

Rocky Mountain National Park: History and Culture as Factors in African-American Park Visitation

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Abstract

This investigation examined experiences of the African-American population living in the Denver area about their visitation to Rocky Mountain National Park. Using qualitative semi-structured interviews with 36 participants, and archival techniques, the authors identify the historical and cultural factors that resulted in low use of the park by African-Americans. Consequently, the authors suggest the use of Bourdieu's "cultural capital" and "habitus" as mechanisms for assisting researchers and practitioners in better understanding and meeting the needs of marginalized people in the United States.

KEYWORDS: Race, ethnicity, bourdieu, national parks, visitation

For many individuals in the United States, visiting a National Park site during leisure time is considered common practice. However, recent studies have shown that traveling to a National Park is not widespread among all ethnic and racial groups and that visitation by racial/ethnic minorities is very low. On average, the White population typically accounts for 91% of park visitors while minority populations such as African-Americans, consist of only 3.8% (Littlejohn, National Park Service, personal communication, 1998; Floyd, 1999). Low visitation rates by minority groups concerns the National Park Service (NPS) because the organization has an ethical, legal and moral responsibility to make parks accessible and available to all individuals (Sandy

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Weber, NPS Interpretation and Education Branch, personal communication, 1999).

To gain a better understanding of low visitation rates by minorities in National Parks sites, this qualitative research inquiry explored the relationship between Denver's African-American community and Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP). RMNP is located just 70 miles northwest of the city and is one of the nation's major tourist attractions. In Denver, African-Americans constitute 11.1% of the city's population (U.S. Census, 2000), but they rarely visit the natural area. To understand why the African-American population in Denver tends not to recreate in the RMNP, it is important to identify the historical factors that shape and influence how and where this population recreates. Furthermore, the cultural context in which the African American population from Denver lives is also essential for understanding the underutilization of the park. In this study, the lead researcher explored how historical and cultural factors of the African American community living in Denver have influenced their current outdoor recreation practices.

The current literature that describes minority recreation behavior has focused on cultural differences between various races and ethnicities, cultural assimilation, perceived racial discrimination and the marginalization of particular groups throughout American society. Previous literature describing ethnicity and recreational choice used four models: (1) the marginality hypothesis, (2) the ethnicity hypothesis, (3) the cultural assimilation hypothesis, and (4) the discrimination hypothesis (Floyd, 1998). A brief description of each is provided here as these hypotheses are reviewed and critiqued extensively in other journal articles (Chavez, 1991; Floyd, 1998, 1999; Floyd & Gramann, 1992; Floyd, Gramann & Saenz, 1993; Floyd, Shinew, McGuire & Noe, 1994; Hutchison, 1987; Johnson, Bowker, English, & Worthen, 1998; Klobus-Edwards, 1981; McGuire, O'Leary, Alexander & Dottavio, 1987; Rodriguez, 1996; Stamps & Stamps, 1985; Tierney & Dahl, 1998; Washburn, 1978; Washburne & Wall, 1980; West, 1989; Yancy & Snell, 1976). The marginality hypothesis states that minority recreational patterns are a counterpart of limited economic resources, which are usually the result of historical patterns of discrimination reflected in low paying jobs (Floyd, 1999). The ethnicity (Washburne, 1978) or subcultural hypothesis (West, 1989), identifies that patterns of participation result from differences in norms, value systems and "leisure socialization patterns between racial and ethnic groups" (Floyd, 1998; Floyd, Gramann & Saenz, 1993; Hutchison, 1987; Johnson et al., 1998). Assimilation theory suggests that park use by minority group members might reflect the acquisition of characteristics of the dominant culture (Floyd, 1999). The assumption of the assimilation theory is that as individuals adapt and adopt the values, beliefs, and behavior that characterize mainstream society, their recreational patterns increasingly mirror that of dominant society. Finally, the perceived discrimination hypothesis (Floyd, 1999) links the discrimination experienced by members of ethnic groups to the choices individuals make regarding where and when to recreate, and in what activities to participate. Discrimination theory accommodates contemporary forms of discrimination individuals may experience while in a park, such as "feeling unwelcome" or "being stared at" while in a recreation area. More recently, Gomez (2002) presented the ethnicity and public relations model that incorporated the relationship between acculturation, sub-cultural identity, socio-economic status, perceived benefits, perceived discrimination and recreation participation.

While all five theories are valid, absent from these models is an understanding of historical and cultural patterns of oppression; that is, the systemic processes embedded in society's norms and daily practices (Young, n.d.). By understanding the prejudice, individual discrimination, and institutional racism this population has historically experienced, one can gain a better understanding of current African-Americans recreation practices.

Pierre Bourdieu (1977) introduced two concepts which help outline human behavior: cultural capital and habitus. Cultural capital can be described as the resources individuals have, including social, cultural and historical knowledge. Cultural capital can exist in three forms: embodied, objectified and institutional. The embodied state consists of "the ensemble of cultivated dispositions that are internalized by the individual through socialization and that constitute schemes of appreciation and understanding" (Swartz, 1997). An example of the embodied state could include how we are taught to act in given situations, such as appropriate behavior in African-American culture in contrast to that in White culture. The objectified state is the possession of cultural objects such as paintings, media, and writings. In a recreation context, this could even include the possession of valuable outdoor gear, which can serve as a social boundary between those who own the correct gear for outdoor settings and those who do not. Institutionalized forms of cultural capital include academic achievement, such as degrees or certificates earned. Institutionalized forms of cultural capital may also serve as social boundaries for those who are educated with a particular training, in contrast to those who are not. Forms of cultural capital can be transmitted from generation to generation, can be learned through life experiences, or can be taught to individuals.

"Habitus," a second term introduced by Bourdieu (1977) is a mode of conduct, or action, by group members that feels natural and is often unconscious, appropriate to a given social context and is directly tied to what cultural capital an individual has or does not have. For example, if an individual has been taught to not enter the woods because they are perceived as dangerous (cultural capital), then an individual may not travel into those areas (habitus). The history of a cultural group and its members' relationship with natural areas could be considered an example of the cultural capital one has. Habitus refers to the action, the decision, to travel (or not) to a national park. This decision to act (habitus) is often based on one's cultural capital. Employing Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and habitus, we might better understand that leisure activity is not simply an action that happens in isolation, but is stringently tied with the history, cultural norms and values of a population.

History of African-American Recreation

The Supreme Court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) created "separate but equal" facilities for African-Americans that perpetuated a segregated and discriminatory society (American Association of University Administrators, 1999). Public spaces such as railways, streetcars, restaurants, boarding houses, and places of recreation were all segregated. It was not until the advent of the modern Civil Rights Movement (1954-1965) and, in particular, passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that the segregation of public facilities was ruled unconstitutional. Even though a law was created to end segregation, the legacy of Jim Crow continued throughout the next few decades and

traces of that legacy continue to exist today.

Since public and private spaces were segregated until the mid-1960s, the African-American population historically had their own areas where they stayed while traveling. From 1936 until approximately 1960, Victor H. Green Publishers of New York City published "The Negro Motorist Green Book" that identified where traveling African-Americans were welcome. To set the historic framework, in 1936 the book identified one skating rink, three trailer parks, one resort, two bathhouses, one dude ranch, five cabin-rentals, one park, one recreation club, and one place to fish and boat that were available to African-Americans across the nation. Most of the book listed hotels, houses, barbershops and restaurants owned by both African-Americans and some Whites where the African-American population might feel welcome and not discriminated against (Negro Motorist Green Book, 1936).

In contrast, Taylor (2000) outlined the history of "wilderness" and the beginnings of the national park system claiming that since the Civil War, these areas were considered places where "White men" could escape the confines of civilization. As a result, wealthy (usually White) Americans often led hunting expeditions and built cabins, sportsman's clubs, fenced game parks and country estates in natural areas. However, he did not discuss the presence of African-Americans in wilderness areas and national parks (Taylor, 2000).

Holland (2002) examined African-American recreation historically as it related mostly to urban areas. The author wrote that throughout the history of the United States, funds for public swimming pools, playgrounds, parks, camps, and libraries for the African-American population were minimal. The difficult issue to decipher is how being raised where there were few opportunities to recreate in public spaces translates into how African-Americans currently recreate in natural areas.

The history of African-American recreation is characterized, in part, by limited funding for recreation services, and real and perceived inaccessibility to recreation spaces. What is less frequently discussed is the relationship African-Americans have historically had with natural spaces and how that impacts current recreation practices. In this study, researchers examined the relationship of African-American's residing in Denver to RMNP, and how this relationship influenced their outdoor recreation practices.

Rocky Mountain National Park and African-Americans

The purpose of this section is to provide insight into, and documentation of, social and cultural aspects and circumstances that historically affected those who visited the RMNP. In the United States, the National Park Service was officially founded as the caretaker of the National Parks through the signing of the 1916 Organic Act. Currently, there are 391 units in the National Park Service. National Parks are defined as large tracts of land set aside by Congress because of some outstanding scenic feature or natural phenomena (Parknet, 2002).

RMNP was founded on January 12, 1915 when President Woodrow Wilson signed the Rocky Mountain National Park Act (RMNP, 2004). Little is known about the African-American involvement within RMNP and virtually nothing is written in the general historical description of this park by the National Park Service. The founder of the park, Joel Estes, was a slave owner. When Estes traveled to what is now Estes

Park (the gateway community bordering the east side of the park), he had thirteen children, a wife, and depended on five Black slaves for labor (Buchholtz, 1983). In the 1850s, he traveled back to his home in Missouri and brought all of the family and the slaves to Denver where he could then better scout the area. During the Civil War, he returned to Missouri where he was met with hostility because he was a slave owner. He relocated to Texas where he was an unsuccessful cattle rancher. Consequently, he freed all of his slaves and moved back to Missouri (Buchholtz, 1983).

Historically, African-Americans were known to travel throughout the Estes Park area. For example, between 1872 and 1900, Lord Earl Dunraven, who was drawn to the area to take part in hunting expeditions, brought an African-American servant into RMNP (Carstophen, personal communication, June 6, 2000). Very little is known about the relationship between Lord Dunraven and the servant. Explorer Hayden was commissioned to conduct geological surveys in the area. Often, he was accompanied by an African-American expeditionary member (Ravage, 1997).

In the early 1900s, F.O. Stanley constructed the elegant Stanley Hotel, “a classic hostelry exemplifying the golden age of touring” due to his love and admiration for the beautiful landscape. The Stanley Hotel is located adjacent to RMNP in Estes Park. In June 1910, J. W. Morris, an African-American from Denver, served as head-waiter of the dining room. He brought with him from Denver 15 other men to take care of the dining facilities. African-Americans from Denver worked at the Stanley Hotel and had separate accommodations outside of the main lodge (The Colorado Statesman, June 1910). Staff historians at the Stanley Hotel do not know when African-Americans were first allowed to stay at the resort, but they were likely unable to reserve a room until at least the mid 1950s (Staff Historians at the Stanley Hotel, personal communication, 2000).

There is evidence that there were African-American visitors to RMNP although there are no photos in any archive on the Front Range or at the park itself. In the Denver African American newspaper, The Colorado Statesman, there are reports of various groups of individuals from the African-American community visiting the park as tourists. For example, it was reported that on July 14, 1910, the Zion Baptist Church, an African American congregation, held a picnic at Glacier Lake (Colorado Statesman, 1910). The Philomatheims Bridge Club, also African American, enjoyed a sightseeing tour and picnic at the park in the summer of 1941 (Colorado Statesman, 1941). In 1943, the United States Organization (USO), along with the YMCA and YWCA, sponsored a picnic at RMNP for African-American families in the Denver area (Lewis, 1943).

Near RMNP was Lincoln Hills, Colorado, an African-American resort. This resort-community was developed in 1922 by Mr. Winks, a local businessman in Denver. Mr. Winks offered lots for a \$5.00 down payment. When individuals had paid a total of \$40.00 or \$50.00, the buyers were allowed to build lodging facilities and automatically became members of the Lincoln Hills Country Club. Between the 1920s and 1940s, the African-American community from Denver often chose Lincoln Hills as a vacation destination to escape the summer heat. Mr. Wink passed away in 1965, but the town of Lincoln Hills still exists, although it is not presently considered an African-American community. Also located at Lincoln Hills was the YWCA summer camp for African-American girls called Camp Nizhoni. During the 1950s and 1960s the YWCA stressed

interracial programs and the segregated camp experience disappeared. Camp Nizhoni is no longer in operation (Wilson, personal communication, July 6, 2000).

In 1965, the Superintendent of RMNP proposed the creation of a Job Corps where underprivileged young men between the ages of 16 to 21 years would live on federal property eight miles east of Estes Park in Hollowell Park. The young men would serve two years while receiving skill training, education and construction work experience. Thirty percent of the young men were labeled as “minority.” This particular program was met with great resistance by the Estes Park inhabitants. Prior to establishing Job Corps, the Superintendent of RMNP held a public meeting to explain the goals of the program. Eighty-five percent of the public seemed to be supportive of the given proposition; however, after the meeting, 40 letters were written to oppose the creation of a Job Corps, while 25 letters supported establishing the program. It is not recorded as to whether this program ever transpired.

During the same time period, many of the African-Americans present in the Estes Park area served as housekeepers and/or nannies to Whites who were visiting the region. While the experience of African Americans whose roles were to serve Whites would be different than the White tourist visiting the park during their leisure time, the encounter was not without some form of entertainment. The helpers held an annual summer celebration where they had a bonfire, around which they would sing and dance (Anonymous, personal communication, June 8, 2000).

While Estes Park and RMNP were visited by a few African-Americans throughout the history of the park, interviews with African-Americans in Denver indicated that other areas surrounding Denver were frequented more often. Garden of the Gods, Manitou Springs, Cave of the Winds (all located near Colorado Springs and south of Denver) were frequently visited. Red Rocks, Lookout Mountain, Buffalo Bills Gravesite, Idaho Springs, Central City and Dumont (directly west of Denver) were also areas of interest to the African-Americans living in the area. African-American’s living in Denver historically traveled, explored natural areas, and took part in outdoor recreation activities in the Denver area, and they continue this practice today. However, both in the past and present, this population seldom visited RMNP. Instead, they traveled to other places perceived safer such as Lincoln Hills and/or Red Rocks. When they did travel to RMNP, they usually did so in larger groups.

Methodology

The goal of this qualitative inquiry was to explore the historical and cultural factors experienced by African-Americans in Denver to identify how these may influence current outdoor recreation practices. The following section outlines the strategies of data collection, a description of the population, and techniques used to arrive at the findings.

Data Collection

Thirty-six semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used to collect data from African-American participants about visiting RMNP. Demographic information was gathered using a brief, self-administered questionnaire to determine age, income level, gender, racial/ethnic status, marital status, education level, employment, and length of residence in their community. Snowball sampling was used to recruit individuals in the Denver Metropolitan area. Snowball sampling occurs when the researcher identi-

fies and locates one or more key individuals and then asks those individuals to relate the names of other people who might be interested in discussing the research topic (Bernard, 1988). This type of sampling was chosen to facilitate access and build credibility between White researchers and the African-American community. Bill Gwaltney, an African-American Chief of Interpretation at RMNP, recommended interviewing individuals at the following sites: the Denver County Public School District, the Black Chamber of Commerce of Denver, the Black-America West Museum and Heritage Center, The James P. Beckwourth Mountain Club, the Black Church Initiative, The Colorado Historical Society, the YMCA and the Denver Public Library. The goal was to interview as many individuals as possible to obtain a broad cross-section of the Denver community and to achieve saturation. Interviews took place in a variety of places, usually a quiet space to which both the researcher and the participant had access. Schoolrooms, museum offices, libraries, homes, personal offices, and churchrooms were all spaces where the interviews occurred. Using a protocol, the semi-structured interview included questions to help the interviewer and participant become acquainted, questions about the participant's relationship to RMNP and the historical use of the park and nearby natural areas. Participants were also asked why the African-American population as a whole chooses not to recreate at RMNP. The interviews lasted, on average, one-hour.

Additionally, archival methods were used to examine the historical relationship of the African-American population living in Denver with RMNP. Archival methods were employed at the Black American West Museum and Heritage Center in Denver, Colorado, the Denver Service Center for the National Park Service, the National Park Archives located at RMNP, the Denver Public Library, the Estes Park Historical Society, the museum at the YMCA of the Rockies, the Fort Collins Public Library, the Boulder Public Library, and the Carnegie Branch Library for Local History in Boulder. These data helped to contextualize and explain the relationship of African-Americans with RMNP and the surrounding natural areas.

Finally, two separate focus groups were conducted with a total of 15 African-Americans residing in the Denver area. These individuals were recruited at two different churches located in the Denver Five-Points community. Both focus groups lasted approximately two hours. Questions asked at the focus groups were the same questions used during individual interviews. The focus groups were held to verify the data obtained in the individual interviews and to ensure data saturation. Individuals participating in the focus groups offered no new information than had been obtained during the individual interviews.

Participant Demographics

In total, nineteen men and seventeen women were interviewed for this project. Six percent of the participants were between the ages 13 to 18 years, and another 6% between the ages 19 to 25 years. Nineteen percent of the participants were between the ages of 26 to 40 years, 47% of the participants were between the ages of 41 to 55 years, and 22% of the participants were between the ages of 56 to 65 years. Concerning income, 22% of the individuals earned over \$80,000 annually; 30.5% made between \$50,000 and \$79,000; and 22% made between \$10,000 and \$49,000. The income of the remaining nine participants is unknown.

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and imported into a qualitative analysis software program (NVivo) which helps to manage and organize large amounts of data. Coding then occurred in three stages. Open coding involved a process similar to brainstorming, as the researcher reviewed the data for major categories of information (Creswell, 1998). Following this step, the researcher grouped the codes from across all of the interviews that contained similar themes. This is frequently referred to as axial coding. During axial coding it was important for the researcher to attend to discrepant cases or themes that did not fit with the purpose of the research (Creswell, 1998). The researcher identified data that did not relate to the study at hand and used the data that did relate to the given research question. Selective coding was the final stage of analysis. During selective coding, the researcher re-read the transcripts to identify all of the data that fit with each theme. In this manner data were examined and reexamined to build theoretical sufficiency. This circular process, known as constant comparison, allows the researcher to develop theory that is closely tied to the data (Charmaz, 2006).

Triangulation and member-checking were used to insure the trustworthiness of the findings. Triangulation refers to various procedures in which researchers combine different methods or sources of data in a single study. In this study triangulation was achieved by using archival data, focus groups, and in-depth interviews with multiple stakeholders. This provided more substantial and richer data; and enhanced the transferability of the findings. In this study, responses from the two focus groups were similar to data from the individual interviews. Archival research confirmed the context of discussions with study participants. In addition, final themes were shared with participants and their feedback was incorporated into the analysis. The entire process culminated with the creation of the themes used to explain the experience of the participants (Creswell, 1998).

Findings

The findings of this study are organized according to two overarching categories: historical factors and cultural factors. Historical factors are those based on historical events and hegemonic institutional structures such as discriminatory practices or the segregation of spaces. Cultural factors are those beliefs, values, customs and behaviors that members of a society may share, and which inhibit them from behaving in particular ways.

Historical Factors

Five major historical factors were identified in the data: life history, economic situation, racism, nature-based language, and destination-minded travel patterns. Participants offered explanations that were historically-contingent, explaining why visiting RMNP was or was not considered an activity in which African-Americans participate.

Life History and Recreation. Historically, one factor influencing whether an African-American traveled to RMNP was their personal history. For example, if children were introduced to national parks by their parents or through other groups, then there was a tendency for these individuals to travel to national parks as adults. Despite the fact that African-American visitation to national parks has historically been low, some

of the participants did perceive this space to be within their “comfort zone.” Other participants were not taken to national or state parks when they were children, and consequently continued to avoid them. Thus, where individuals go to recreate, and the activities in which they participate during their leisure time, are often passed down from generation to generation. Some individuals were exposed to natural areas by parents, church groups, YMCAs, Upward Bound, and/or scout groups. One person stated:

That brings in childhood when I started. What happened was that there was a church group, a Baptist church and. . . they would gather us up and take us to a camp (in the mountains) once a year. So I fell in love with the mountains when I went to camp in the summer. I wouldn't have gotten that experience if I hadn't gone to the church.

Another individual described his relationship with natural areas that evolved during his childhood:

[In the 40s, 50s] I was in Boy Scouts. I've done a tremendous amount of hiking, overnight camping, trailblazing, etcetera. . . when I was growing up, the Boy Scouts Camp and the YMCA Camp, individual camping tours (were things that we did). (We were) in Grand Lake area quite a bit. . . We walked on the bottom of Grand Lake, the Granby Dam before they built that.

As understood from decades of leisure studies research, how one recreates as a child is often an indicator of how one will recreate as an adult. In this case, if individuals were taught during childhood that natural areas, such as RMNP were a place where individuals could enjoy their natural surroundings, then they might be more likely to go to this national park as an adult.

Economic Situation. Economic factors were historically linked to discriminatory practices in the workplace that have impacted the individuals' income. Historically, the African-American population in the United States has been discriminated against in politics, housing, education and employment, which would often result in limited financial ability to travel to a national park. To illustrate this point, between 1967 and 1990, African American families experienced a median income increase of 12% from \$19,080 to \$21,420. During this same time period, White families experienced a 15% rise from \$32,220 to \$36,920. Thus, the median family income for African-Americans was 58% of their White counterparts, and between 1967 and 1990 this statistic remained relatively unchanged (Bureau of the Census, 1993). What changed was the median income for families headed by an African-American couple, which increased 47% from \$22,910 to \$33,780. Households maintained by single African-American women showed no increase in income between 1967 and 1990. The poverty level for the African-American population, as a whole, dropped from 34% in 1967 to 26% in 1998 (Mckinnon & Humes, 1999).

Several of the participants reinforced this notion and indicated that traveling to RMNP was not an affordable activity. One person stated:

From the beginning with our inclusion in America to the point that we had the freedom where we could go where we wanted to go, we still didn't have the capital or the resources to be able to enjoy recreation. We spent so much time working trying to scratch out a living; we didn't have time for that type of recreation and relaxation. And even when we did we would often vacation in the homes of relatives out of state so it was not brought

up in our preaching, so now we have to be reprogrammed. . . For a very long time, those programs were dominated by the people who had the money to do it. And typically, African-Americans typically didn't.

Minimally, traveling to a national park has always required resources needed for transportation to get to the park. For some African-Americans, a lack of capital resources needed to travel to the park meant they were not able to get there.

Racism. Participants discussed how historical use of parks was limited by racial tensions. Indeed, institutional racism, explicitly codified through Jim Crow segregation, and implicitly manifested through everyday interactions and stereotypical assumptions held by Whites, limited where people of color could go and what they could do within the dominant White culture. This limitation also created fears of traveling outside of ones' comfort zone. There was a very real fear for one's physical safety, the lack of which was rooted in historical racism. This fear also influenced what one believed one could do as well as the participant's desire to engage in an activity. One study participant explained:

. . . the information was not readily available. Nobody in our - and I was raised in a Black community - nobody said, "I went out and went camping" and came back and talked about it, or I went to a national park. Everybody says, "ok you just get up and go to work 8 to 5 and provide for the kids". In the 60s and 50s discrimination was still so tolerant that your best thing was survival. Your best thing was just walking into JC Penny's and getting accepted there. So you know, why do I want to branch out? Plus you know they are always quoting the fear, you know if I go out of the bounds of the city limit, no telling what I'm going to run into. I may be running into acreage, I may be running into something that doesn't want to relent. Some kid, some minority person for the sake of it, to just go out of say south (Denver) is not safe.

Also discussed was how the historical legacy of the Jim Crow laws might make it difficult for older people to visit RMNP. For example, older persons who worked in subservient positions to Whites as domestics or as farm workers might still not feel welcome to areas dominated by White populations. In discussing an African-American friend, one participant stated:

This person talks about, well he is very integrated. The intergenerational issue is also big. He said his momma worked for White couples and stuff. She was actually working in the cotton fields and that she was always perceived as being subservient, so for her to go into a White space, for the people of this generation, would be definitely a situation. He has taken her into White spaces. She was really scared at first, but they were really nice to her and it worked out ok. Nevertheless, she was scared. Income and generation are big factors in deciding who is going to be here and who is not. He's widely integrated into White society.

Where individuals belong during their leisure time and the spaces they occupy are often indicative of their past experiences. If an African-American has been subservient to another cultural group (usually White) for a large part of their life, this individual might not want to occupy spaces dominated by that cultural group during his or her leisure time.

Nature-Based Language. Reasons cited for why African-Americans, both historically and currently, have rarely visited RMNP include the negative connotations and meanings applied to natural spaces, specifically “country” and “woods.” From the late 1800s until 1960, nearly 5 million African-Americans migrated from the rural South to the northern cities in search of employment (The African-American Great Migration, 2001). Because farm machinery was replacing the African-American worker on southern farms, and northern cities offered increased employment opportunities, the Black population traveled North in great numbers. For some, this transition from the country to the city was seen as a means of economic progress as the country was often associated with poverty. Consequently, in the minds of some African-Americans, natural areas, including national parks, were and continue to be, associated with the word “country.”

For example, an African-American Pastor claimed he had tried to recruit members of his congregation to visit RMNP, but they would not participate because:

. . . what a Black person or a Hispanic, what we call country is farmland. Whether it's Texas or whether it's Alabama, we call it farmland-we call it country. And so the connotation that's tied with country means poverty. It means a demotion of self-worth. . . See, so now when we say national parks, the first concept is, it's like the country. And so everything that says country is everything you thought you don't want. So because of things I would want, I don't want to go back to “quote” the country. And so outdoors - country, no thank you, oh that's country. . . They are using interchangeable term for country. I listen to them. You know. I don't want anything country. I was raised country. No it's not the same thing. . . You can see then shut down because the connotation of, it's country.

Another participant indicated: “Another thing is... for some reason the associations with the outdoors, historically, Black folk, we came here to work this land. We came from an agrarian culture. . . and it wasn't necessarily a positive experience.”

For some African-Americans the connotations and meaning of “woods” is also negative. Historically, woods were often associated with poverty and lynchings. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, between 1882 and 1944, more than 3,000 African-Americans were lynched, nearly all in rural southern states. An equal number of Blacks were believed to have “died in uncounted racial beatings, shootings, hangings, draggings and disappearances” (Ramage, 2001). Thus, rural nature, in general, and the woods in particular, continue to have strong negative connotations for some in the African-American community. A participant stated:

Yea, nature walks. That's not a big thing for us. That doesn't do it for us. We're not as a really into the preservation of land. But we do not embrace and we do not have an innate or historical appreciation for it... that you call forest, we call woods... the ideology of the woods came out of the Deep South and there was nothing about... it was not good in those kinds of surroundings. Black people was forced to make do in those types of environments, but also they are often associated with outhouses, didn't have inside plumbing. The belief in the South was sometimes fear of going out in the woods... there were a lot of stories of blacks being hung, their bodies being found hung from trees and things like this. So there's not anything comfortable traditionally in African-Americans' mind, in my opinion, about what we would call the woods and you would call the forest.

We actually embrace it in a totally different way.

Visiting a National Park may not be appealing to those in the African-American community because it reminds them of their negative historical affiliation with natural areas. To return to the woods for recreational purposes might not be considered progress. Instead, it may be viewed negatively in terms of being antithetical to the progress they previously achieved in moving to urban areas for work.

Destination-Minded. Because many public spaces have been perceived as inaccessible, and because finances were limited, African-Americans traditionally vacationed differently from Whites. The Colorado Statesman, the African-American newspaper in Denver during the first half of the Twentieth Century, listed the vacation destinations of Blacks who were leaving the city. The majority of the time, these individuals traveled to visit family or friends during their vacations. This traditional pattern of African-Americans spending their leisure time with friends and family continues today. This is also reflected in the writings of “The Negro Motorist Green Book” (1936) previously discussed. Explanations of African-American travel included the following descriptions: “Because I think that when we go on vacations we usually go to visit family or friends. For some reason you guys seem to be more curious about the parks and stuff like that.” Another participant stated:

I spent all that time in Arkansas and my concept and my experience is that if you went more than 30 miles away from home then you had gone a long way. Yep. You didn’t get into a car and go visit a natural place. You know that wasn’t part of the culture. You might go over to a relative’s (house) and have barbecue or have some fried chicken.

The African-American population was historically limited where they could travel, and in the services rendered to them; consequently, they have historically often traveled differently than the White population.

Cultural Factors

Cultural factors were also identified as a major category. For example, many African-American participants mentioned that going to a national park, or recreating in natural areas is not a “Black thing” to do and is not a part of African-American culture. In these cases, going to a national park might be considered a demarcation of “White culture.” Conversely, for some, not going to RMNP was a demarcation of “Black culture.” When a cultural group defines particular activities as outside of their own culture and the park is associated with these activities, this then becomes a reason as to why African-American visitation is low in the park. Thus, the possible perception of the park as a “White space” becomes a barrier to visiting the park. If one does take part in these outdoor activities, he/she risks being associated with “White culture” by others within the African-American population and perceived as rejecting African-American culture. This too, could serve as a factor that limits park visitation by African-Americans. Expressions of this concept were found in statements such as: “There are a lot of little things in the Black community and it comes across like, whoa, well, Black people don’t do that. Black people don’t ski. Black people don’t hike” and “I know African-Americans who have never been to Cave of the Winds. Or I’ve asked some of them and they say that’s a ‘White people’ thing.” Since Whites have historically dominated

outdoor recreation activities that may take place in natural areas, these activities are a cultural demarcation identified with the White population and a rejection of African-American culture.

Participants discussed how a racial or ethnic group might occupy particular spaces during recreational periods and how differing racial groups do not often use the same spaces at the same time. The following quote suggests that because one culture group uses a space, other racial/ethnic groups cannot:

It's just like some. . . parks are taken over by one race and leaves the other race just sitting there where they don't feel comfortable where they don't want to be in an area when that other race is there, which I think is wrong. . . it's not like you (are) in my park and you don't belong here. It's that we have the weekdays and you can have the weekends, it's something like that.

In summary, when the participants were asked why they believed the African-American population was under-represented at RMNP, responses indicated a variety of historical and cultural factors to park visitation. Historical economic factors, the historical meanings of the words "woods" and "country" are a few of the factors mentioned. These historical and cultural factors have not been mentioned in the literature on ethnic minorities in outdoor recreation cited in this manuscript. The challenge is to create a framework that will incorporate these new categories.

Discussion

While previous models which describe minority patterns of outdoor recreation are valid, partially absent from these models is an understanding of the greater historical and cultural context which might guide how individuals choose to engage or not engage in recreation activities. The findings indicated that the low numbers of African-Americans visiting RMNP may be partially explained by historical and cultural factors. The concept of "history" has multiple subcategories ranging from the life history of an individual to the economic disparities of the population as a whole. Consequently, historical and cultural considerations need to be added to existing theory.

Beyond an additive model, a secondary literature review offered theoretical insights to reframe how one understands cultural and historical context related to how African-Americans actively choose to recreate. Employing Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of cultural capital and habitus, we might better understand that leisure activity is not simply an action that happens in isolation, but is stringently tied to the history of a population. The three dimensions of cultural capital outlined by Bourdieu, the embodied, objectified and institutional states, provide a more detailed understanding of how and where cultural groups may choose to recreate.

The embodied state can be described as knowledge that can be both consciously and passively acquired through socialization over a period of time. In the context of this data, historically many African-Americans were not raised to travel to RMNP, perhaps due to lack of economic resources or perceived and/or real discrimination in those areas. Consequently, this cultural group created their own recreational practices in locations they deemed as safe and enjoyable. Knowledge of how and where to recreate was learned and passed down through multiple generations. Some participants classified outdoor recreation activities and traveling to natural areas as describing, or

a demarcation of, White culture and not African-American culture. The lack of awareness about outdoor recreation activities and spaces was so embedded that “not going” became the embodiment of a cultural norm for many. This cultural norm continues to be passed down from one generation to another. Importantly, the Civil Rights Law (1964) permitted African Americans into recreational spaces where they could not travel previously. However, their embodied and socialized patterns of leisure did not immediately transform accordingly.

The objectified state of cultural capital represents the notion of consumption and the possession of items that are symbolically valuable. During multiple interviews, participants discussed how their recreation was historically shaped by a lack of finances. To travel to RMNP, an individual would first be required to have a vehicle with fuel. As noted in the findings, Whites had the financial and physical resources to travel to RMNP while the African-American population spent the majority of their time simply trying to provide the basic essentials for their families. One mother explained:

First of all, you have to have the type of car. . . you know. . . and then there's gas. . . I don't have the right gear to go up to the mountains. I have to wear another jacket other than the one I am wearing to school every day. . . Oh then gloves. Earmuffs. . . who can afford it? I've got a decision here, you have choices. Do we eat, or do we go to the mountains?

Consequently, traveling to RMNP and participating in outdoor recreation activities was again demarcated as a White activity by virtue of who had the finances to travel to the area and the gear needed when in a mountain climate.

Bourdieu's (1977) institutionalized form of cultural capital consists of educational achievement and degrees earned. In the context of the findings, given that many of the participants had not engaged in outdoor recreation, they may not know or be aware of the potential benefits that might accrue from participation. In fact, for some, visiting a National Park such as RMNP was viewed negatively as it reminded them of their negative historical affiliation with natural areas. For many there was a dearth of knowledge about RMNP and what they would experience if they did visit the park. This lack of knowledge of the benefits of recreating in a natural area such as RMNP by the African-American population in this study may partially explain the low numbers of African-Americans currently visiting the park.

The three forms of cultural capital, the embodied, the objectified and the institutionalized, have helped shape recreation travel patterns and the activities this cultural group engages in during their free time. Respondents in this study discussed the decades of historical oppression, and how they found safe spaces where they could enjoy their leisure time. Despite not being able to travel to RMNP due to a lack of finances, they instead traveled to areas closer to Denver where they would feel welcome. Consequently, many of the participants may not have had an understanding of the benefits of outdoor recreation and the experiences gained in exploring the scenic wonders located just 50 miles from where they live. All three of these components have helped construct where and how participants in this study engage in recreation.

While an individual's behavior is not necessarily dictated by history and culture (and the cultural capital learned throughout), the context should be considered a driving force. In the context of these findings, the participants' choice to visit RMNP (habitus) was often determined by historical structures and culture (cultural capital).

The historical structures outlined in this study illustrate the oppression African-Americans have experienced in American society and how this has been a factor in shaping current recreation practices. In other words, the cultural capital learned as a result of years of historical oppression has shaped their current recreation behavior (*habitus*). Individuals have agency in how they choose to recreate, but that agency is shaped by historical occurrences and social structures. There were, and continue to be, natural areas that African-Americans in this community visited during their leisure time (e.g., Lincoln Hills, Garden of the Gods, Buffalo Bills Grave, etcetera). These are locations where the participants felt safe and where the lines of segregation were perceived to be non-existent.

In this research, the African-American participants in this study largely chose not to visit RMNP. Visible lines of segregation, for the most part, have disappeared; however, because of how individuals have been taught to think about natural areas, invisible lines of segregation continue to exist. While the natural areas we call the National Parks are supposed to be welcome to all, they may not be perceived as welcoming by many. These natural areas have traditionally been spaces where Whites have recreated, and this practice of segregation of recreation continues even though the lines are not visible to the casual observer.

Conclusion

In summary, multiple factors influence whether an African-American from Denver would visit RMNP. Introduction to the park experience in formative years, lack of finances, segregation of recreation spaces, accessibility to public and private buildings and services, and the historical interpretation of the outdoors are some of the reasons cited in the findings. Some African-Americans vacationed differently than Whites, tending to spend time with friends and family at homes and in spaces perceived as safe. This tradition continues to be passed down from generation to generation for some families. As a result of these observations, today, going to RMNP may be interpreted as a “White activity” by many African-Americans and for some, is seen as hostile to Black culture. The authors propose that history and culture be added as additional factors necessary in previous models.

Despite the fact that this research was conducted in 2001, no new conceptual frameworks beyond marginality, assimilation, ethnicity and discrimination, have been developed to explain differences in recreation patterns among and between different groups of people. Bourdieu (1977) offered an alternative framework to better understand the ways culture and history influence and shape recreation patterns for all park users. Bourdieu also offered an alternative framing to understand the behavior of minority recreation patterns in a historical and cultural context. In using this theoretical approach, researchers are better able to understand how contemporary and historical political, social, and institutional oppression shapes how and where individuals choose or choose not to recreate. Understanding the social and historical contexts in which people live may ultimately help us to better understand the ways people also engage in recreation, including outdoor recreation.

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