

**Embedded and Exposed**  
**Exploring the Lived Experiences of African American Tourists**

**By**

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**Abstract**

The United States is experiencing a shift in racial demographics. Recent projections suggest that minority groups will make up nearly 50% of the population by 2023. Such increases have made the topics of race, ethnicity, and culture an appealing area of study for researchers and tourism professionals alike. Existing explanations of differences in African American travel suggest that decisions are made due to marginality (generally economic) or ethnicity (subcultural values). Because travel preferences may be a byproduct of learned behaviors passed down through generations, it is imperative to understand both current and historical aspects of leisure behavior. The stories of 12 African American tourists provided information which suggests that marginality, ethnicity, and issues related to discrimination impact their attitudes and behaviors regarding tourism choice. Capturing the voices of African American travelers offers a more inclusive understanding of their travel experiences, while at the same time offering explanations between the relationship between race and tourism.



Embedded and Exposed  
Exploring the Lived Experiences of African American Tourists

A Thesis

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by

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Embedded and Exposed: Exploring the Lived Experiences of African American Tourists

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The field of leisure is considered to be a “wonderfully complex social phenomenon, affected by many social institutions”. Various forms of leisure touch the lives of people everywhere (Human Kinetics, 2013, p.62), but there is a need to examine how leisure is experienced in the lives of various racial groups. One of the most critical times in US history related to African Americans and leisure was during the period referred to as Jim Crow. Examples of institutionalized segregation, particularly in the south, could be found in various leisure spaces (beaches, parks, etc). While laws have been lifted, evidence of racialized spaces can be found in leisure locations across the United States. Thus the idea that race still matters is critical to the continuation of support for research on race and leisure (Philipp, 2000). One of the growing areas of interest within leisure research is that of tourism. This research explores the travel experiences of African Americans.

The 2010 United States Census indicated that the minority population is rapidly growing. A large part of the minority growth can be attributed to African Americans who showed an increase of 3.7 million between April 2000, and April 2010 (Stodolska, Shinew, Floyd, & Walker, 2014). In 2010, this growth amassed a total of 42 million African Americans yielding a total annual buying power of \$913 billion (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). The increase of minority populations is projected to continue growing, thus making the examination of the leisure activities of minorities a relevant area of study (Stodolska et al., 2014).

Tourism is the world’s largest industry representing 2.8 percent of global gross domestic product (Edgell & Swanson, 2013). With events ranging from community festivals to large scale annual events like the Super Bowl, tourism is now “interwoven with the fabric of our society and is an essential component of recreation and leisure” (McLean, Hurd, Rogers, 2008, p. 273).

Given the nation's history with discrimination, the relationship African Americans have with travel is complex, but they have been described as a growing, important segment of today's travel industry. An analysis of various tourism advertisements would lead one to the belief the long standing stereotype that African Americans do not travel (Alderman, 2013), but a simple Google search will tell a different story. Blogs like "I'm Black and I Travel" and "Travel Noire" or Instagram accounts like Nomadness celebrate the travel experiences of African Americans supporting Floyd, Shiner, McGuire, & Noe (1994) statement that African Americans do travel and participate in leisure activities; they just happen to differ from other racial groups, namely white Americans. In fact, Mandala Research (2011) firm asserts that African Americans spend \$48 billion on US travel and seventeen percent take at least one international trip annually. Additionally, Philipp (1994) found that African American travelers preferred traveling in groups often visiting popular destination locations and tend to stick to a schedule once arriving at their destination.

For the last few decades, existing theories of marginality and ethnicity have been used to explain the differences in travel behaviors especially as they compare to their White counterparts. Marginality refers to the financial resources African Americans have to participate in leisure activities. The ethnicity theory suggests that perhaps certain forms of leisure are not a part of the social norms and values of African Americans. Recently, there has been a push to examine race and tourism using prejudice and discrimination as explanation for differences in leisure preferences. The notion behind this push is that African Americans have maintained certain attitudes and behaviors once learned during the Jim Crow era that have been passed down through generations thus affecting their attitudes and behaviors today (Floyd, 1998). Additionally, Philipp (1999) suggested that feelings of acceptance impact tourism

choices. Despite some growth, much still remains largely unknown about the African American traveler (Carter, 2008).

Now in a time where individuals can come and go as they please, evidence from previous studies confirms that some African American tourists remain deeply affected by the events of the past, not willing to expand beyond their comfort zone. With the racial makeup of leisure activity participation diversifying, it is especially important to uncover trends, motivations, constraints to ensure equality is represented in all leisure activities. As Floyd (1998) boldly stated race matters.

### **Statement of Problem**

Currently there is a dearth in the literature on the experiences of African American tourists. Existing literature provides some insight into quantifiable statistics of African American tourists. For instance, the length of stay, destination visited, and leisure activity participation are examples of research findings from previous tourism studies. There is minimal research that captures the voices of Black tourists based on their perceptions of traveling as an African American.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Alderman (2013) posits that the tourism industry has created a “white male gaze” that ignores the experiences of minorities (p. 375). Previous studies on race and tourism were mostly conducted using quantitative research methods. While these studies provided “standardization of measures, identification of casual factors, and wider generalization of findings” they do not offer an outlet for the voices of those experiencing travel to be heard. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is an approach that can be beneficial in filling in the gaps that exist in quantitative studies (Stodolska, 2014).

As this segment of tourist grows additional research is needed to better understand the travel experience(s) of African Americans. The purpose of this study is to explore the travel experiences of African Americans and in what ways these experiences shape their travel attitudes and behaviors. The findings from this study can provide valuable information to tourism planners and marketers. It may also be beneficial for other African American travelers.

### **Research Questions**

Broadly stated this research seeks to explore the travel experiences of African Americans. The research examines the overarching question:

- How have African Americans experienced travel?

The following supporting inquiries will be used to distinguish between experiences both past and present.

- Describe your experiences with travel growing up.
- Describe your current travel experiences.

Undergirding this research is the self reflective process participants will use to make sense of how being African American has impacted their attitudes about travel and their actual travel behaviors. To illicit these findings the following question is poised:

- In what ways do the lived experiences of African Americans shape their tourism attitudes and behaviors?

### **Significance of Study**

Exploring leisure within a racial context provides evidence for how issues of prejudice, discrimination, and inequality play out in social settings. This research has the ability to impact research across disciplines. For example the tourism industry will be informed by narratives of actual travelers. This feature adds depth to the existing knowledge of a certain segment of

travelers. Marketers will be informed about the reasons tourists are drawn to certain destinations and perhaps more importantly reasons why they do not visit locations.

Perhaps most important is the potential significance this has for African American tourists. The African American participants will have an opportunity to explore the dynamics of race as they pertain to their leisure choices. Participants will not only have an opportunity to share their travel experiences but their feelings intersecting race, travel, discrimination, barriers, and benefits will be heard as well. In doing so, the experiences of these participants are acknowledged, something that is not often illustrated in mainstream society.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Race, Leisure, and Tourism**

##### *Definitions*

The concepts of race and leisure have gained increasing attention in leisure research but in comparison to research conducted in this field as a whole there are many stones that have been left unturned (Stodolska et al., 2014). This paper seeks to examine the creation of attitudes and behaviors of African American travelers; because race and leisure will dominate much of the concepts of this paper, it is important to share the defining characteristics of each.

Traditionally race have been explained using biological characteristics (Stodolska et al., 2014); however this paper follows Floyd's (1998) argument that race, relative to one's participation in leisure, is centered on an individual's phenotypic characteristics (skin color). He suggests that one's race can define "social boundaries and structure social interaction" (p. 11). As previously stated, the racial group included in this study is African American. The term *Black* may also be used when referring to African Americans.

Early thoughts on leisure derived from the idea that leisure was "a sphere in which choice, creatively, and freedom could be given almost unlimited expression" (Tomlinson, 1989, p. 101). It was once thought that leisure was the basis of culture; today much of the research is focused on its relation to everyday life (Smith & Godbey, 1991). This paper broadly conceptualizes leisure as the activities in which one participates in free time with a focus on tourism.

Traditionally leisure studies did not include tourism, but connections are increasing. In 1989, Jackson and Burton found that tourism ranked third in themes in recreation and leisure

research (Smith & Godbey, 1991). The World Tourism Organization defines tourism as “the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, or other purposes” (Holden, 2008, p. 3). The desire for individuals to choose to participate in activities in which they find pleasurable is one reason why tourism is connected to leisure studies (Smith & Godbey, 1991).

### *Researching Race, Leisure, and Tourism*

Changing demographics in the United States have led to increases in research in the areas of race, leisure, and tourism (Stodolska, 2014). The multicultural sector of the United States continues to grow; in fact, reports show that by 2050, 43% of the United States will consist of people of color (Contrino & McGuckin, 2009). The African American community is among the fastest growing racially-ethnic groups in America. Currently, there are roughly 42 million African American consumers in the United States (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012) and over the next 40 years this group is slated to grow to 61.4 million (Contrino & McGuckin, 2009).

African Americans have also grown in affluence (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). The number of African Americans joining the middle class has increased, but at the same time, over the last few decades the gap between income groups (upper and lower class) has widened (Stodolska, 2014). African American households have seen an increase in household income which has led to an increase in the spending of discretionary funds. Tourism is one area in which African Americans are choosing to spend their extra income (Alderman, 2013).

### **African American Travel and Leisure**

A review of the literature indicates that a substantial amount of work has been done on race and leisure, but very little exists about African American leisure (Stamps & Stamps, 1985) or African American attitudes and behaviors about tourism (Carter, 2008).

In the 70s, much of the research in leisure studies focused on activity participation of blacks and whites (Stodolska et al., 2014). Understandably the research focused on issues of inequality and policies especially as they related to the civil rights movement (Floyd, 2007). For example, Washburne (1978) surveyed California residents about their levels of participation in outdoor activity. He found that Blacks participated in localized and group events (e.g., basketball) at higher levels than white residents. Whites participated in travel and outdoor activities (e.g., camping) at higher rates than Blacks.

Floyd (2007) categorizes the 80s and 90s as the second wave of leisure research. During this time the dependent variables expanded to include activity preferences, the use of parks, and the meanings associated with activity participation and environments among Blacks (Stodolska et al., 2014). For example, West (1989) found that African Americans may choose activities based on perceived “Blackness” or “Whiteness” associated with an activity.

With regard to tourism even less research has been done to adequately construct a profile of the African American tourist. In Philipp’s (1994) study, 213 households completed a survey about their travel behaviors. The information yielded from the study indicated there are significant tourism preferences between blacks and whites. Blacks were more likely to agree to statements related to traveling in large groups, having every minute occupied, and eating in well known restaurants. Carter (2008) conducted a quantitative analysis of data collected from the 2001 National Household Travel Survey. The results revealed differences in the travel behaviors of blacks and whites. The main motivation for travel among both groups was to visit family and friends; over 60 percent of African Americans ranked this as their motivation compared to only 48.4 percent of whites. This study also reveals the propensity for African Americans to travel in groups. Finally, a recent report conducted by Nielsen (2013) substantiates two the trends that are

often prevalent in tourism research. Neilson suggests that African Americans tend to travel in groups and friends and family serve as the main resource for travel related information. Neilson states that Black travel and tourism is big business coming in as a \$40 billion industry.

### **Explanations of Racial Differences in Travel and Leisure**

Research has shown that there are differences in the travel and leisure patterns of African Americans, but what causes these differences? Of the existing literature, two major themes emerged that seek to explain African American travel behavior and leisure preferences: one of marginality and one of ethnicity (Carter, 2008).

#### *Marginalization*

The marginality theory links the leisure choices of African Americans to their socio-economic status. It suggests that Blacks do not participate in certain activities because of poverty (Washburne, 1978), thus they lack the financial resources needed to engage in tourism or certain leisure activities (Carter, 2008). Supporters of marginality argue that if economic constraints were removed minorities would choose to participate in activities identified with higher levels of participation by whites (West, 1989). Additionally, Washburne (1978) suggests that the lack of African American engagement in leisure activities is due to a lack of time because “Black families...have more than one working member per family or a second job” (p. 177). Additional studies (e.g. Floyd 1994; Philipp, 1994; Philipp, 1999) prove that leisure differences are more than likely based on more than social class alone.

Limitations for this theory involve the lack of consideration for “how historical racism and discrimination influence contemporary behaviors and preferences” (Floyd & Stodolska, 2014, p. 10). As indicated previously, the growth of African Americans has caused an increase in

gap within the race, thus the marginality theory is not a clear indicator of in group differences related to income.

### *Ethnicity*

In Washburne's 1978 study on the lack of African American participation in wildland recreation, he offers ethnicity as an alternative explanation. The ethnicity hypothesis suggests that "cultural norms, values systems, and socialization practices within racial-ethnic groups" (Floyd & Stodolska, 2014, p. 11) serve as explanations for differences in leisure participation. Washburne (1978) asserts that the use of ethnicity as an explanation "is an integral reflection of culture, characteristic preferences for leisure activities among Blacks may have been developed and maintained in the same fashion as those among Whites" (p. 177). As Philipp (1994) points out, "tourism preferences are likely learned behavior and may persist for decades, it becomes essential to understand how these preferences are created and maintained from one generation to another" (p.486). Despite providing an alternative means for analyzing African American leisure participation, early studies did not identify specific cultural characteristics that may be associated with leisure (Stodolska et al., 2014).

### *Emerging Theme: Prejudice-Discrimination*

History, an element of culture, is often viewed as a connection to the past that serves as a way to live life in the present. It helps to guide our actions in our daily lives. The creation of a larger worldview is shaped by the stories passed on from generation to generation. While history helps to construct one's individual identity, it serves as a tool used to explain present-day perceptions of members within the cultural group as a whole (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel (2009).

West (1989) is cited as conducting the first analysis of the effect discrimination has on leisure participation. With regard to tourism, research conducted by Philipp (1994) and Floyd (1998) suggest that past racial discrimination offers explanations as to whether one engages or avoids certain locations and leisure activities. Backing up this notion is Cavin & Scott (2010) who state that African Americans have made great strides in many areas once stricken with oppression but the effects of years of institutionalized injustice impacts their actions today (Cavin & Scott, 2010).

### *Racialized Space*

More recent work conducted by Carter (2008) adds to the idea of prejudice and discrimination as explanations about African American travel and leisure. He suggests that African Americans differ from their White counterparts because of their racialized view of space. Living and traveling in the “Jim Crow” era was difficult for most African Americans. Interviews conducted with African American travel agents linked race and leisure travel. Based on these narratives, Carter posits that African Americans are guarded in terms of their views of certain spaces, whereas their white counterparts view most space as unracialized. In a supposedly post racial society, it would seem that the topic of race is not needed; however the realization that factors such as (years of) stereotyping and discrimination affect leisure experiences, thereby influencing future leisure choices (Floyd, 2007).

The literature suggests that the travel and leisure behaviors as well as their interaction and interpretation of certain locations and activities must be based on one of the aforementioned explanations. It seems that each item is presented in an isolated manner offering little or no connection among them. Additional research is needed that gives voice to the experiences of African Americans. In an effort to gain a more comprehensive understanding of African

American travel and leisure behaviors and preferences, such research would explore the connections between the group's history of discrimination and as well as current engagement in travel and leisure.

### **A History of Discrimination**

The relationship between that of African Americans and travel has been strained to say the least. Critical eras in US History that have had implications on African American travel attitudes include slavery and the Jim Crow segregation era. For many African Americans, living during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, "travel" meant being bought and sold to plantation owners in different geographical locations. Acknowledging and understanding these experiences may help explain the minimal African American representation in various aspects of travel and leisure today (Alderman, 2013).

#### *Jim Crow Era*

The inception of "Jim Crow" has a few different scenarios, but the devastating discriminatory effects are the same. A white minstrel by the name of Thomas "Daddy" Rice decided to darken his face to resemble the shade of an African American male. Rice set out to provide entertainment to anyone who would watch. People came from various places north and south to see him perform overly stereotypical acts which included song, dance and other actions commonly associated with the acts of African Americans. Ultimately, the show reinforced the thoughts of white audience members, leaving them with distorted images of blacks (Litwack, 2010). Jim Crow soon became more than just a show; it had become a way of life in the south. Near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was the term used to define the laws and etiquette rules of this time period. During this time blacks were segregated from whites in public establishments, barred from voting and subjected to a great deal of abuse.

Finally on January 31, 1865, with the passing of the Thirteenth Amendment, slavery was abolished. Subsequently, the passing of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments bestowed blacks with the same basic rights as whites. Despite these rulings, states began to enact their own versions of the law; such actions would have powerful effects on the African American community for generations (Pilgrim, 2000).

### *Early African American Travel Experiences*

African Americans who worked their way into successful careers began to seek opportunities to travel and enjoy leisure activities. Those who set out to travel quickly realized the increased amount of planning and preparation it took to ensure their safety. During this time, Blacks relied on various forms of public transportation (Foster 1999). The services available for were unclean and the service was less than stellar. Segregation laws called for different seating arrangements for blacks and whites. Blacks were seated only if there were seats available after white passengers boarded the bus. While waiting to board or in between stops, unable to be served at lunch counters, many blacks found themselves outside while their white counterparts rested and dined at separate lunch counters. If restroom facilities were available, they were often dirty, small, and unkempt (Weingroff, 2013). Blacks were at risk for harassment, ridicule, and violence. Even the threat of arrest had to be considered (Litwack, 2010).

In fact, a monumental case involving the segregation transportation issues involved the arrest of a man named Homer Plessy. Mr. Plessy admitted (as was required by law) to a streetcar conductor that despite his light complexion, he was indeed African American. The conductor asked Mr. Plessy to move to the streetcar reserved for blacks, but he politely declined, thus prompting the call to local authorities. Plessy was still unwavering in his decision to remain in the white streetcar and was arrested for violating the Separate Car Act. Plessy argued that the

actions taken against him were violations of his 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> amendment rights. Judge John Howard Ferguson found Plessy guilty because states had the right to regulate this transportation system within the state. The case went to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1896, where it was decided that locations between whites and blacks were to remain separate but the public facilities must be equal (Cates, 2012).

Early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the automobile became a welcomed mode of transportation for African Americans. No longer restricted to the assigned routes set forth by public transportation, the automobile allowed African Americans to explore various route within their own timetable. Blacks quickly found that novice motorists could be at risk for the same types of discrimination as they'd once been subjected to on early forms of transportation. Drivers had to become astute in figuring out the racial climate in unfamiliar towns. Obtaining the necessary items, such as gas, food, and lodging proved to still be problematic. Accounts from Black travelers reveal that traveling in the morning or early hours was when they felt the most free. As the day progressed, Black motorist worried about where they would stay because many facilities declined services. Prepared travelers arranged to stay with friends while others found themselves spending the night in their cars (Foster, 1999).

### *Green Book*

Situations like the ones mentioned in the previous paragraph prompted one man to take action. An African American postal worker was so moved to help his peers; he began keeping a record of locations that accommodated African Americans. His collection was turned into Victor Green's Negro Motorist Green book, a guide book for African Americans to navigate welcoming venues during trips. Initially, the Green Book listed venues in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Eventually the book expanded to include listings all over the US as well as certain

international destinations (Mitchell & Collins, 2014). A children's book, *Ruth and the Green Book*, by Calvin Ramsey was also based on this important directory (Ramsey, 2010).

### *Importance of Travel Agents*

During the Jim Crow era, black businesses emerged to serve the developing needs of African American citizens. As the economic means of blacks to travel increased so did the need for agencies to service them (Butler, Carter, Brunn, 2002). The role of African American travel agents was very important because they could offer something others could not, the insurance of black friendly establishments. Due to the harsh racial treatment of blacks while traveling, it was very common for African Americans travel agents to create trips that allowed people to travel in groups, thus bus trips especially those organized for the church were extremely popular. For many, traveling in groups eased the fear of traveling during the Jim Crow era. Narratives from African American travel agents seemed to highlight trips included visits to large cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. There was no mention of trips to national parks, beaches, or other outdoor sites (Carter, 2008).

### **Aspects of African American Tourism Today**

#### *Culture*

In today's society, culture has come to mean a host of different things to different people. In the often cited definition offered by E.B. Tylor, culture includes anything from one's way of life, to their knowledge, customs, and habits (Tylor, 1871). Regardless of the plethora of ways culture is defined, common elements are present that help explain the concept of culture. Rather than focusing on a specific definition of culture, this research is shaped by the understanding that culture is an integrated system that is learned, shared, dynamic, and transmitted from generation to generations (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, 2009). These overarching characteristics of culture,

give pause to the fact that culture largely affects the way people “think, react, and sometimes feel” (Peoples, & Bailey, 2012, p. 22).

In a later edition of Green’s guide book, he wrote, “There will be a day sometime in the near future when this guide will not have to be published. That is when we as a race will have equal opportunities and privileges in the United States” (Green, 1949). While there may not be a need for the guide book, there is still a need to investigate differences in travel and leisure among cultural groups, like the differences within the African American subculture of travel and leisure today. Examining various cultural characteristics with in the inclusion of race is one way to begin tracking the trends of a given group of people (Contrino & McGuckin, 2009).

#### *Culture and its connection to African American Tourism*

For the most part, people are unaware of the influences on their behavior or perceptions. Because it is a natural function of who they are, they never stop to examine reasons behind their actions or thoughts. Listed as the most important characteristic of culture is the notion that culture is learned (Samovar et al., 2012). Everyone is born with basic needs; the ways we attend to those needs are learned behaviors. These patterns of behavior become internalized and a habitual part of our lives. Culture is shared. The transmittance of culture is done through many outlets (art, media, stories, proverbs, books, etc.). A critical note to the continued cultural assertions is that it must be passed on to other members within the culture, specifically from generation to generation (Samovar et al., 2012).

Although there is limited information on the African American tourist, certain features can be attributed to behaviors that were passed down through generations (Philipp, 1999). According to previous research, African Americans are more likely to list the visitation of friends or relatives as their motivation for travel. Group trips are also often associated with

African American travelers; the idea of safety in numbers is often cited as an explanation for this feature (Carter, 2008). Because African Americans tend to choose their tourism destinations based on financial resources this too could explain the propensity to travel in groups.

Destinations often offer group discounts on accommodations or to local sites (amusement parks, museums, etc) thus making it more cost effective to travel with more people. In addition to shopping, black travelers enjoy partaking in dancing, visiting cultural heritage sites, theme parks and gambling (Miller-Cribbs, 2015). The next section explores these behaviors in more detail.

### **Group Travel: Social Organizations**

The first empirical study conducted on African Americans was DuBois' (1989) book *The Philadelphia Negro*. His research identified four different class categories (lowest, poor, working class, and those at the top) and their preferences for leisure activities. Engagement in leisure ranged from gambling (lowest) to church and secret societies (poor and working class). Upper class enjoyed leisure time at home often hosting parties or receptions. Recognizing the importance of involvement in leisure, DuBois encouraged the upper class to use "voluntary associations and social clubs for the betterment of all classes of Black citizens" (Floyd & Mowatt, 2014, p. 64).

#### *Fraternities and Sororities*

Social organizations help to instill various aspects of culture. Social groups establish a certain way of communicating and offer networks through which aspects of culture are shared (Samovar, et. al, 2009). An example of the social clubs DuBois spoke of includes Black sororities and fraternities. For over 100 years, Black Greek-letter organizations have been an important part of the African American community. These groups brought together the knowledge and resources of men and women who made it their mission to enhance African

American communities across the United States (Parks, 2008). Membership in BGLOs has not only been related to a sense of linked fate with others and black self-reliance, but the membership serves to reinforce connections with people who share similar interests (Harris-Lacewell, 2010).

The first black Greek letter organization was Alpha Phi Alpha. It served as a progeny for two movements that went against Jim Crow: Niagara Movement and the Uplift Movement. Together with some of the brightest African Americans of the time, W.E.B DuBois and Booker T. Washington, seven forward thinking young men went on to create opportunities to improve the quality of life for students as well as for all African Americans (Parks, 2008). The founders of Alpha Phi Alpha set the precedent for others to follow. Between the years 1906-1963 eight additional Black Greek-letter organizations were founded whose members would work for equality and justice throughout the nation. Philanthropic outreach and social action remains a large priority for members of BGLO. Despite their founding dates, mission statements, varying colors, and calls, members seek opportunities to uplift the African American community (Parks, 2008).

Although no formal “travel” programs exist within the nine organizations represented in the National Pan-Hellenic Council, access and exposure have been important focal points. Recognition of the importance of travel can be seen in the early work of members of Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Sorority, Inc. In the mid-1930s, member Zatella Turner received a scholarship from AKA to study for one year at the University of London. She later went on to publish a book about her accounts abroad (Foster, 1999). In 1969, during the administration of Dr. Larzette Hale, the sorority established the Domestic Travel Tour which gave 30 high school students the opportunity participate in a “one week cultural excursion” ( Our History of

Sisterhood, 2014.). AKA is historically known as the first African American sorority in the United States, established in 1908. Like Alpha Phi Alpha, AKA brought together like-minded women interested in serving the Black community (Parker, 2008).

African American organizations like sororities and fraternities are huge opportunities for the tourism industry. To continue the work slated by the Grand Chapters, each organization holds annual or bi-annual meetings, conferences, and/or conventions. During these times members will gather at various locations across the globe to further the mission of their respective educational and philanthropic agendas. Many of these conferences take place in the summer and are usually used as an opportunity to vacation. Because many attendees bring their families to such events, the location reaps more revenue from these groups than any other group. In 1996, the NAACP and other national organizations launched a consumer campaign to identify the amount of annual spending Black groups spent on hotels. The voluntary responses from dozens of organizations showed that African Americans spend more than \$4 billion on travel (to include lodging) and of that nearly \$210 million was spent in cities where these organizations hosted national conventions. With the numbers increasing at such fast rates, tourism destinations cannot ignore the black consumer market (Hawley & Hitchcock, 1997).

### **Special Interest Groups**

During the Jim Crow era, African Americans had to overcome unfavorable treatment in nearly all segments of everyday life. For this reason African Americans created establishments that met their basic everyday needs including leisure organizations. Floyd and Mowatt (2014) describe the creation of black establishments as parallel institutions to describe strategies used to desegregate various industries. An example of such an institution is the National Bar Association. In professional industries, these groups provided opportunities for Africa Americans

to improve skills within their given trade; they served as a way to increase the positive image of African Americans. Additionally, African Americans created establishments that provided opportunities for Blacks to enjoy leisure without the subjection to discriminatory treatment. Special interest groups were created for sports like golf and tennis. Probably one of the most popular parallel institutions was that of the Negro baseball league (Floyd & Mowatt, 2014). Examples of such institutions can be found today. These groups were created in leisure spaces that are often not thought of for African Americans.

#### *National Association of Black Scuba Divers*

In 1991, two of the world's earliest African American certified scuba divers (Ric Powell and Dr. A Jose Jones) joined forces to create the National Association of Black Scuba Divers (NABS). The purpose of the organization was to foster a friendship among African American divers and to address concerns in the African American community. The organization strongly promotes scuba diving awareness by hosting and sponsoring events in African American communities. Such programs involve educational programming on safety and technical information, an annual Dive Summit, and overseas excursions. Members can be found in over fifty clubs around the world (Mjagkij, 2013).

#### *National Brotherhood of Skiers*

In 1972, two ski enthusiasts (Art Clay and Ben Finley) met through a mutual friend. During this time African Americans on ski slopes was almost nonexistent. Together the two men sought out to create a ski summit that would unite the thirteen existing black ski clubs. The event called "A Happening" later became known as the "Black Summit" gave participants the opportunity to identify and discuss issues that were unique to black skiers. Secondary purposes for the weekend included socializing and networking. Soon, the group formulated the idea for the

first national (predominantly) black ski club whose main focus would be to place a black skier on the U.S. Ski Team. Their goal was realized in 1984 when Bonnie St. John-Dean won two bronze and a combined silver medal at the '84 Paralympics in Innsbruck, Austria. Additionally, Jahi Rohrer and Andre and Suki Horton competed in the U.S. National Championships. Today the organization boasts 60 clubs with 3,000 members and is widely recognized within the ski industry as the largest ski organization in the United States (About, n.d.).

## **Events and Entertainment**

### *Black Bike Week*

Black Bike Week is recognized as one of the largest events bringing together bikers and biker fans in Myrtle Beach, SC during Memorial Day Weekend. The weekend event is among the top five largest motorcycle rallies in the United States (Lilliefors, 2006). Dating back to 1940, Myrtle Beach played host to the predominantly white motorcycle event called Harley Davidson Week. African American motorcyclists wanted a similar place to gather but during the segregated times their only place for beach leisure in this area was Atlantic Beach. A local motorcycle club, The Flaming Knight Riders, whose mission was to create social welfare for the community is given credit for creating a similar event bike rally now known as Black Bike Week. Today African Americans from all across the US flock to Myrtle Beach making this event larger than the initial Harley Week (King, 2012).

### *Essence Music Festival*

Carter (2008) found that African Americans ranks considerably high in seeking entertainment while traveling. This finding may be due to the long standing history African Americans have with celebrating holidays, special events, and other happenings that have value

for the community. Such celebrations date back to the period of slavery. The restrictive nature of slavery often prevented large scale gatherings like those in the north but unity and the celebration of culture were always at the forefront of these events (Smith, 2010).

The Essence Music Festival is a prime example of a popular festival located in an area whose dynamic culture brings together people, primarily African Americans from all walks of life. In the nineties, Essence Magazine wanted to sponsor an annual music festival. Knowing the strong musical ties to jazz, blues, rock and roll, and a host of other genres rooted in the African American cultures, the staff at Essence looked to New Orleans, Louisiana. The first festival was held in 1994. Each year from 1994-2005, during July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend, visitors flock to the Louisiana Superdome to enjoy contemporary black music and culture. The devastation of Hurricane Katrina caused the event to move to Houston, Texas, but returned to its home in 2007. In addition to enjoying outstanding musical performances, guests can also improve their business skills by participating in business related seminars designed to help African Americans (Essence Fest, n.d.).

### **Importance of Family and Friends**

Until recently, the examination of the importance of family and friends was largely ignored. For African American travelers, the importance of family and friends not only serves as an identifying travel trend but as a point of information gathering as well.

#### *Information Search*

The planning process of traveling can be daunting for some, but research indicates that travelers use a myriad of resources to make travel decisions. Murphy and Olaru (2009) found that the informational gathering stage in trip planning is related to the demographics of consumers (Moisescu 2013). Topping the list of resources used by African American travelers is

recommendations from trusted friends or family (Carter, 2008). The use of informal information distribution is just as important as formal distribution channels (Moisescu, 2013). Previous studies indicate that despite socio-economic status, African Americans remain acutely aware of the possibility of discrimination within society (Philipp, 1999; Coner-Edwards & Edwards, 1988), thus relying on the exchange of information among people in trusted networks serves as a “safe” way of sharing information (Carter, 2008).

### **Visiting Friends and Relatives**

The research related to motivation of travel indicates that visiting friends and relatives (VFR) is the leading reason for travel (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012). VFR as a motivation for travel is especially true for African Americans. They were far more likely than their white counterparts to travel for this purpose (Carter, 2008). A frequently stated reason for VFR travel in the African American community is to attend family reunions (Starks, 2015).

African American family reunions can be traced back to the emancipation of slaves. Naturally, there was a strong need for family members to reunite, thus the idea of the reunion was born. Newly freed slaves would use newspaper advertisements as a means of locating family members with whom they had been separated during slavery. Today African American family reunions may involve family members related by blood and fictive kin, individuals who are not related by blood or marriage but have a close relationship with the family and are treated like relatives. Reunions are generally filled with eating, activities, storytelling, and connecting with family lineage (Miller, 2004).

With large numbers of African Americans traveling for family reunions, the tourism industry would benefit from marketing such gatherings as opportunities for travel. Larger cities have begun to target African Americans as potential visitors. Demonstrating the locations

connection to African American history has proved to be an asset when choosing a reunion destination (Miller-Cribbs, 2004).

## **Conclusion**

Leisure has been woven into various parts of the daily lives of people across the globe. Tourism is now recognized as a substantial form of leisure by a large part of society, which means that participants vary in age, gender, race, among others. Understanding tourism consumers and the factors that influence travel decisions is an important aspect of ensuring the continued growth of the tourism industry. Kotler and Armstrong (2012) say that culture is a cause for understanding a person's behavior. Much of human behavior is a learned trait. The tourism patterns of African Americans may be explained by the embedded behaviors passed through generations or through the exposure from new experiences.

Considering contemporary issues and historical factors will be important in offering explanations for travel and leisure patterns. The inclusion of the historical background of African Americans serves as a means of presenting a well rounded perspective to African American travel behaviors and leisure preferences today. Anthropological reasoning behind studying a subject in a holistic manner suggests that it allows for a better understanding of all sources that influence a topic (Peoples & Bailey, 2011). This study will use a qualitative research method to illicit stories about the travel experiences of African Americans. Because their voice has been largely unheard within the academic literature and mainstream society, exploring the experiences of African American travelers will add an additional insight into understanding how issues of class, ethnicity (as demonstrated in previous literature) and prejudice and discrimination have shaped the travel experience for African Americans. Additionally this work serves as an opportunity to validate the experiences of African Americans.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

Much of the literature about African American leisure is centered on the level of participation in various leisure activities such as participation in wildland and visitation of parks. While the studies cover an array of leisure activities, often tourism is left out of the list of reviewed activities (Washburne, 1978; West, 1989; Floyd et al., 1995). A review of the literature also shows that methodological selection for these studies are overwhelming quantitative. Floyd, Bocarro, & Thompson (2008) suggest that the benefits of quantitative research involved “standardization of measures, identification of casual factors, and wider generalization of findings. After conducting a review of existing literature, Floyd et al., (2008) found that only 20% of leisure studies involving race and ethnicity included the use of qualitative method. Washburne (1978) suggested that there should be a shift in research methods especially as it relates to ethnicity. He argued that the use of qualitative approaches would be beneficial in understanding life circumstances of African Americans. To address the gap in qualitative research, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was employed for this study.

IPA was chosen because of the distinct emphasis it places on one’s ability to make sense of their life experiences. Considered to be more than just a set of services, the tourism industry has shifted their focus to creating an experience for their consumers. Such experiences are expected to be impactful and leave the traveler with long lasting memories. Without adequate information about various consumer segments, creating positive memorable experiences may be difficult for tourism providers. The experiences people have while traveling are significant and should be recognized and analyzed. This research will engage African American tourists in conversations about their past and present travel experiences. By providing African American travelers a safe place to reflect on their tourism experiences, both positive and negative,

significant understanding is gained about the development of their tourism attitudes and behaviors and how those attitudes affect their tourism behavior today. Moving forward, this chapter will provide an overview of qualitative research, theoretical underpinnings of IPA, and other details specific to this research study (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

The responses of research participants in studies using qualitative methods can aid in understanding certain inconsistent factors within quantitative research. This type of research uses narratives from the participant to explore various aspects of events or experiences (Stodolska et al., 2014). By nature, humans are story tellers (Bernard, 2011). Storytelling is of particular importance in the African American community. For years the use of stories has been a rather unique and important aspect of African/African American culture. It allows for the individualized expression of experience, the sharing of knowledge through lived experience, and the passing down of information throughout generations. It has been stated that the use of stories has been critical to the survival of African Americans (Banks-Wallace, 2002). In order to move the tourism research related to African Americans forward, it is imperative that their voices are heard; that reason a qualitative research methodology was selected for this study.

Many researchers find narratives to be of great importance because they allow individuals to share their experiences (Smith & Weed, 2007). LeCompte & Schensul (1999) states that the use of narrative research is helpful because the personal accounts shared by informants could yield solutions to the problems. Through conversations with African American travelers, the researcher hopes to gain insight into how certain travel trends were created and maintained which will offer a broader understanding of the travel behaviors of African Americans. This serves to answer the call for a “different approach” because previous studies have not truly given

a voice to African American travelers nor have they explored how the beliefs they hold were shaped and maintained.

### **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

Developed as a popular method in the field of psychology, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is quickly capturing the interest of practitioners in social sciences. Interpretative phenomenological analysis is a qualitative research method used to examine the lived experiences of people. The process of IPA focuses on a participants' reflection on his/her experiences and how the individual makes sense of the experience. As the name suggests the interpretative feature of IPA helps the participants understand his/her feelings about the situation. Because much of the existing literature focuses on quantitative aspects of African American travel, IPA was selected because it allows participants to share their experiences with the researcher. The nature of the study encourages reflection on the meaning the experiences. The examination of experiential meaning is a reciprocal process that takes place between the researcher and the participant. Known as a double hermeneutic, "the researcher tries to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 3). IPA was also chosen as an appropriate method for this research because of the attention committed to examining each participant's story. The method allows for careful individualized examination and comprehension of each case while also seeking similarities and differences between cases. Recognizing that this research would focus on African American participants who have taken at least one trip within the last year, IPA was selected because of the acceptance of small homogeneous samples. Smith et al., (2009) explain that the use of small homogeneous samples allows for reader of the study to identify claims specific to the group

being studied while at the same time making generalizable statements relative to information found in existing literature.

## **History of IPA**

The first appearance of IPA can be found in a psychology paper written by Jonathan Smith. He argued that the field of psychology needed a method that would be central to the field rather than barrowing from other disciplines. A qualitative approach would be used to show that psychology could be both experimental and experiential. Much of the early work using IPA was used in health psychology, but has also been used in clinical and counselling psychology as well as social and educational psychology. Three main areas encompass the general make up of IPA: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et.al, 2009).

## **Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is considered to be a philosophy that focuses on the study of experiences. Edmund Husserl is given credit for the creating the foundations of phenomenology. He argued that social sciences needed a way of “understanding of how human beings experience the world” (Bernard, 2011, p. 19). Husserl developed what he called the phenomenological method used to identify aspects that were central to the human experience (Smith et al., 2009). A fundamental concept associated with phenomenology is intentionality which deals what exists within consciousness and what exists beyond it (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Considered to be one of the most important aspects in phenomenology is the process of bracketing or putting aside personal bias as to not to comingle participants’ experiences with our own cultural understanding (Bernard, 2011).

Husserl’s work was extended by notable philosophers Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Satre (Smith et al., 2009). Heidegger agreed with Husserl’s thoughts on intentional directness but

rejected the mental aspects of phenomenology. Instead Heidegger posits that positive situations do not cause humans to “think”; it is only when things happen in an unordinary fashion that humans are forced to pause and process the situation Larkin et al., 2006). Merleau-Ponty suggests that humans see themselves differently from other things in the world. His notion is that humans view the world rather than being immersed in the world (Smith et al., 2009). Merleau-Ponty offers the idea that our personal experiences can be shared through appropriate forms of expression. Finally Sartre, brings forth the notion that humans are forever developing. His work focuses on how we “conceive of our experiences as contingent upon the presence-and-absence – of our relationships to other people (Smith et al., 2009, p. 20).

IPA is based on a Husserl’s phenomenological traditions. IPA attempts to provide a way for researchers to collect the details of a lived event as they were experienced by the individual (Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, it is important to delineate that IPA is interested in how participant assigns meaning to his or her experience (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Taking on a Heideggerian approach, the researcher interprets the experience of the participant. Part of this interpretation involves bearing in mind the thoughts and feelings of the individual’s experience (Smith et al., 2009).

### **Hermeneutics**

The second theory IPA pulls from is hermeneutics (Smith et al., 2009). Named for the Greek god, Hermes, Hermeneutics is the “continual interpretation and reinterpretation of texts” (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 255). The initial purpose of hermeneutics was to provide interpretations for biblical texts, but over time it developed as a means of interpreting historical documents and other forms of literature. Schleiermacher, Heidegger, and Gadamer were three well known hermeneutic theorists (Smith et., al, 2009).

Schleiermacher was among the first to suggest that hermeneutics could be used to interpret all forms of text (verbal, written, secular, etc). In determining the interpretations, Schleiermacher focused on the actual meaning of a given text and on the meaning offered by the speaker. As previously noted, Heidegger is focused on understanding apparent and hidden meanings. Gadamer mainly focused on historical and fictional works. Gadamer tends to follow Heidegger's explanation of hermeneutics, suggesting that preconceived notions may not be revealed until interpretation begins. He posits that the goal of interpretation is not to relive the experiences but to learn from them (Smith et al., 2009).

### **Idiography**

The final theoretical underpinning of IPA is idiography, which is concerned with the details of a particular case (Smith et al., 2009). This portion of IPA is related to the examination of each case within the research study. Using a sequential process, a detailed analysis should be conducted on each case. After each case has been analyzed independently, themes can be identified across cases (Smith, 2004).

### **IPA and Tourism**

As previously stated, much of the early research on leisure and race used quantitative approaches to determine categorical aspects of participation. Emerging ideas surrounding the underpinnings of race and leisure indicate that qualitative approaches can serve as an important aspect of understanding experiences of certain groups (Stodolska et al., 2014).

A review of the literature showed a limited number of tourism studies involving the use of IPA and even less that included race as a variable. The widely accepted work of Cohen (1979) was among the first to use the term phenomenology in tourism research. In *Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences*, he suggests a typology of tourist experience. The list includes 5 modes of

tourist experience: recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental, and existential. The modes range from travel to get away from one's daily life in search of entertainment to a search for meaning. While helpful in terms of classifying tourists, some suggest that he does not provide enough description of phenomenology nor does he provide theoretical justifications for using the term (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010).

Early works on African American leisure provide us with information on the types of leisure activities in which African Americans participate, but little exists about reasons for (or not) participating in leisure activities. There is also a void in research that shares the voice of the African American tourist. The use of interpretive research is ideal for gaining insight on the lived experiences of African Americans and in what ways those experiences shaped their attitudes and behaviors about travel (Stodolska et al., 2014).

### **Sample**

Sampling is the process involved in selecting participants for a research study. Sampling should be consistent with “qualitative paradigm in general and with IPA’s orientation in particular” (Smith et al., 2009). Thus, as is common in qualitative research, a purposive sampling strategy was used to obtain informants (Bernard, 2011; Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al., 2009). Factors such as the “degree of commitment to the case study level of analysis and reporting, the richness of the individual cases, and the constraints one is operating under” can have an impact on study size. (Smith & Osborn, 2003,p. 56). Smith et al. (2009) state that there is no right or wrong sample size, but studies employing IPA benefit from a small sample. Smith and Osborn (2003) note that five or six participants is the recommended sample size for student led projects. In Smith et al. (2009) later work, three students are suggested for undergraduate and Master’s level studies. A collective review of studies using IPA indicates that the mean number

of participants in studies using IPA was 15 (Reid, Flowers, Larkin, 2005). The researcher initially planned to interview 15 participants; however a total of twelve participants completed the study. A baby boomer was referred to the study and initially agreed to participate but was unable to be reached via email, thus an interview date was never solidified. Two additional millennial potential participants were asked. One agreed to participate after he healed from a surgical procedure, but due to circumstances out of his control, could not participate. The second millennial potential participant immediately agreed to participate but after three attempts to set an interview date, she was excluded from the list of participants. The decision to include only the twelve participants was also based on the saturation of material gathered. After analyzing the interview transcriptions, it was apparent that new information was no longer being gleaned that would add to the explanation of the phenomena, and it was thereby concluded that the point of saturation had been reached.

IPA warrants the need for a homogeneous sample. The extent of the homogeneity varies from study to study. Determinations for the level of homogeneity are left to the discretion of the researcher. As an exploratory research study designed to understand how African Americans develop attitudes about travel and how those attitudes and behaviors persist through generations, qualifying features for interview participation included the following: self-identify as African American or Black and have taken at least one trip for leisure purposes within the last year.

IPA accounts for the need to divide a sample. This division provides the researcher with the opportunity to examine the phenomenon from a different perspective (Smith et al., 2009). Participants in this study were recruited from one of three generational groups: baby boomers, Gen X, and millennials. The distinction of the cohorts will be used to determine if attitudes and behaviors have persisted throughout generations. It is typically thought that individuals born

during the same time period share certain life events that impact personal value systems. These value systems follow individuals throughout their lives and impact the way future experiences are understood (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010).

### **Sample Recruitment**

With regard to recruitment, Smith et al., (2009) states that participants are often chosen because of the insight they offer into a specific experience. Finding participants usually take place in one or more of the following ways: “referral, from various kinds of gatekeepers; opportunities, as a result of one’s own contacts; or snowballing, which amounts to referral by participants” (p. 48-49). In accordance with Smith et al., (2009), participants were selected because of their ability to provide the researcher with a perspective on the topic being studied; in this case, the attitudes and behaviors of African American travelers. The research is especially interested in their experiences, rather than attaching generalizations to an entire population.

The author first considered her own social networks, making a list of various organizations with whom she has social contacts. The names of individuals who would possibly share their experiences were placed on a chart. Because posts about travel are highly popular on social media, sites such as Facebook and Instagram were particularly helpful in confirming travel experience of potential participants as well as identifying unknown interview participants. Individuals from the Gen Y and Gen X generation groups were by far the easiest participants to identify and recruit. This is due in part to the author’s membership within the GenY (n=5) group and connection to members of the Gen X (n=4) population. Baby Boomers (n=3) proved to be a bit more challenging as immediate access to individuals in this age range was not as vast. A total of twelve participants were interviewed for this study. Eight participants emerged from what Smith et., al (2009) describes as opportunities, meaning they were recruited through the use of

the social contacts. A combination of email and in person conversations was used to recruit these participants. When participants responded affirming their willingness to participate, a date, time, and location for the interview was agreed upon by both the researcher and the participant. Four participants were unknown to the researcher; a variety of sources were used to identify these participants. The first participant expressed interest in the research topic at an academic conference. One millennial was recruited from a university website on study abroad participants; while another millennial was recruited after learning about the research topic and expressing her love for travel. After watching an online interview about black travel, the researcher contacted one of the panelists via email explaining the research topic and invited her to participate.

Ensuring participant comfort levels are met during all stages of the study, a collaborative approach was used to determine the date, time, and location of the interviews. In many cases, the participant asked the researcher to provide the dates and times that fit her schedule and we worked together to determine a location. Ten interviews were conducted face to face and two interviews were conducted via phone. Six of the ten face to face interviews took place in Greenville, NC on the campus of East Carolina University. One interview took place at the participant's office after work, one at a local library, and one at a local restaurant. The researcher traveled to Wilson, NC to conduct one interview because it was more convenient for the participant and would allow more time to conduct the interview.

### **Data Collection**

Despite the support for qualitative research in social sciences, the work related to African Americans and leisure shows an abundance of quantitative studies (e.g. Floyd, et. al., 1994; Philipp, 1995; Philipp, 1999). Of these studies, mail or telephone surveys, on site surveys, and secondary data were popular methods used to gather information on destination preference,

leisure preference and leisure participation (Henderson & Walker, 2014). Throughout the years, there have been calls for research to help explain differences, in which case qualitative approaches to this type of exploration are a natural fit.

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were deemed an appropriate method of data collection because of the ability to elicit “stories, thoughts, and feelings” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 56) about the attitudes, behaviors, and experiences of African American tourists. In 1928, Palmer described interviews as a conversation among human beings that serves as an important part of data on social research. Knowledge, understanding, and learning are major characteristics of qualitative interviews (Jennings, 2005). Maccoby and Maccoby (1954) stated that interviews serve as an attempt to gather information on the opinions or beliefs of another person or persons. As Chase (2007) posits, the life stories, shared by the narrator, provide insight into the life of the individual and the analysis of such experiences sheds light on the culture in which they represent.

### *Developing an Interview Schedule*

The purpose of semi-structured interviews, in IPA, is to allow an opportunity for the interviewee to share their stories. To obtain relevant information that may inform the particular phenomenon being studied, an interview schedule is typically used to help guide the conversation (Smith et al., 2009). Often seen as a benefit, semi-structured interviews can be somewhat flexible (Jennings, 2005), but the preparation of an interview schedule helps to ensure topics that should be covered are discussed.

Smith et al., (2009) suggest examining the research question(s) to create a list of interview questions that will assist in answering the research question(s). Next it is encouraged to think about the broad topics that will be covered in an interview, thereby creating the interview

schedule in a logical, sequential format. It is also suggested that the interview questions be discussed with someone else such as a supervisor or co-researcher. In this instance, the research questions were shared with the thesis committee. Based on the suggestions provided by committee members, edits were made to the wording of some questions and additional questions were added which served as potential prompts.

### **Conducting semi-structured interviews**

While there is no set time length for semi-structured interviews, they generally last about an hour (or more). For this reason, it is important to schedule interviews when the participant has an uninterrupted block of time and is preferably alone (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, Smith et al., (2009) suggest guiding the participant as to what to expect from the interview. This may include sharing the style of the interview and even sample questions as a part of the recruitment process. It is also recommended to revisit the purpose of the research at the beginning of the interview. Interviewers should also explain that they will have little to say during the interview as to allow for their stories to be heard.

Following these guidelines, each interview began with an introduction section. As the interviewer, I reviewed the purpose of the study and the anticipated flow of the interview. Before getting started, participants were asked if they had questions regarding any of the information provided. Included in the introduction section, was also questions used to break the ice and engage participants in conversations about travel. Participants shared places on their travel bucket lists, their definition of vacation, and described their last vacation. Understanding how the participants contextualize the idea of vacation directly affects how and why they travel, a critical part of the analysis portion of this study. Next participants were asked to describe travel during their childhood or while they were growing up. This set the tone for their first (if any)

experiences with the phenomena of travel. Next current travel behaviors were discussed. This is an important aspect of tourism research specific to minority groups like African Americans because a profile of the African American tourist is practically nonexistent. Finally, questions related to race and tourism was asked to gauge their perceptions about how they as African Americans experience travel and how they think it influences their travel.

### *Building Rapport*

A critical step during the interview phase is building rapport. This is simply about establishing trust; ensuring the participant is comfortable enough to share his or her life experiences (King & Horrocks, 2010). Smith et al., (2009) warn against jumping into the interview quickly, thus steps mentioned above regarding the sharing of information about the study and the interview format is important in ensuring co-understanding between the interviewer and the participant as well as easing the participant into the interview (King & Horrocks, 2010). In addition to following these steps, three ice breaker questions/statements were used to ease the participant into talking about travel.

- Do you have a travel bucket list? If so share with me the places on your list?
- Define the word vacation
- Tell me about your last vacation.

The first statement offers a nonthreatening way for participants to open up about their desire to continue their travel experiences. The next statement, although more in line with a question likely to be included in an unstructured interview, aids in understanding the participant's prior knowledge of a topic. It also allows the interviewer to structure the interview in a way that allows for general and specific exploration of topics (Smith et al., 2009). The last statement is a way for participants to share details about a recent travel experience. Smith et al., (2009) note

that opening the interview with an opportunity for participants to provide a descriptive statement helps ease them into talking. I found this to be especially true when individuals described their last vacation. They were eager to share the details about the location and things they did while on vacation.

### *Recording and Transcription*

Ten of the interviews were conducted face-to-face; two were conducted via phone. The decision to interview via phone was based on geographic location. One participant resides in Virginia, and the other in New York. Tape recording interviews is highly recommended for IPA interviews as to ensure the interview is fluid and all data is captured (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Participants had the option not to be recorded. Ten of the interviews were recorded using the QuickVoice app; two participants requested not to be recorded. One participant stated that she didn't like the way her voice sounded on audio recordings. The researcher assured her that the recordings were not for public consumption, but would be used during the transcription process; nevertheless she requested not to be recorded.

Tape recorded interviews were transcribed in their entirety. As indicated by Smith and Osborn (2003) the transcriptions include all words spoken including but not limited to interview questions, false starts, pauses, and laughter. In accordance with Smith et al., (2009), the interviews were transcribed verbatim to serve as a record of the information collected during the interview. This process took much longer than initially anticipated, however it was quite useful in familiarization of the data.

### **Analysis**

The analytic process of IPA is both rigorous and systematic. IPA focuses on the participant and the researcher's ability (respectively) to understand their experiences (Reid et al.,

2005). While there is no single method for analysis, there is a general process that should be applied. The first step involved in IPA analysis is immersing oneself in the data, which involves the reading and re-reading of interview transcripts. This process helps ensure the participant is the focus of the analytic process. As the researcher and author of this study, the familiarization process was acquired by both the transcription of the interviews and the reading of the final product. Smith et al., (2009) states that it is quite normal to feel overwhelmed with thoughts and ideas while reading the transcripts. They suggest recording personal thoughts in a separate notebook, thus initial thoughts are recorded but are put to the side to focus solely on the data. The author concurs with the aforementioned statement; each reading seemed to bring out certain characteristics about the interviewee or about the phenomena itself. During the interviews, the researcher found it helpful to certain words or phrases mentioned by the participant. The same notebook was used to write down thoughts regarding ideas or questions gleaned from reading the transcriptions.

The next phase is categorized as the most involved step. During the initial noting phase, the researcher records anything that may be of interest. This starts the process of recognizing specific topics the participant talks about or the way he or she thinks about a topic (Smith et al., 2009). It was especially helpful for the researcher to print out a hard copy of the transcript; detailed notes were recorded on the hard copies. Prior to printing the hard copies, the pages were numbered and the margins were adjusted to allow room for writing notes. The left hand margin was used to record any notes about the statements provided during the interview.

Step three involves analyzing the exploratory notes to ascertain themes (Smith et al., 2009). In this phase the other margin is used to record the themes. Themes are generally written

as phrases that capture the essence of the participants' statements. The key is finding phrases that "allow for theoretical connections within and across cases" (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 68).

When looking for themes across cases, referring back to the original research question will help determine which themes should remain and which should be discarded (Smith et al., 2009). To remain focused on the initial research question, it was printed on a piece of paper and hung it in the work station to serve as a constant reminder of the information being sought about African American travel attitudes and behaviors. Smith et al., (2009) state that studies involving more than one case, should use the same steps to analyze subsequent cases. Each case should be treated individually. Smith and Osborn (2003) recognize that the researcher will be cognizant of the previous themes, but advise to stay open to finding new themes in each case. In larger samples, Smith et al., (2009) state that it is permissible to assess key themes that are prevalent for the entire group. The importance of measuring recurrence across cases is a suggested method for identifying themes; however the definition of recurrence is left to the researcher. Many of the reoccurring themes appeared in at least half of the interviews; however the researcher also relied on her own judgment when choosing to include items that were in slightly less than half of the interviews.

During the noting process it is suggested that the researcher list all the themes in the order in which they emerged in the interview. This step occurred naturally, as the notes were taken on the hard copy of the transcript, thus they were listed in order. After the themes were recorded in the right hand margin, they were typed (in order) in a word document. Next the themes should be reorganized as a means of grouping related themes. Another suggestion is to print the list of themes and cut each theme into separate pieces. Using a space that allows the pieces to be spread out (e.g. the floor or a large table), similar themes can be physically grouped together (Smith et

al., 2009). Initially the author tried grouping the themes together in a separate Word document but found it was not an effective way to group similar themes; instead index cards were used to record each theme. This was a much easier way to visualize the themes and group them together. Some themes were easily identified and could be grouped quickly, while others did not develop as easy or they simply stood alone. A major heading was given to the themes with the topics on the index cards serving as subthemes.

### **Presenting the Findings**

Once the themes have been identified, the final step is the write up of the findings. In IPA, writing up the findings is viewed as an extension of the analysis. It is the process of explaining the themes in narrative form (Smith & Osborn, 2003). It was at this point; the author put herself in the place of the reader and considered the fluidity of each section. Because of how the interview schedule (the order of the questions), it was as if each section had its own story to tell. The author felt it was important for the readers to connect with both the existing literature and the findings at the same time to demonstrate how they inform one another. Thus, the alternative write up strategy presented by Smith and Osborn (2003) which involves a discussion of the findings and the links to literature in a single section was used as opposed to a section for results and a separate section discussing the links to the literature.

The write up process was highly iterative. Rather than working with the entire interview transcript, the author focused solely on each section, yet was careful to continuously refer back to the main research question. Naturally this process led to the development of ideas that would serve as explanations for answering the question of how the participants' experiences affected their attitudes and behaviors about travel. Although writing these two sections caused for constant referral back to the entire document, it was not quite as continuous as it was when

writing the third section on race and tourism. This process serves as an example of the hermeneutic circle because of the constant movement from part to whole.

Perhaps one of the strengths of this study lies in the quotations extracted from the narratives. Their stories were used to explore African American experiences with travel, to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to travel while Black. Because of the limited amount of qualitative research studies on race and leisure, the use of quotes is an imperative piece in offering their voice to the research on Black travel. Quotations were used to demonstrate both how participants viewed themselves in the context of traveling as an African and to show linkages to existing literature (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006).

Pseudonyms were selected at random and used to identify which statements belonged to which participant. When presenting the quotes, phrases such as “um” or “ya know” were removed to enhance readability. With regard to format, quotations are often presented in a number of different ways (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006). Short quotes were generally included in the same paragraph quotation marks and italics. This was done to ensure the reader knew those words related to a statement made by a participant. Longer statements started on a new line and were indented for easy recognition. Both of these methods are considered to be common ways of separating the researcher’s voice from the participant’s voice (Corden & Sainbury, 2006). The findings and the existent literature can be found in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the results from participant interviews on their experiences with leisure travel. It provides details about how they make sense of their travel experiences as African Americans. The interviews consisted of three broad topics: experiences with travel during childhood (young adult experiences were included as well), current travel experiences, and race and tourism. Within each of the sections various themes emerged. The basis for the themes is supported by direct quotes from participants.

### **Participant Profiles**

Basic demographic was collected from all twelve participants. The participants of this study reside in North Carolina and Virginia and self-identify as African American or of African ancestry which includes black or multiracial. Each participant took at least one leisure trip in the last year. Pseudonyms were created for each participant and profiles have been included in an effort to create an image of the participants who so willingly shared their experiences with leisure travel during various stages of their lives. The profiles of the participants were compiled from the information collected on the participant data sheet as well as from information shared during the interview sessions. The following table is a summary of the participants.

**Table 1: Participant Profiles**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Generation</b>	<b>Birth Year</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Location of Last Vacation</b>
Darlene	Baby Boomer 1	1952	F	Williamsburg, VA Virginia Beach
Nathan	Baby Boomer 2	1958	M	Philadelphia, PA
Carrie	Baby Boomer 3	1962	F	Miami, Florida
Christina	GenX1	1979	F	Raleigh, NC
Carina	GenX2	1973	F	Bahamas
Tonya	GenX3	1979	F	Puerto Rico
Elsie	GenX4	1967	F	Arizona
Shannon	GenY1	1991	F	Orlando, FL
Erica	GenY2	1989	F	Atlanta, GA
Laura	GenY3	1991	F	South Africa
Evelyn	GenY4	1984	F	Honduras
Grayson	GenY5	1984	M	Myrtle Beach, SC

### **Baby Boomers**

Darlene

A self proclaimed introvert, Darlene is a newly married African American female.

Growing up in Greenville, NC she had limited experience with travel with the exception of the occasion trip with her grandmother to visit family. Prior to her recent union, Darlene said that she always enjoyed the idea of travel but never made it a priority, but when her church began to

organize trips for the senior members of the congregation, she felt that was great time to see the world.

Nathan

Nathan was reared in a small town in South Carolina. He grew up in close proximity to family and leisure time was typically spent in church or playing outside with cousins and other neighborhood children. Travel was inclusive of short trips within a 10 mile radius of his home. On a rare occasion, “going to see the family up north” was a treat for him and his sister.

Carrie

A Greenville native, Carrie grew up enjoying annual family trips to the beach with her dad and sisters. She says her dad believed in family being together, so in addition to annual beach trips, Carrie’s aunt and uncle would also plan a family trip to a new location each year. The trips were centered on visiting other family members as well as exposing her to different cultures. Carrie continued this tradition with her own children to ensure they too learned about different cultures.

**Gen X**

Christina

Christina is a single mom of a 6 year old girl. Christina was full of life and was excited to share her love for travel. She describes herself as a lover of food and new experiences. As a child she had limited experiences with leisure travel. She says college was “where the fun began”. As a “lover of food” she enjoyed trying new dishes like tuna melts on a trip to Baltimore with a college friend or lobster soup while on a college sponsored trip. A savvy traveler, Christina often looks for deals or uses coupons to help make her trips more affordable. Her biggest motivation for travel is exposing her daughter to the world.

Carina

Bursting with personality, Carina eagerly shared stories of her family's travels which ranged from quick getaways to extended trips to visit family in other states. She says her family didn't have a lot of money but due to the creativity of her mother, they always enjoyed each location they visited. Cruising is her favorite form of travel now.

Tonya

Tonya grew up in a rural town in Virginia where, as of 2010, the population was only 483. When asked about travel during her childhood, without hesitation, she stated that her family had no money and did not travel. Her exposure to travel began in high school, first hearing about trips that other students were taking during summer breaks and then experiencing travel herself via her school's senior trip to Florida. She says that in college her love for travel really blossomed. Today she and her husband commit themselves to taking at least two trips each year.

Elsie

For the first part of her life, Elsie grew up in New York but her family moved to North Carolina. Every summer Elsie traveled to back to New York to visit her family and attend summer camp. While at camp, she participated in archery, horseback riding, and swimming. She says her experiences traveling were unlike most of her peers. Like many of the other participants, she felt that money was the biggest reason her family did not travel. From her point of view money was the biggest barrier to travel for people growing up in the seventies regardless of race. Today, Elsie sees vacation as a time to simply relax. She enjoys taking trips that allow her to unplug and interact with nature.

## **GenY**

### Shannon

Shannon is a recent college graduate who grew up taking annual beach trips with her immediate and extended family. The idea of travel was not foreign in this household as mother and daughter would often dream of places. Time and money often prohibited these dreams from becoming a reality but fortunately, the mother daughter duo have been able to slowly check off some of the locations on their travel bucket list. Shannon described their recent trip to Cancun as the best trip she ever had.

### Erica

A somewhat reserved young woman, Erica lights up when discussing her adventures. She comes from a “traveling family” and recalled taking many road trips with family to visit different locations from Maine to North Carolina. The travel bug stayed with her. Because she loves to drive, quick weekend getaways are perfect for her but she enjoys longer destination oriented trips as well.

### Laura

Laura is a cheerful undergraduate who loves sharing her travel experiences with others. Reared by her grandparents, she recalled annual domestic trips to various parts of the United States. Having inherited her family’s love for history, she enjoyed taking trips to visit sites like Jamestown in Virginia or the Alamo in Texas. Her experience traveling to Australia with the People to People Student Ambassador Program cemented her love for travel. She is now looking for opportunities to combine travel with school and work (when the time comes).

Evelyn

Evelyn embodies many of the characteristics (entrepreneurial, motivated, spontaneous, etc) that define her generation. After completing coursework abroad, she knew there was no way she could return to home in New Jersey and take on the typical 9-5 life that society expected of her. She knew there would always be something missing. Using social media as a platform to reach other minority travel enthusiasts, she has now created a massive following of like minded individuals, eager to see the world. The CEO is carving out a space in the travel industry designed to highlight the underrepresented travel experiences of urban travelers between the ages of 21-45.

Grayson

Reared in a small North Carolina town near Interstate 95, Grayson says vacation just was not a priority in his household. Growing up in a single parent home with two siblings, he attributes their lack of travel to limited finances. Because of the short distance to Virginia Beach, on rare occasions, the family would take a day trip to enjoy the sun and sand. He attributes his marriage and the birth of his daughter to his increasing interest in leisure travel. Spending time and making memories with his family are deeply important to Grayson. He now sees vacation as the perfect time to unplug and enjoy each other.

### **Overview of findings**

A total of twelve African American men (n=2) and women (n=10) were interviewed about their lived experiences with travel. The interview spanned various phases of their lives beginning with experiences with travel during their childhood progressing to their current travel experiences. Eight out of the twelve participants indicated that travel was not a priority in their family. For these individuals travel mainly encompassed the occasional trip to spend time with

family members who resided in other states. Most did not consider these trips as “vacations”; it was merely a time to see the family. Four participants considered travel or vacationing to be a priority in their family as was evident in combinations of trips to see family, trips to visit sites or landmarks, and short road trips. In each the cases where participants stated that travel was not a priority in their family, they were able to pinpoint a life experience that shaped their current view of travel.

### **Conceptualization of Leisure Travel: Vacations**

Each participant was asked to define the term vacation. In addition to building rapport, this question also served as a means of analyzing how African Americans conceptualize leisure travel. Understanding how one conceptualizes vacation provides insight into the influences attitudes and behaviors with regard to vacation destination selection and leisure activity participation.

From participants’ points of view, vacations do not have to be defined by a given period of time. Vacations can be a two day getaway or two weeks. Instead, more emphasis was placed on one’s ability to escape the norm, a time when one is free from the demands of daily life and has a chance to relax. This was especially true for women who balance the demands of work and family life. Examples of how participants’ define vacation are included below.

...to me a vacation doesn’t necessarily have to be a week or two weeks. A vacation to me is getting away from the norm...I’m not around my surroundings, I’m not at home, I’m not at work, I’m not around people that I know. (Darlene)

Vacation for me is like doing lots of nothing as far as my day to day life things as far as dealing with the baby, dealing with the husband, routine, I don’t want to do any of that on vacation. I don’t want anyone to ask me to cook, clean, nothing... (Tonya)

The ability to disconnect was also an important aspect of vacations. The freedom to “unplug” and not have to check emails or answer calls, particularly as they related to

work or school responsibilities enhanced one's enjoyment on vacation. As defined by Elsie, a vacation is "strictly relaxation...no phones, no electronics, just vacation".

Research on how minority groups define and conceptualize leisure is scarce. The work on African American leisure is typically centered around participation not on how they conceptualize it. The participants in this study conceptualized leisure as it relates to travel as a time for relaxation and free from the obligations of their daily lives. While not specific to tourism, similar definitions can be found in studies on Latino and Asian cultures (Stodolska et al., 2014). A 2010 cross national study was conducted by Acevedo which showed that Mexicans (living in Mexico and in the Midwestern part of the United States) used the term *tiempo libre* to describe leisure. Translated as *free time* study participants indicated that leisure was a time that was void of obligations. To these participants, leisure was related to self selected activities that led to positive outcomes. In 2000, Juniu found that middle class Latinos viewed leisure as a time for rest and relaxation. Leisure was a time for rejuvenation and to participate in activities of their choice (Stodolska & Shinew, 2014). Similar findings were found in studies on leisure among Asian Americans. A review of the symbols used for the Chinese word for leisure revealed meanings related to relaxation after work or unoccupied time. A 2001 study conducted by Ho and Card showed that Chinese female immigrants now residing in the United States named relaxation was how one should experience leisure (Walker & Deng, 2014). Similarly Li and Stodolska (2006) found that Chinese graduate students matriculating in the United States conceptualized leisure as relaxation.

Tenants of relaxation, no obligations, and unplugging align with the participants' description of their last vacation. Having never been to Virginia Beach, Darlene and her

husband set out to explore the area. Their first stop was in Williamsburg, Virginia. She says although they visited popular sites in Williamsburg, most of this portion of the trip was spent shopping and simply driving around the town. In Virginia Beach she enjoyed “looking at the people having a good time, taking pictures, and stopping by different vendors, street singer, and dancers.”

Carina’s favorite mode of travel is via cruise, so it was no surprise that her last vacation was a cruise to the Bahamas. Being responsible for a caseload of 30 people causes her to be “on” seemingly day in and day out. Carina described a vacation as a time when one can “relax physically and mentally” and there are “no demands made of you”. On her cruise to the Bahamas she enjoyed “the casino, the comedy show, and karaoke”.

### **Importance of Travel**

At the conclusion of the interview, participants were given the chance to add any additional comments, most chose not to offer supplementary information, stating that they felt the interview covered a lot of information and simply thanked me for the chance to participate. However Christina, the first interview participant, suggested that I also include the question “why is travel important?” Intrigued by potential answers, it became a permanent part of each subsequent interview. Participants often echoed previously stated comments about slowing down and relaxing but 2 additional ideas emerged from this question.

#### *An Opportunity to Refresh Oneself*

Starks (2015) believes that leisure time is an important factor in mental and physical health. Without proper amounts of time dedicated to leisure, certain stressors could lead to health issues. For people like Carina, travel is just what the doctor ordered. When asked why travel was important she simply stated relaxation. She goes on to elaborate that travel could help lessen

heart attacks and headaches. She feels that vacation also have an impact on work relationships. She says “it’s a stress reliever, you need that getaway mentally” because sometimes work demands can be quite draining. Nathan says travel is important to “clear out the cobwebs”.

### *Inclusion*

Nathan and Christina spoke about the importance of travel with regard to being learned, educated, and knowledgeable. Although only two participants alluded to the need to be included in diverse conversations, it was included as a major finding because it also relates an important characteristic for some minorities; the need to fit in. Specifically, one participant states the following about ideas of inclusion.

I like to discover the historical factors that are available to me in those areas, so that we can join the conversation when others start talking about “oh yea I went to Philadelphia and I did this at the market downtown or I did this in Washington DC at the Smithsonian”...you want to be able to join in those conversations...I know I do. It let’s people know you’re learned, educated, and you know what they are talking about. (Nathan)

For Christina, her deep rooted motivation for traveling was to expose her daughter to as much of the world as she can. As she explains below, she feels the importance of travel relates to her daughter’s ability to relate to a multitude of topics.

You can go anywhere in a book and I encourage you to read, I really do but to actually be able to say what I read, I was there, that’s more powerful than anything in the world. Like to be able to say, oh I know what you’re talking about; I know what you’re talking about! Like you compare our Caucasian students to our African American students and you can tell somebody has taken them somewhere. I don’t want her (speaking about her daughter) to be stuck. When the teacher starts talking about the train I want you to remember oh yea I remember that. I know what it felt like, smelt like, not sitting there...because you can’t relate. (Christina)

## **Inquiry 1: Childhood Experiences with Travel**

### **The Mindset of Travel**

Across the interviews the majority of participants had some level of engagement with travel, whether it be going to visit family in other states or simply taking a day trip to the neighboring town. The “idea of travel” was something that seemed to differ among generational groups. Baby Boomer and GenX participants often made mention of the mindset of families during their childhood. Take for instance Nathan’s view of “the times”. From his perspective, important aspects of daily life included work, church and family.

Elsie shared that growing up in the seventies, “African Americans just didn’t think vacation. You’re thinking survival. You know just paying the bills. You know making sure your child had the essentials”. This sentiment was echoed by Nathan says that thinking about the income of his parents, he doesn’t know how they did it. He seems as he talked about the two bedroom home he grew up in which his parents later renovated. He continued by talking about his parents ability to purchase his sister her first car and their ability to send them to college. He ends by saying “if there were financial issues, I never knew it, never saw it. Reverting back to the topic of vacation, he makes that connection that perhaps that’s why they didn’t travel. He says, “while we had all the necessities that we needed at home and could get to these places within a 10 to 100 mile radius, that’s all we did.” He says that during this time, there was this “embedded behavior where a trip to the next county seat [was a vacation].” Elsie also talked about traveling to the next town to go to the mall was a big deal in her family.

Additionally, during the time Baby Boomer and GenX participants grew up, many spent their leisure time in church. Stodolska, Shinew, and Floyd (2014) confirm this finding in their review of the Black church stating that African American churches have been a source of leisure in this community for years. They state that the Black church served as a place for worship as well as “refreshment from the toil of work” (p. 136). Nathan chuckled as he shared a story about

his parents only taking vacation time during the summer to attend their church's revival. He stated that even well into their retirement; the church was the central focus of their leisure.

Two millennials (Erica and Laura), one Baby Boomer (Carrie) and one GenX (Carina) represent a different belief of leisure travel. Erica describes her family as a "traveling family". She credits for her family's love for travel to her grandfather. She said he was very adventurous and even after his death the family continued to travel. Carina says both of her parents believed in vacation, "even if it was literally Thursday, Friday, and Saturday come back for church on Sunday," they always went somewhere.

### **Why They Traveled**

People have a variety of reasons that motivate them to travel. Understanding these motivations provide insight into how travelers select their destinations and activities. Participants in this study were asked to describe their childhood experiences with travel. Based on their descriptions, two distinct travel themes emerged: Family Ties and Education Exploration.

#### *Family Ties*

Consistent with the literature on the primary purposes of travel, visiting family and friends was the most popular motivation for travel among interview participants. Within the context of travel for the purposes of visiting family there were two subgroups: social visitation and destination exploration. This finding is significant because it was a determining factor in how individuals viewed the priority level of travel during their childhood. Individuals whose families traveled solely to see family and did not participate in destination exploration did not see travel as a priority in their family; their trip was mainly "too visit family", whereas those who visited family and incorporated sightseeing into their trip agreed that travel was a priority. The table below illustrates these differences.

**Table 2 Non Priority vs. Priority Travelers**

Non Priority Travelers	Priority Travelers
<p>I traveled more than my mom but my travel I did with my grandmother. We went to Chicago and we went to Cleveland by train. That was fun! I was probably about 5 years old. She (Darlene’s grandmother) had a son in Chicago and she had a son in Cleveland so we went to visit them.</p> <p>My next trip that I recall of any length of time was when I went to Philadelphia with my aunt. I was probably about 16 years old and we went to Philadelphia and Norfolk and were gone for about a month. She was a senior at the time and she just didn’t want to travel alone so I went with her. (Darlene)</p>	<p>Every summer my family, my aunt, uncle, and my twin and I we took a family vacation. Every summer, whether it was New York, Washington, DC, Connecticut, Jersey, south Carolina, somewhere, we went somewhere and we always went to the beach.</p> <p>...my dad always believed in family being together so if we had to pack up in the car, him and his girls, we had to go visit relatives out of town or whatever he always made sure that we traveled and we knew different things. [He] kept it cultural; we learned about other cultures other than what we were surrounded by.</p>
<p>...the only time we did get to travel was when there was a funeral...or family reunions. Oh my goodness we had to go to family reunions every year. We go to the family, we eat the fish, we go to the spot, sit there, pray, dance, celebrate, and eat and leave. That was it. (Charlene)</p>	<p>My family is spread out in different [states]... Virginia, Connecticut, Mississippi, New Orleans. [These were] trips to see family. We would ride on tractors... we’d come back dirty from digging in the dirt, messing with cows, and playing with the horses.</p> <p>My mom was really creative because we didn’t have a lot of money. My mom was really good at finding really interesting things to do that didn’t cost a lot of money. We may not be able to afford to go [for example] to the amusement parks so instead of everybody going my brother and my dad would go...and my mom and I might take nature walks and go like find rocks and leaves and stuff and I would come back and be like this is so cool and we’d check out books from the library to try to figure out what the rocks were...that’s really interesting to me. (Carina)</p>
<p>I can’t say that it was a priority. I grew up with my mother, step-father, and brother. My step-father was of Jamaican descent; they lived in Montego Bay. From that point, it became a priority to get out there at least once a year but outside of Jamaica, not really; travel wasn’t really a priority. One my biological father’s side of the family, they originated down south but migrated north, so trips with that side of the family involved all of us loading into cars and caravanning from Long Island, NY to Camden, NC. Travel in my family was always centered on something; an event so for example the road trips I mentioned were centered on family reunions. The trips to Jamaica were also about seeing family, but I feel like it was more of a vacation for my step-father and mother. We used to go down during Sumfest. I eventually realized they were having fun and we were in the house with my grandparents. (Evelyn)</p>	<p>We would take trips around the country mainly, because I was raised by my grandparents so it was easier for them to go around the country rather out of the country and we went form like Texas to New Orleans; I guess the south east region, DC, New York, so traveling was something we did at least close to once a year. [The motivation for travel] was more sites based. It was mainly sightseeing. New York was to see family though. A lot of it was history based. We stopped in Virginia where the settlers came and everything. [We visited] the Alamo in San Antonio. (Laura)</p>

## **Barriers to Travel**

Just as there are many reasons why people travel, there are a number of reasons why people do not travel. When reflecting on travel growing up the age old argument of time and money was quite apparent in the narratives. The concept of tourism curiosity also evolved through stories shared about the lack of travel experience for the parents of participants.

### *Lack of Resources: Time and money*

Time and money are often cited as barriers to travel. As mentioned in the section titled “the mindset of travel”, many Baby Boomer and Gen X participants noted that the mindset of most families was survival and making ends meet. This also speaks to the economic hardships faced by many African American families. Financial strain was often stated as a barrier for travel during childhood. When asked if travel was a priority for her family, Tonya immediately exclaimed “Girl naw we aint have no money, we couldn’t afford it.” Christina says “our family wasn’t economically well off. Now we did have a nuclear family, which statistics would like to say that nuclear families were usually better off but we were dirt poor.” She continues by saying that the only time they traveled was to a funeral and they often had to borrow money or someone’s car to get there. She later included family reunions to their travel destinations, but those were held annually in close by towns. The monetary constraints on these families drastically limited their ability to travel. Even some participants like Carina noted that their family wasn’t economically well off, but her parents’ belief in the importance of travel allowed them to take short trips with unique experiences. Thinking about his travel experiences as a child, Grayson says his mom wanted to give him and his siblings those experiences but financial it just

wasn't feasible. He goes on to explain that she worked a lot and only took off when someone died because then she felt as if the family needed her. Although Shannon's family took annual trips to the beach, she too states that travel wasn't big in her family, not because her mom didn't want to but because they didn't have the money and her mom was always working.

### *Lack of Tourism Curiosity*

The popular idiom *you don't know what you don't know* is used as an explanation for not being aware of things or concepts especially due to lack of exposure. For many of the participants' parents this applies to their concept of travel. Having limited or no exposure to travel from their own upbringing, they didn't know to pass it along to their kids (the participants). Additionally, their lack of exposure, coupled with economic hardships often prevented them from seeking out even the simplest form of leisure let alone tourism.

The term intellectual curiosity is used to describe one's continuous need to learn more about a person or concept. Berg and Latin (2004) state the curiosity often leads to a desire to want to learn more about a topic because of "the mind strives to connect and relate concepts and bits of information" (p. 12). I purport that the same line of reason can be used in tourism. The limited or in some cases, nonexistent exposure to travel and tourism of the parents of the non-priority travel participants led to a lack of interest in seeking out tourism as an opportunity for leisure. For example, in addition to lack of financial resources, Tonya adds this statement as a possible explanation for her lack of travel growing up. *"I also think it's like if you don't know, if you don't do it...I don't think my mom and her siblings traveled at all as children, so they wouldn't know ..."*

A similar argument can be made for priority travelers. Those who did travel often visited the same locations or traveled for the same reason, to see family, thus they too suffered from a lack of tourism curiosity. When asked to consider why her family never considered using the same budget to travel to a different location, Shannon characterized her family as homebodies; they didn't want to explore anywhere else. For her family going to Myrtle Beach was familiar and safe, thus it became a reoccurring family trip.

## **Inquiry 2: Current Travel Experiences**

### **The Decision to Travel**

Factors such as familial perception of travel and actual travel experience greatly impacted how the African Americans in this study perceived the importance of travel which serves as a link in understanding their current travel attitudes and behaviors today. Before deciding where to travel, conceivably a more important matter is the actual decision to travel. Participants who did not consider travel a priority in their family growing up were asked when their love for travel began; expanded social networks and changing life stages caused a shift in non-priority travelers. Some were exposed in high school through extracurricular activities such as the school band; others gained more exposure in college at the encouragement of new friends or through social organizations.

Two participants commented:

I really didn't start traveling until I was in high school and then it picked up when I was in college and now it's like full-fledged I want to go everywhere. I think being exposed to people [in high school] who had traveled at young ages and then you know of course once I got to college there was a myriad of people who had traveled and saw places and I was like hey I think that's something I want to do.  
(Tonya)

It was my last year of college in 2006; I went to New Rochelle in New York. My best friend from high school was doing a coursework in Paris. She was living and working there. It was a winter break and she was like "yo come out to Paris".

I was like who has money for this?

She said just come out. You know you'll have a place to stay. We'll go grocery shopping and cook at home so it'll be cheaper. Just come.

So that January I went to Paris for 4 days. I absolutely fell in love with it. I fell in love with Western Europe. I fell in love with travel. I knew this had to be a part of my life. (Evelyn)

Travel requirements for employment and marriage were also important factors in increased travel. Nathan previously described his travel as anywhere in a 10 mile radius to see family members, the occasional trip up north to visit family, or a quick trip to visit his sister in college said that it wasn't until he got his first job that he really began to travel. He says "*...that's when I started hitting the skies!*" Grayson shared that his wife was fortunate to grow up traveling and experienced many places so vacationing and traveling wasn't a huge consideration for him until marriage. He says now travel is important to him because he wants to "*instill the same value about travel [in his daughter] that his mother has*". He sees travel as a way to create memories with his family.

Individuals who considered travel a priority growing up have continued to travel. Carrie says the following about the importance her father placed on travel.

"...my dad, he always believed in family being together so if we had to pack up in the car, him and his girls and we had to go visit relatives out of town... he always made sure that we traveled and we knew different things..."

Carrie continued this family tradition by taking her children on trips to visit family and "*other places where people were different so that they'd know that there were people who were different but the same.*"

### **Seizing the Opportunity for Travel**

Once the decision to travel has been made, the task of determining where and how to go often follows. Seizing the opportunity to travel was an important aspect of making the decision

to travel. During the earlier part of the interview with Shannon, she mentioned that she would be traveling to Italy this summer. During the section related to current travel, I asked her to share more about how this opportunity developed. The evolution of this choice was quite interesting. She explained that she was watching the show Intervention, which deals with drug addiction. On this particular episode a young man battling an addiction would write the word Italy on his bedroom wall. It was discovered that the meaning behind Italy was I'll Truly Always Love You. It was his way of communicating his love to his family. Shannon goes on to say that during this time, she was having a hard time in life. "I was getting ready for grad school...and I have these bills, I want to go to grad school, they've already hit me I need to do this, I need to do this so I decided to pack up my stuff and move in with my parents...I just couldn't focus...and then a lady was advertising [a trip to] Italy...and I got focused right then." She says she felt like that was "nothing but God" because she was in the midst of making so many decisions about "grad school, [being a] single parent, money, bills" that it was taking her to a dark place. When she heard about the trip to Italy she immediately thought of the meaning of Italy, I'll truly always love you, and made the decision to go. Again her interpretation of this was somewhat spiritual, saying "to me that was nothing but God just saying this is order". She felt like it was meant for her to go and is excited about the opportunity to travel there this summer.

Darlene's church has been extremely instrumental in her decision and ability to go to many popular US destinations. She shares her experiences below.

Lately pretty much the church planned my trips. It was on Bishops heart that the seniors of the church, she realized that a number of them had not traveled and she believe that everyone should have that opportunity to travel so most of my trips that we've taken it's been through the church. I've been to New York; we went to see a play, which was The Color Purple. We went to Disney World and stayed there for a week and while we were there went to see...(participant couldn't remember the name of the tourist attraction The Holy Land). We went to Las Vegas for a week. That was the most fun!

I asked Darlene to share her attitude towards travel prior to these trips, particular its importance. She explained that before she was living alone and simply didn't save money for travel. She says her focus was on working, taking care of bills and herself. In the following comments, she again refers back to the opportunity of travel.

It was never out of my mind that I wouldn't want to go to these places but I didn't focus on it because I had another focus at the time, so when these opportunities came up with the church I saved money to pay my part. This is one opportunity for me. I couldn't do it all on my own so this was an opportunity, so that's why I took those trips.

Perhaps no better example of the theme, seizing opportunities to travel, was exhibited by Gen Y participants Lauren and Evelyn. Evelyn describes her peer group as such.

Millennials are way more worldly and inclined to take risks. Many are creative and entrepreneurs. We're defining what our work and life experiences are going to be. [For our parents] it was about going to school, getting good grades, getting a job and staying on that job until retirement. IT was bout following the straight and narrow path. It's a different story now. We don't want that. We're about living a life we enjoy. We're not with this whole wait until we're retired to have a life generation.

When asked about her travel bucket list, Lauren shared her desire to go to Brazil and any location in Asia. When asked if she had a plan for making these travel goals attainable, she stated that she has a friend who is attending school in Japan so that is an opportunity to visit. She says that she thinks she could work or go to grad school in Brazil. She is also considering service work in Brazil as its location would yield opportunities to "*help in lower developing regions*". Her desire to find ways to incorporate work and studying into traveling are prime examples of seizing opportunities to travel especially for the millennial generation.

### **Current Travel Behaviors**

It has already been established that there is little information known about the African American traveler, thus making it difficult to create a profile of this growing segment. A 1994 study conducted by Philipp revealed that African Americans indicated that they like to travel as a part of a large group, prefer to stay busy while on vacation, and patronize well known establishments. In 2001, over 45,000 residents received the National Household Travel Survey. The information was used to compare long trip data between Whites and Blacks. Out of the 12,138 usable surveys only 455 surveys could be used to assess African American travel; a glaring indication that differences lie between the two. The analysis determined that the main reason participants traveled was to visit friends and family. African Americans represented 60 percent of this motivation compared to less than half as indicated by their white counterparts. The survey indicated that African Americans traveled more in groups and often resort to bus or other “non-air modes of transportation more often” (Carter, 2008).

The broad statement “describe your travel experiences now” was used to illicit responses that would help provide first hand data about African American travel behavior. Overall quick, impromptu getaways seemed to dominate the conversation. Travel by car was the most popular form of transportation. Travel surrounding popular events was also an emerging motivation for travel. Erica’s last trip was weekend getaway to Atlanta for the Battle of the Bands. The event is a popular annual celebration supporting and recognizing marching bands from Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Christina travels to Fayetteville, NC every August to attend the Umoja Festival, a cultural celebration focusing on community unity. Planning, mostly with respect to saving money or budgeting, was the biggest factor impacting one’s ability to travel. Carina suggests families gather at the beginning of the year to decide where to visit and make a

plan for saving. When asked to describe their current travel behaviors, three participants shared the following.

Sometimes I'm sitting on the couch thinking I'm going to Raleigh in the next hour; I will get up and just drive to Raleigh. I like following the football teams. A trip to Charlotte, I'll do that. Of course [I'll go] home to South Carolina. Most of the flying that I do now is associated with the fraternity. We have either a national meeting...and so those are all over the place; all over the country and I follow those and then I will usually add a day or two just to do personal fun things. I like to do New York. I pledged to myself about five years ago that I would do a play every summer in New York. (Nathan)

We're committed to two vacations a year. One we take with our son and one we take as a couple and any kind of little mini trips we can get in. We also have a good group of friends and we travel with them. (Tonya)

We decided...every year on our anniversary, we're going to take a trip somewhere that we've never been. Every year we're setting aside a set amount of dollars...to take that next trip, whether that's a cruise, that's going to get us to some of these places or a plane ride. (Grayson)

### **Inquiry 3: Race and Tourism**

Currently the existing literature on African Americans and leisure hold three main theories: marginality, ethnicity, and discrimination. The marginality theory holds that the long standing history of economic disparity has a strong impact on how African Americans experience leisure. The ethnicity theory suggests that certain leisure activities were not a part of the norms and values of African Americans (Shinew, Floyd & Parry, 2004). As time passed and changes related to economic barriers weren't as prevalent, the notion that minority groups should participate in leisure activities frequented by dominant groups. Despite these compelling theories, it was suggested that these theories could not fully explain minority leisure behavior. He suggested that further examination of discrimination be included in subsequent research. The perceived discrimination theory differs from marginality because of its focus on "contemporary

sources of discrimination affecting minority groups associated with interactions between ethnic groups or institutions” (Stodolska, et. al, 2014, p. 13).

The decision to include research participants from various generational groups stemmed from Philipp’s (1994) work on racial differences in tourism choices. Upon discovering that blacks and whites have different tourism preferences, he too suggests that decades of discrimination impact leisure decisions. He also purports that tourism preferences are learned behaviors and often exist for decades. In his research on generations, Markert (2004) recognizes the importance of birth periods because of the historical events that have taken place during specific time frames. He also states that “one’s birth group has been found to be more influential in shaping the group’s behavior...” (p. 15). Analyzing the lived experiences of African Americans as tourists within the context of race provided clear examples of the effects discrimination has on leisure attitudes and behaviors.

Shinew, Floyd, and Parry (2004) offer the explanation that perhaps one reason more research has not been done on race and leisure, specifically focused on African Americans is because of the emotion connection to discrimination. For many of the participants in this study, the aforementioned statement was especially true. For some describing past experiences of discrimination or retelling their parents’ experiences with discrimination was difficult. This was evident from the manner in which they attempted to retell certain experiences. They struggled to find the right words to use, often pausing, restarting sentences, and finally asking for assurance that the basis of their comments were understood.

The comments shared in this portion of the interview often represented interconnected ideas which serve as further data supporting all three existing theories, thus there are examples of lingering effects of discrimination, financial constraints, and feelings associated with certain

locations and in certain leisure activities. Lastly an examination of how travel is seen as an opportunity to break the stereotypes and create a new narrative for African Americans as it relates to leisure.

### **Destination Choice**

Understanding how African Americans choose their destinations or why they neglect certain destinations is a powerful feature of understanding the African American perception of the world. It is also evidence of the power race still has in our nation. Questions about destination choice and leisure activities were listed on the interview schedule under Inquiry 2 (Current Travel Experience); however some conversations tended to lend themselves to discussion at different times during the interviews. After analyzing the statements, it was that these results be included in the section dealing with race. The responses given by participants add explanatory evidence of the concept of perceived discrimination, the third theory suggested by Floyd (1998).

The discussion of treatment of African Americans, especially during the Jim Crown era was discussed at length in Chapter 2, however based on participants' responses, an overview of the Great Migration is important as it relates to the perceptions and experiences and how they relate this collective past to the experiences they had with travel. When Erica reflected on traveling to visit family, she said they frequently took trips to visit family in New York and New Jersey. She says *"lots of my family moved away; it was thought to be safer in the north for Blacks than the south."* Her personal quote references a time in the twentieth century when African Americans began making the decision to move from southern states into northern states. This movement was brought on by the unfair treatment of the race in the south and the hope for better opportunities in the north (Tolnay, 2003).

It is estimated that over 2.5 million blacks who were born in the south were living outside of the region by 1950 and over 4 million by 1989. Tolnay (2003), states that “in purely demographic terms, the Great Migration produced a dramatic geographic redistribution of the African American population” (p. 210). The vast movement of African Americans ended in the mid-1970s, in fact, a shift was now beginning to take place wherein were returning south. McHugh (1987) confirms an overall gain of 14,000 African Americans during the period ranging from 1970-1975. Improved conditions and the continued search for opportunity drew southern born blacks back to their “home”. Northern born blacks in search of a better life were also enticed to move to the south (Tolnay, 2003). Nathan says that growing up he knew he had family in the south and family in the north. He says *“I kind of sensed that there was this geographical presence between up north and down south but nobody was out there in the west; there were no black people out there. That’s the sense I had.”* During discussions of the destinations on participants’ travel bucket list, many indicated that they had not explored the western part of the United States, but it was now on their bucket list of places to visit. Additional states that were frequently mentioned as locations where they would not travel were Alabama and Mississippi. Texas and Arkansas were also mentioned. A reason for the lack of exploration in these locations is easily explained by the main motivation for travel being to visit family and friends, however Grayson’s comments that “I aint got no business in like Arkansas. I don’t have any business being there.” He admits that this viewpoint is stereotypical but continues by saying “...me being African American and understanding there’s a lot of white people in Texas; there’s a lot of white people in Arkansas; there’s a lot of white people in Mississippi... I just might not need to be around there”. This directly speaks the continued perception of anticipated racial tension in certain regions held by African Americans today.

I found this fact interesting because the first question in the race and tourism section was how does race impact your travel decisions? To which everyone answered (in some form) “it doesn’t”. However when asked how that correlated to their answers with regard to places they wouldn’t visit, they were often stumped, pausing to reflect on their previous statements. Grayson offered the best answer stating *“it does play into my mind but I guess...I would never think of going there to start with so it doesn’t really affect me.”* He goes on to give the example that if he were to win a trip to Mississippi, he wouldn’t be sure if he would go because he doesn’t think there’s anything for him to do in Mississippi. Nathan echoed the sentiments giving the example of somebody asking him to go to Iowa; he would have to do some research to find out what he might want to do.

Aside from not knowing what to do in certain states, the legacy of discrimination emerged. Participants often commented on their lack of interest in southern states because of what they were taught in school. Carrie mentioned that places like Utah and Iowa wouldn’t bother her because she’s unaware of those states having a history of negative treatment towards African Americans, however her awareness of the *“lynching of black people...and blatant mistreating because of the color of their skin”* in places in the south would limit her desire to travel to those states. When asked about locations she wouldn’t visit, Tonya started and stopped several sentences trying to explain why she would not visit states like Alabama and Mississippi. She recognized that the immense history related to slavery and Civil Rights might be of interest through visiting museums, but she says that because of the history there, she would probably not visit. She even joked that she used to say *“if you hear that I’ve gone to Mississippi or Alabama you may want to call somebody because I don’t think I went there voluntarily.”*

Safety was also a common theme marking a location as an undesirable vacation destination. Evelyn says she would not travel anywhere where there was civil unrest. Erica too states that the only reason she wouldn't go anywhere was because of political safety. Africa was mentioned as an example of a place participants wanted to visit but will not act on the desire due to media coverage of recent events.

The idea of safety can also be used to explain the repetitious travel described by the childhood travel experiences of Shannon or the current experiences of Nathan. Even Nathan's travel bucket list included places he'd already been: Washington, DC, New Orleans, New York, etc. Goeldner and Ritchie (2012) some people hold the desire to explore and the desire for safety. By venturing somewhere, the individual satisfies his/her need to explore but by returning to the same location, the need for safety due to the familiarity of the destination is met.

### *Leisure Preferences*

An increasing amount of research has been conducted on the leisure activities (excluding travel) of African Americans. The literature is full of studies related to the relationship between African Americans and outdoor spaces, specifically park use (Washburne, 1978; Hutchison, 1987; West, 1989). In each of these studies the ethnicity and/or marginality theories were supported. For participants in this study they again proclaimed that race was not a factor in their participation in leisure activities. As Christina says, "If I want to do it, I'm going to do it". Participants typically sited shopping, visiting family and friends and eating as top things they like to do while on vacation. Activities like safaris, scuba diving, and bungee jumping were specifically mentioned as undesired leisure activities, but their reasons were related to safety not race. Only Grayson mentioned a feeling of uneasiness when participating in certain leisure activities. He says, "...to be an African American that likes golf...you get that [look]like I'm

*sorry what are you doing. This isn't what you do, is it? So that feeling of not belonging in certain settings come into play when you do certain things...*"

### Racialized Space and Welcomeness

The statements presented in the section above provide critical empirical data on Carter's (2008) theory of racialized space and its influence on African American travel. During the time of Jim Crow, rules related to segregation deeply affected leisure of African Americans. He posits that "just as bodies are socially marked as being white or black...spaces are socially marked by those who inhabit them, by those who claim them as their own, thus there is an expectation that certain people belong in certain places and not in others (Carter, 2008). When considering this statement in the context of leisure travel, African Americans presented conflicting statements about their perception and visitation of certain locations. It is clear that while they recognize they are able to visit any place they wish, fear of the possibility of discrimination prohibits them from actually visiting certain locations.

In 1999, Philipp found that there were several differences in perceived welcomeness in leisure activities by whites and African Americans. The study found that a gap in the determination of middle class whites and blacks had similar understandings of where African Americans will be accepted while participating in leisure activities. The finding also relates to the racial labels assigned by African Americans to certain leisure activities (i.e. golf, skiing, diving).

While the majority of participants in this study could not think of a specific time when they experienced discrimination; however there was an overwhelming sense of trepidation, which participants often referred to as "a feeling" when visiting certain sites or participating in certain leisure activities. Three participants attempt to explain what is meant by the "feeling".

I feel like the more south you go, you are more likely to experience things. There's just a feeling you get, nothing specific, just a feeling. (Erica)

I felt tensed because a lot of times. I started taking her (referring to her daughter) to the beach and the museums on the beach... we were literally sometimes the only African Americans there. That's one thing I did notice. Like my tension... We're kind of by ourselves baby girl. What are they thinking of us right now? I am who I am. I know that exposure is the key to opening up a lot of things especially with education and learning new things and dropping prejudices and things of that nature... I don't want people to misjudge me and that's a lot of times how I feel, so I make sure that a lot of times when me and baby girl go out I make sure that my fro is out or I have my puffs and I make sure that she has hers so I'm just letting you know that I am what I am and we're gonna be here. (Christina)

I haven't myself run into any but I'm sure that depending on the place I've had...I take that back, I've had one incident where it was, sorry why are you here? (Grayson)

As a point of clarification as to whether someone actually said this to him or if it was just a feeling Grayson said the following:

...you know how the looks like what are you guys doing here?...we're young, we're African American and immediately someone would think that we're lost, it's like I'm sorry what are you doing... so that feeling of not belonging in certain settings comes into play when you do certain things or you're in certain places we tend to try to stray away from those types of environments where viewed uncomfortable or we're the only ones in the room...so we just kind of take it in stride.

While there are no signs designated segregated spaces, some African Americans have attached racial designations to certain locations and activities. For some it's just easier not to participate than to be subjected to uncomfortable feelings. Minorities often toggle with how their presence in certain locations or participation in certain activities will be taken by others. In their typology of discrimination, Blahna and Black (1993) list potential discrimination as one of the categories of discrimination. Philipp (2000) stated that a person does not have to actually experience discrimination to be affected by it. Blahna and Black (1993) explain potential

discrimination occurs when a person expresses a fear of discomfort because of the potential for prejudice or discrimination. This type belief can emerge from hearing stories of discrimination from other people or the media (Stodolska et. al, 2014).

### **Challenges: Real and Perceived**

*A lot of people think we're not open to go places, but I'd have to say there's a lot of...African Americans who are open to traveling...(Lauren)*

From television to social media, society has witnessed massive expansion in communication systems which have ultimately broadened people's interest in other places and cultures (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012), but what about the people who are doing the traveling? In a special issue devoted to African Americans and Tourism, Alderman (2013) addresses this very issue. He states that the tourism industry has “adopted a white male gaze that obscures the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities while also perpetuating racist stereotypes”. The statement offered by Lauren speaks to stereotype that African Americans do not travel. Until recently someone took note. Social media accounts dedicated to African American travel and other mainstream reports tell a different story about minority travel.

### *Creating Your Own Space*

Evelyn has a unique story in that she has created a platform that serves as a major step in the right direction for increasing African American visibility in tourism. After spending time in Paris at a film school, she knew she could not return to life as she knew it. Feeling like no one understood her desire to travel; she turned to social media to find other people who shared her wanderlust. Her hope to find a few people with whom she could connect resulted in a gathering of forty people eager to share their travel experiences with others. This session was the catalyst to her new life. As founder of this company, she creates “meet ups” for travel enthusiasts all over the world and arranged four group trips a year, which tend to sell out at record speeds. She says

*“I love putting black people in scenarios where they think we don’t go. I love being the catalyst for putting people in situations where we’re the only mass group of black people. I love breaking the stereotypes. Through social media pages on Instagram and Facebook and an upcoming web series, Evelyn wants the world to know “we are out here doing these things.” She feels strongly that African Americans have the responsibility to own their own narrative and showcase their own stories. She says “we’re showing these experiences and we’re showing it on a mass level”.*

### *Maintaining Cultural Identity*

Efforts such as Evelyn’s have even larger ramifications for the African American community. The promotion of African American travel has the ability to shift the social norms that exist not only within the culture but how others view approved behaviors and actions for African Americans. Christina shared that one of the biggest challenges facing African Americans is their own culture and the biases they have. She often refers to the value African Americans place on materialistic items (expensive hair, cars, houses, etc) instead of doing something that will expose them to new things. She says if you do certain things sometimes people think you’re not a “true African American”. She says even her family calls her “white lady” because of the way she chooses to spend her leisure time. Erica commented that she feels African Americans do not do certain activities or go certain places because of a fear of losing their cultural identity. Instead of shying away from places or participating in activities that are not assigned the black label, African Americans should education themselves on their culture. She says *“you can always maintain your personal identify and cultural identity. I’m always cognizant of the fact that I’m Black, but I don’t let it stop me”.*

When African Americans engage in activities that are outside of their assigned cultural norms, it empowers others to try new things thus opening them up to incredible opportunities that otherwise may not have existed.

### *Equality, Curiosity, and Racism*

Another issue plaguing African Americans is the internal negotiation is the assessment of equality, curiosity, and racism. As a professional working in law enforcement, Grayson says that other than safeguarding his family while on vacation, he wants to ensure his family is treated fairly. He smiles broadly as he compares the manner in which he looks at situations compared to his wife. He said, rather real or perceived, she likes to confront issues head on while he is more laid back. He gives the example of rooms not being ready or the wait time at a restaurant as things his wife eagerly speaks out about whereas he analyzes the situation before reacting. He says *“you can tell sometimes when it’s time to say something and then there are other times where it’s like if we weren’t black would we be saying anything...that’s so hard and especially in today’s society...when are you able to pull that card out your pocket and then when well someone look at you and say hey listen that’s been used, Jesus put it away, it’s not because of that (race), we’re busy. It’s just being able to be even keel about things...”*

While discussing challenges facing African American travelers, Evelyn says that people need to “be open to understanding the difference between curiosity and racism”.

*“you have to meet people where they are; from there you have to maneuver them to where you want them to be. We have to understand as a Black American all the images that are shelled out to us in our own country and to other countries are negative. Those images of us being violent, cursing, and not getting along; we have to remember those are the same images being shown across seas. If it’s all they know that’s what they expect. We should look at it as a teachable*

*moment. We can represent our people in a different light.*” While the study of privilege is beyond the scope of this research her final comment “they’re not meeting us there because they don’t have to” suggests that investigating how tourism can close these gaps of stereotypical images especially those created through media can be closed through tourism is a worth investigating.

## **Conclusion**

The experiences shared by the twelve participants in this study illuminated both embedded behaviors transcending generations and exposed ideas that have not been addressed in the literature on African Americans and tourism. The participants ranged in age and had varying social, academic, and economic backgrounds, all of which impacted their attitudes and behaviors on tourism as an African American.

Upon gathering data on the participants’ experience with travel during their childhood, it was apparent that travel was not to be a priority for the vast majority of participants. A lack of discretionary income was often stated as the barrier prohibiting their travel experiences. The few participants who did consider travel a priority in their family growing up often visited family or made trips to the same location each year. Despite their previous relationship with travel growing up, every participant considered travel a priority in their lives today.

When choosing where and how to travel, participants used a number of avenues to make their travel dreams happen. From study abroad programs to work conferences, participants used these opportunities for travel. Effective and timely planning was a major feature in determining travel destinations for these participants. Participants felt that having enough time to save for the trip, arrange work schedules, and research things to do ensured their ability to travel at least once a year.

The overarching topic of this study is race and tourism. This study addressed gaps presented in the literature by providing an overview of historical events specific to African Americans as a means of providing insight how societal issues may be guided their attitudes and behaviors about tourism. By examining the experiences of individuals from three different generational groups, the effects of historical events can be measured by how they view the world and themselves as a part of it. For example, many of the Baby Boomers lived through various parts of the Civil Rights Movements. They experienced things that members of Generation Y have not, thus their attitudes about certain places or their approach to travel often differed. Baby Boomers and some Generation X participants remained cautious about certain locations especially southern states like Mississippi and Alabama; whereas Generation Y participants were open to seeing all corners of the world.

One of the most difficult topics for participants was the personal negotiation process of determining whether a situation was an example of racism or whether it was an isolated issue. Specific the race and tourism, it seemed that some viewed travel as an option for pushing the dialogue about race further. There was the idea that traveling and meeting new people was a step in the right direction to creating teachable moments.

## **Chapter 5: Implications and Conclusion**

The purpose of this research study was to explore the travel experiences of African Americans and to determine in what ways these experiences shaped their attitudes and behaviors about travel. The previous chapter provided glimpses into the specific experiences of African American tourists. Participants shared travel stories from their childhood and young adult years and made connections as to how those experiences shaped their current attitudes and behaviors about travel and tourism. In making such connections, participants identified attitudes and behaviors that were passed down from generation to generation. These attitudes and behaviors often impacted where and how they traveled until exposure to new ideas or places led them to view travel as a vital part of their lives. In this final chapter, suggestions have been made regarding practical suggestions for educators, marketers, and tourism providers.

### **Race and Tourism**

Early works on leisure and race identified two majority hypothesis used to explain differences in participation. Marginality related to the economic status of individuals and ethnicity referred to the social norms of a culture (Washburne, 1978). Later research suggested that the inclusion of prejudice and discrimination be included in research studies to understand how historical and contemporary acts of discrimination affect leisure participation of minority groups (West, 1989; Philipp, 2000; Carter, 2008). While leisure travelers of all races may have similar travel behaviors, analyzing African American stories through the lens of prejudice and discrimination offers unique insight into how topics of racialized space are shared among families and how they affect their views of the world today.

The narratives of these African American tourists suggest that indeed race still matters. This study demonstrates how issues of marginality, ethnicity, and discrimination are often

interconnected and not isolated explanations as once indicated in the literature. African American families continue to lack financial fulfillment that allows them to partake in certain leisure activities but unlike previous generations, they have made travel a priority and are taking steps to ensure they take at least one vacation each year. Although certain levels of racial paranoia persist relative to certain locations, especially southern states, there is a push to encourage African Americans of all ages to travel.

### **Practical Implications**

The stories shared by African American tourists not only provided information about their experiences but shed light on implications that would benefit practitioners and educators. This section offers ideas for an integrated learning approach to teaching history, enhanced marketing strategies, and the incorporation of technology.

Table 2: Practical Implications

<b>Areas of Improvement</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Suggestions for Improvement</b>	<b>Relationship to Tourism</b>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• View of certain locations learned in school</li> <li>• Current curriculum on minority experiences is limited. Info that does exist is often conservative (Gay, 2000).</li> </ul>	Broaden the focus of discussions about minorities to include contributions made by ethnic groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiential Learning (field trips)</li> <li>• Technology Inclusion</li> <li>-Webquests</li> <li>-Virtual field trips</li> <li>• Pen Pals (compare living conditions past and present)</li> </ul>
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning</li> </ul>	Financial Planning to community organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include sections on planning for vacation</li> <li>• Promote vacation savings accounts</li> </ul>
Tourism Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Tourism Curiosity (Awareness)</li> <li>• Invisibility in marketing</li> </ul>	Partner with trusted organizations in AA community (churches or civic organizations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide group travel packages for organizations</li> <li>• Create a travel payment plan similar to process used w/a travel agent</li> </ul>

*Education*

The process of instruction is perhaps one of the most essential aspects of teaching and learning. Gay (2010) describes instruction as “the engagement, the interaction, the dialectic discourse of students and teachers in the processes of teaching and learning” (p. 175). Teachers need to know what prior knowledge students have on various topics and what new knowledge they gained; but it is also equally important to know how students came to know prior knowledge and the connections they make with new knowledge.(Gay, 2000).

Participants in this study made it clear that their upbringing and educational experiences shaped their ideas about themselves and where they belong in the world. To date the impact of these experiences still can be seen in how they view certain spaces and whether or not they belong in those spaces. Simply put, participants, particularly Baby Boomers and members of Generation X believed that areas of the south remain unsafe for Blacks, thus they did not want to spend their leisure time in this region. Only one participant acknowledged that through the visitation of museums and other historical landmarks, the southern area of the United States could serve as an opportunity, especially for her son, to learn about a time period that deeply affected African Americans, however she quickly followed this statement by saying that she was still would be very hesitant to visit. Statements like this speak directly to Molefi Asante's, scholar of Afrocentricism, sentiments that learning without a cultural foundation could lead to the dissolution of the African American's sense of place.

Ranging in frequency from 70%-95%, textbooks are the most frequently used resource for classroom instruction. An analysis of textbooks found that the African American experience was depicted with statements about slavery, Emancipation, and Reconstruction. There were no further critiques of the events, comparisons to current situations, or connections between other ethnic groups (Gay, 2000). Gary and Pritchard (2005) suggest that the exclusion of perspectives and experiences of diverse groups only tells a partial story. There is little empirical data that shows the effect biased textbooks have on minority students but Gay (2000) provides accounts of students being "insulted, embarrassed, ashamed, and angered when reading and hearing negative portrayals of their ethnic groups or not hearing anything at all" (p. 116). The use of an individual teaching strategy, often lecture, does not offer students the opportunity to reflect, question, respond to new information; thus causing stereotypes (Ford, 2014) like Grayson's statement that

Texas has too many white people, which further leads to a negative sense of place. This is confirmed through the continuation of his statement that because there are too many white people in an area, perhaps that is a place he does not need visit.

Educational institutes have the ability to alter these damaging experiences by expanding the educational resources and further developing and sharing the narratives used to teach African American history. Recognizing that the idea of tourism and education are connected (Pitman, Broomhall, McEwan & Majocha, 2010) educational tourism is suggested as a supplement to existing curriculum. Through the visitation of festivals, museums like the Freedom Rides Museum in Ohio or historic sites like Mary McLeod Bethune's home in Washington, D.C students gain a broader vision of the influential people who shaped history. For example, after studying lessons on slavery in the Caribbean, students at El Punte Academy for Peace and Justice participated in and produced a short video about their community's Sweet Freedom festival, which celebrates Latina American culture. Although this example is not centered on African Americans, the results would be potentially transferable to other minority groups. Instead of feelings of guilt and shame students stated that they felt respected and honored and possessed a positive personal identity and ethnic pride (Gay, 2010). Recognizing that this may not be a feasible option for all school systems, it has been suggested that the use of technology be incorporated to take virtual trips or engage with students from different areas of the world. Additional suggested activities are included in table 1.

### *Business and Marketing*

There are a host of business and marketing implications that can be yielded from this research. Upon reflecting on childhood travel experiences, participants in this study concluded that perhaps they didn't travel as much because their parents didn't know where to take them nor

did they have the resources to research vacation locations. Goeldner and Ritchie (2012) define one's unawareness of travel destinations as a Lack of Interest; they suggest that this is perhaps the most challenging barrier for tourism planners to overcome.

Because one of the challenges African Americans face when deciding where and how to travel is their view of racialized space, tourism organizations would be better served by identifying major players who could act as catalysts to influence the leisure travel among African Americans. Black churches or nationally known organizations are examples of resources that could be used as a way to target future visitors. Working with travel agents, such organizations could serve as sponsors for travel ranging from day trips to week long vacations.

A glaring barrier preventing African Americans from traveling is a lack of financial resources; yet participants in this study demonstrated that with enough planning, travel is possible. Tourism companies who can create program(s) that allow tourism participants to adequately plan for their upcoming trip will likely increase participation. Akin to reward programs or layaway programs, companies may benefit from creating tourism savings programs that would allow individuals to create a travel savings account. The money saved could be used to pay for accommodations, food or other services offered by the establishment. Sears extended their pay now buy later practice to leisure travel in 2012. Customers can make payments towards their vacations just like they would a new television. Companies who created these programs started them so that families would not have to compromise their vacations (Ladika, 2013). Another potential partnership lies among banks and the tourism industry. Again, using community outlets like the Black churches, these programs would be ideal to impart important foundational financial planning sessions with a focus on tourism to a community who would benefit from both topics.

## **Methodological Implications**

The use of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is extremely important to the field of tourism because of its ability to elucidate the lived experiences of travelers. By exploring the experiences of travelers, we are able to gather information on travel patterns, barriers, and other areas related to travel thus continuing the momentum of tourism research.

With regard to race and tourism, IPA is especially useful because the stories provided by participants add valuable understanding to the existing quantitative data. It has been proven that the images of African Americans within tourism are virtually nonexistent. The same is true for their voices. Only few studies incorporate qualitative methods which would shed light on the experiences of this growing segment of travelers. By allowing African Americans to speak about their experiences with travel, both past and present, we validate their experiences. We can learn from the past to create a better, safer future for minority groups who long to experience leisure whether through their established cultural lens or by branching out into spaces labeled and often dominated by the majority population.

## **Theory Implications**

Previous studies on race and tourism yielded to three main theories: marginality, ethnicity, and prejudice and discrimination. Previous studies related to African Americans and tourism were likely quantitative. Each attempt has been used to provide supporting data for detailing African American travel behaviors. By using the qualitative method of IPA, participants had an opportunity to recall their experiences with travel and reflect upon their attitudes and behaviors in the context of race. By allowing participants to conceptualize leisure with respect to tourism provides answers to some the why questions that emerged from previous quantitative studies. Additionally, the study showed that if given the opportunity to travel with

time for financial planning, the likelihood of African American willingness to travel is increased, a topic that has not previously been discussed in the literature.

### **Limitations**

One limitation was the female dominated narratives. Because personal social networks were used it was seemingly easier to recruit female participants than males. Having an equal number of male participants would have served as a nice gender comparison. A second limitation was the geographical focus of study participants. Participants were reared in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. One participant lived in New York for a small portion of her childhood, but spent an extensive amount of time in North Carolina. Currently the participants reside in North Carolina and Virginia. A study that includes individuals reared in other parts of the United States would have been useful in determining if the themes were regionally motivated or persisted across the group.

### **Further Research**

Literature suggests that efforts related to gender, race, economic status are important topics to consider when studying minority leisure participation (Stodolska et al., 2013). The results of this study suggested that attitudes about destinations differed among generations. These differences seemed to be derived from how personal experiences or shared stories about specific locations and the safety related to African American visitors. Studies focusing on generational specific aspects of travel would be helpful in furthering the conversation on racialized space.

Destination choice seemed to be determined through a combination of economic and ethnic features, thus future studies should focus on these as connected factors not solely in isolation. Participation in leisure activities did not seem to be based on race as previous literature

suggests. Additional studies examining participation in leisure activities while on vacation would be useful in determining current leisure interests of African Americans.

Evelyn's vision of creating a platform for African Americans to share their stories turned into a brilliant business. Her story is just one of many who are turning their love for travel into a profitable business. Despite this upswing, studies on African American entrepreneurship particularly tourism related businesses, are somewhat limited (Butler et al., 2002). The social media explosion has opened the door for a new type of entrepreneur in the travel industry. Evelyn is just one example of how using social media can spur onlookers to try something new. Others companies like Travel noire and Soul Society are often cited as new and innovated platforms highlighting the travel experiences of African American tourists. It would behoove tourism and business researchers alike to study the new wave of African American entrepreneurs within the tourism industry.

## **Conclusion**

Tourism is a growing leisure option for people across the globe. If there was ever any doubt that African Americans were not traveling, the experiences of the 12 participants in this study should do away with such thinking. This work adds to the existing literature by detailing the travel experiences of African Americans and how those experiences have led to their current attitudes and behaviors. This study suggests that despite the range of experience with travel, each participant saw travel as a vital part of his or her life and plans to continue seeking various parts of the globe. For some that is visiting a festival in their state or others that's travelling to a new country. Where ever they are on the travel spectrum, their experiences matter and deserve to be shared.

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## Appendix

### Interview Questionnaire

#### Icebreaker:

- Do you have a travel bucket list? If so, tell me about a destination on your travel bucket list.  
**Prompting Questions:** Where would you go? What would you do? Why? Do you think that you can one day attain these travel goals? Why? /Why not?
- **Define vacation**
- **Tell me about your last trip.**

#### Section 1: Childhood Experiences with Travel

##### 1. Describe your experiences with travel growing up.

###### Prompting Questions

- Was travel a priority in your family? If yes, in what way? If no, why not?
- Where did you travel as a child?
- What did you do on vacation?
- What was considered vacation events in your house?
- What are some of your fondest memories about vacation with your family?
- What kinds of things did your parents believe about traveling?(did they encourage it/discourage it?)
- What would you like to have been different about travel with your family growing up?
- What will you do with your family? Or what do you hope for the future when it comes to family and travel?
- Do you still include your family in your travel plans?

#### Section 2: Current Experiences with Travel

##### 1. Describe your travel experiences today.

###### Prompting Questions

- How do you choose your vacation destination?
- Are there locations you would not visit? Why?
- In what activities do you participate?
- Are there activities in which you would not participate? Why?

#### Section 3: Race and Tourism

1. How much do you think that race plays into your travel decisions? Is it a factor? Why? Why not? To what degree does it matter of where you decide to go and what you decide to do?

###### Prompting Questions

- How does your race influence your leisure activities while on vacation?
- What does it mean to travel as an African American?
- Describe any real or perceived challenges you face as an AA traveler?
- What are your expectations and what are you hoping to avoid while traveling?
- What is your major concern(s) when traveling as an AA person/family

**Why is travel important?**

**Any additional statements?**

**Thank you!**

