

Gender and Ethnic Variations in Urban Park Preferences, Visitation, and Perceived Benefits

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This paper examined how gender and ethnicity are related to preferences for various park characteristics, visitation to urban parks and open spaces, and perception of park benefits as reported by participants in a mail survey of residents in two metropolitan areas in the eastern United States. In total, 1570 questionnaires were completed, but 65 cases were deleted because they failed to identify their ethnicity or gender. The overall response rate for the survey was approximately 27%. Although women were more likely than men to evaluate some park characteristics as "important," there were no significant gender differences/variation in the types of visits or the perceived benefits of parks. There was significant ethnic variation in preferred park attributes, frequency and type of visits, and perceptions of the positive and negative effects of parks. However, the effects of ethnicity were not found to differ for men and women.

KEYWORDS: *Gender, ethnicity, park visitation, recreation preferences and benefits.*

Introduction

Current demographic trends indicate that the growth rate of racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States is increasing faster than that for the population as a whole (Riche, 2000). In many urban areas, ethnic and racial minority populations outnumber the traditional White majority and

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represent a growing user segment of urban parks and open spaces. There is often a mistaken assumption that park and recreation agencies need only make future population projections and provide more of what currently exists (Goodale & Godbey, 1995). However, if park managers, recreation agencies, and leisure science researchers are to meet the needs and interests of these diverse populations, it is important to understand how the expectations and desires of men and women in such ethnic groups differ from those of traditional park users.

The United States has historically been characterized as a "melting pot" where people from other lands and cultures are assimilated into the larger society to become "Americans." Indeed, during the influx of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe during the early 20th century, extensive efforts were directed toward "Americanizing" the new arrivals (Gordon, 1961). Within the United States today, there is increasing acceptance of ethnic pluralism and support for personal affirmation of ethnic identity. Ethnic groups often seek to maintain somewhat separate identities, failing to integrate completely with the larger society—classic cases of what have been termed "marginal groups" (Park & Burgess, 1921). To the extent that individuals seek to maintain identity within both the cultures of mainstream American society *and* their separate ethnic groups, they may experience personal marginality in their relationships with both groups (Mohl & Betten, 1972; Stonequist, 1937). Separate role behaviors within these two differing (and sometimes conflicting) settings can validate one's membership in both groups and lessen psychological stress. Thus, in most economic or work roles, pressures to be "American" and to de-emphasize expressions of ethnicity may be paramount, while in recreational and leisure-time pursuits involving family and friendship roles, individuals may seek to affirm their ethnic ties by engaging in traditional ethnic activities (Stodolska & Jackson, 1998; Yinger, 1981).

Theoretical Background

While much of the literature on retention of ethnic identity has been related to the Hansen hypothesis that a second generation of immigrants rebel or remove themselves from their ethnic group while a third returns to it, subsequent research is mixed in its support (Hansen, 1962; Hansen & Schlesinger, 1964; Kivisto & Blanck, 1990). Patterns of assimilation vary by ethnic group, within various areas of assimilation, such as language, identity, food, working patterns, and friendship patterns, and such variation is considerable (Alba & Nee, 1997; Isajiw, 1990). Moreover, there may also be differences within ethnic groups that are associated with the personal characteristics of the individuals involved, including age, race, and social class. While some intra-ethnic differences have been explored, immigration studies have generally ignored the role of gender. However, "like class and race, gender represents a major dimension of social structure and a focus on this dimension can yield novel insights into many phenomena" (Portes, 1997, p. 816).

Such gender-related research on the immigration process should not deal only with females: "the challenge still remains to branch out from a concentration on female immigrants in order to apply appropriately gender-inflected research questions and methods to both men and women" (Pessar, 1996, p. 32). Since previous research on ethnicity characterizes the process of adjustment and assimilation as complex, varying by ethnic group, with complex intergenerational changes, there is reason to suspect that the role played by gender in immigration process will also show variation.

In their roles as nurturers, women are likely to emphasize affective activities and the maintenance of familial traditions. According to Pesquera (1986), many Hispanic working women believe it is their duty, as women, to teach children songs, stories, religious rituals, and cooking skills which reflect their native cultures. Isajiw (1990) in a study of immigration to Canada by Ukrainians, Jews, Italians, Germans, and English found that the preparation and eating of ethnic food is retained from generation to generation more than any other ethnic pattern of behavior. Additionally, Hochschild (1989) found that traditional Mexican immigrant women believed that "the female role isn't simply a female role; it is a part of a cultural tradition . . . to the traditional, it seems that *only women* can carry on this tradition" (p. 248). To the extent that women maintain such roles and responsibilities, differences between men and women in their attention to the maintenance of ethnic traditions, including issues concerning recreation might be expected. Such differences might reflect the differing cultural roles and rights of men and women. In China, for example:

The inferior social status of women was merely one manifestation of the hierarchical nature of China's entire social code and cosmology. Ancient China had viewed the world as the product of two interacting complimentary elements: *yin* and *yang*. Yin was the attribute of all things female, dark, weak, and passive. Yang was the attribute of all things male, bright, strong, and active . . . Building on such ideological foundations, an endless succession of Chinese male moralists worked out the behavior pattern of obedience and passivity that was expected of women. These patterns subordinated girls to boys from infancy and kept the wife subordinate to her husband and the mother to her grown son. (Fairbank & Goldman, 1998, p. 20)

Similar differentiation in roles and rights can be found in the cultures of other ethnic groups. Gender relations in most Asian countries are separated and dichotomized, emphasizing gender differentiation and clear demarcation of public and domestic domains (Hoffman, 1995; Tseng, 1992). In Asian countries, particularly in East Asia, the patriarchy dominates the social setting, such as workplace and family. In Hispanic communities, the patriarchal structure is also prevalent in daily life (Mirande, 1977; Sotomayor, 1972). Such differences in power and role by gender might lead to different levels of experience in terms of outdoor recreation and different wants and needs in terms of urban parks and open spaces. Moreover, the extent and nature of gender differences within ethnic groups might be expected to vary, depending upon the cultural norms and traditions of the specific groups involved. An understanding of how gender differences might be affected by

ethnicity and how ethnic distinctions might differ for males and females could contribute to planning park facilities and programs.

The perceptions of ethnic minority men and women concerning the benefits and desired facilities of parks may also be affected by discrimination (both historical and current), limited accessibility, lack of knowledge, and other social structural constraints. West (1989) described the separation of races in leisure places through understood racial barriers, and Mowl and Towner (1995) believed the control and segregation of space, and the exclusion of certain social groups were important in both leisure and social conflict. Others have argued that it is reasonable to expect that racial discrimination is prevalent in leisure places and affects leisure decision making and participation (Floyd, 1998; Gobster, 2002; Philipp, 2000). Significant theoretical and empirical work in this area, however, remains underdeveloped (Floyd, 1998).

Purpose

The purpose of this paper was to examine how gender and ethnicity, separately and in combination, are associated with: 1) the attributes or characteristics of parks that are seen as most desirable or important; 2) the frequency and types of park visitation that occur, and 3) the perceived benefits of parks for residents and their communities. Samples of men and women from five ethnic groups (African-American, Hispanic, Chinese-American, Japanese-American, and Korean-American) living in two metropolitan areas in the eastern United States (Atlanta and Philadelphia) were compared with samples of "White" residents in the same cities, and the similarities and differences of their responses described.

Literature Review

Prior to 1985, few scholars were concerned with ethnic differences in urban leisure patterns (e.g., Marans & Fly, 1981). However, in the last 20 years, concerns about possible inequalities in recreation services has led to an increase in research on possible differences between the White majority and ethnic minority groups in participation patterns (Floyd, 1998; Gobster, 2002; Johnson, Bowker, English, & Worthen, 1997; Shaull & Gramann, 1998). Most of these studies have focused on Whites, Blacks, and (to a lesser extent) Hispanics, but virtually no research has examined gender differences within these groups.

Leisure Setting Preferences among Various Ethnic Groups

Using data from a 1969 survey of urban California Blacks and Whites, Washburne (1978) analyzed Black-White leisure differences and tested the marginality perspective. He found that Black under-participation in wildland recreation was not solely attributable to their disadvantaged socioeconomic circumstances as shaped by a history of marginality. He suggested an alter-

native explanation, the ethnicity perspective, which holds that Black leisure patterns were based on their subcultural style and value systems.

In a study of park usage by Black and White Detroit residents, West (1989) found that Blacks participated more in city parks, while Whites participated more in surrounding regional parks. Black under-participation in regional parks was partly explained by aspects of marginality such as lack of transportation, and by the perceived negative reactions by other park users. Washburne's ethnicity (subcultural) perspective did not explain the observed Black-White differences.

Dwyer and Hutchison (1990), in an investigation of outdoor recreation participation and preferences by Black and White Chicago households, reported that African Americans preferred more developed facilities and conveniences while Whites preferred more remote and natural areas. Johnson et al. (1997) also suggested that urban African Americans generally perceived wilderness settings to be less aesthetically pleasing than built environments and were less likely to recreate in such settings than Whites. Philipp (1993) reported that Blacks were less likely than Whites to prefer wildland recreation areas as tourist destinations. Blacks focused more on social interaction and Whites on desired environments when choosing tourist destinations. Talbot and Kaplan (1993) reported that adolescent Blacks had a greater preference for settings that were carefully manicured and relatively open, while Whites preferred more heavily wooded areas with less evidence of human influence.

In an overview of the literature comparing Black, Hispanic, and White subjects, Virden and Walker (1999) reported that "White respondents . . . considered a forest to be safer than Black and Hispanic respondents, who perceived it as more threatening" (p. 233). They also found that Blacks, Hispanics, and Whites shared similar views toward social-setting attributes (e.g., being by oneself or sharing experience), but Hispanics and Whites preferred less management and law enforcement presence and more remote, less developed recreational settings than Blacks. Payne, Mowen, and Orsega-Smith (2002) found that Blacks preferred that parklands serve a recreation function rather than a conservation function.

Gobster (2002), using on-site surveys of users of Chicago's Lincoln Park, reported that Asians preferred scenic beauty, Whites trees and vegetation, and Blacks cared less about the natural environment and more about facility and maintenance aspects. Tinsley, Tinsley, and Croskeys (2002) found that African American and White park users were more likely than Hispanic and Asian park users to enjoy the natural features of Lincoln Park.

Activity Patterns among Various Ethnic Groups

Hutchison (1987) investigated ethnic and/or racial variations in leisure and recreation activities through observation of White, Black, and Hispanic groups in 13 neighborhood and regional parks in Chicago. While more than half of the White and Black activity groups were observed in mobile activities,

the majority of the Hispanic groups were engaged in stationary activities and only 25 percent in mobile activities. Significant differences were found not only in the types of activities, but also in the age, sex, size, and social composition of activity groups.

Dwyer (1993) reported that Blacks tended to participate more in sports, but less in activities that take place in remote areas or undeveloped facilities than Whites. In a later study, Dwyer (1994) found significantly lower participation rates for African Americans than for Whites in camping, hiking/backpacking, hunting, and the use of wildland and natural areas. Floyd, Shinn, McGuire, and Noe (1994) reported results consistent with earlier studies of Black-White variation in leisure participation, including higher levels of Black involvement in team sports, fitness activities, and socializing.

Floyd, Outley, Bixler, and Hammitt (1995) in a study of 1200 Black and White middle-and high-school students found that Whites rated wildland activities higher than Blacks, and that levels of fear of nature and desire for urban environments were related to preferences for non-wildland social-activities. Johnson, Bowker, English, and Worthen (1998) also found that the probability of Blacks participating in wildland recreation was less than Whites, and Payne et al. (2002) reported that Blacks preferred organized recreation activities rather than nature-based activities. In addition, Cordell, Betz, and Green (2002) in an analysis of data from the National Survey on Recreation and Environment, found that walking was popular with all racial groups, motor-boating was favored by Whites, hiking by Hispanics, and, except for team sports, Blacks rated activities such as walking, swimming, hunting, hiking less favorably than did other racial groups.

A few studies have also compared the recreation preferences of Asians with those of Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. Dwyer (1993) reported both differences and similarities in leisure activities, with the largest and most consistent differences between Whites and Blacks. Hispanics and Asians had significantly higher participation in picnicking than Blacks. Asians were more likely than Blacks to drive for pleasure and play tennis, and less likely to play baseball. Although Gobster (2002) reported numerous similarities between Latinos, Blacks, Asians, and Whites, he also found differences in use patterns and preferences both between and within racial groups. According to Gobster, minority group members were more likely to engage in passive social-oriented activities (e.g., picnicking and socializing) while Whites were involved most in active individual sports such as walking and jogging. He further reported differences in park use characteristics with respect to ethnicity of park users.

Additionally, Walker, Deng, and Dieser (2001) investigated the motivations of outdoor recreationists who identified themselves as Chinese and compared their motivations with those of Euro-North Americans in a Canadian national park. They used Markus and Kitayama's (1991) construct of self-construal as an intervening variable between ethnicity, acculturation, and motivations for outdoor recreation and found that ethnicity affected outdoor recreation motivations directly, but this relationship was usually mediated by

self-construal (e.g., independent and interdependent self-construal). Findings of this study suggest that taking self-construal into account will help us better understand the effect of ethnicity, acculturation, and motivations for outdoor recreation.

Gender Differences in Park Preferences and Use

Jackson and Henderson (1995) suggested that leisure constraints for women are not based simply on biological factors, but are also a function of cultural interpretations of gender. Woman's leisure is often viewed as an extension of family roles involving caring for children and household chores (Deem, 1986). Hutchison (1994) in a study of women and the elderly in Chicago public parks, found that women were more likely than men to be engaged in stationary activities associated with child care and in activities as a family member or as a member of a mixed social group. Men were more likely to participate in mobile activities such as sports and walking, and to do so as individuals or with peers. Women were also more likely than men to see the forest environment as threatening and expressed a preference for park manager presence and developed settings as compared to the less management and more remote natural settings preferred by men (Virden & Walker, 1999). New immigrant women, in general, have been found to be less likely than their "Westernized" counterparts to engage in outdoor leisure activities, including the use of urban parks (Eyler et al., 2002). This is particularly true of Asian and Latina immigrants where long hours of family-oriented household work, language barriers, and lack of transportation may reduce the availability of and access to leisure opportunities (Evenson, Sarmiento, Macon, Tawney, & Ammerman, 2002; Eyler et al.).

The role of gender in moderating the effect of ethnicity on park preferences has not been explored, although the role of women as preservers of ethnic traditions would be expected to be associated with the use of parks as places for sharing distinctive cultural activities with children, family members, and friends. A study by Virden and Walker (1999) failed to find evidence that gender interacted with ethnicity or race. Rather, they found that many environmental preference items were not significantly different across ethnicity/race and gender categories, suggesting commonality among these groups. However, their sample was limited to college students, and it is unclear that their findings can be generalized to other age and education groups.

Benefits Provided by Urban Parks and Open Spaces

There is increasing evidence that use of parks and open spaces provides health-related benefits (Godbey, Roy, Payne, & Orsega-Smith, 1998; Tinsley et al., 2002), physically active forms of recreation (Orsega-Smith, Payne, & Godbey, 2003; Raymore & Scott, 1998; Scott, 1997), stress reduction benefits (Godbey et al., 1998; Hull & Michael, 1995; Parsons, Tassinary, Ulrich, Hebl,

& Grossman-Alexander, 1998), social support and self determination (Iso-Ahola & Park, 1996; Iwasaki, Zuzanek, & Mannell, 2001), and opportunities to observe nature and associated benefits (Godbey et al., 1998; Tinsley et al., 2002).

Urban parks and open spaces have also been shown to benefit the environment (McPherson, Nowak, & Rowntree, 1994); provide educational, family, and youth benefits (Nowak, Noble, Sisinni, & Dwyer, 2001; Wolf, 1998); and contribute to economic and social/community development (Dwyer, McPherson, Schroeder, & Rowntree, 1992; Kelsey, 1997; Wilkinson, 1991). However, there is little research concerning the extent to which citizens understand and subscribe to these positive views of parks. Godbey, Graefe, and James (1992) in a nationwide study of residents' views of the local parks, found that economic benefits were mentioned by fewer than two percent of their subjects. Named most often were individual and social benefits. Although there is virtually no research concerning how different ethnic groups and genders perceive parks, given presumed variation in uses and cultural orientations, gender and ethnic differences in their positive and negative perceptions of parks would also be expected.

Methods

Data to assess the above issues were obtained from a self administered questionnaire mailed to samples of residents in two metropolitan areas located in the eastern United States (Atlanta, GA and Philadelphia, PA). The following ethnic groups were chosen for study: African-American, Hispanic, Chinese-American, Japanese-American, and Korean-American. The decision was made to treat all respondents from Spanish-speaking countries as "Hispanic" for two reasons. First, Hispanic countries in Central and South America are so numerous that sub-dividing Spanish speaking people by country, as was done with "Asian" respondents, would produce too many categories for meaningful analysis. Second, language was a key issue in measuring acculturation in this study, and Hispanics are bound together by a common language whereas Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese have three different languages and two variations of one language-simple and traditional Chinese. The study also included "White" residents of these cities.

Atlanta, GA and Philadelphia, PA were selected as study sites partly because they had large populations of the ethnic groups selected for study and established ethnic enclaves (e.g., Chinatown, Koreatown, etc.). The presence of others of the same ethnicity, particularly in established enclaves, can strengthen ethnic ties and the retention of traditional cultural patterns (Miyares, 1997). Moreover, both Atlanta and Philadelphia have numerous park settings, both in and around their urban centers, including some located near ethnic enclaves (Sasidharan, 2001).

The Sample and the Survey

In an effort to obtain a broad-based sample of subjects in the selected ethnic groups, a commercial sampling organization (Survey Sampling, Inc.)

was hired to provide the names and addresses for 750 households within each of the five target ethnic groups in each of the metropolitan areas chosen for study. In addition, random samples of 500 "resident" households in each of the two metropolitan areas were selected. The ethnic samples were drawn using a Tract-Density-Surname method in which census tracts with concentrations of each of the desired ethnic groups within the metropolitan areas of Atlanta and Philadelphia were drawn and screened in regard to the presumed ethnicity of their surnames. While the method was useful in identifying many subjects in the desired groups, it was imprecise, and was expected to yield a sizable number of "misidentified" contacts.

The survey instrument was developed drawing upon previous studies dealing with park preferences and perceived benefits, and reviewed by researchers working in the field and by ethnic group members. Because it was anticipated that English may not be the primary language of communication for some sample members, all survey materials were translated into five different languages: Spanish, simplified Chinese, traditional Chinese, Korean, and Japanese, using a back-translation (double-translation) procedure. The back-translation process for each of the five languages involved at least two skilled, bilingual individuals who participated independently in the translation process (Marin & Marin, 1991).

Each non-English language version of the questionnaire was then pilot-tested, re-examined for content, clarity, and relevance by reviewers from Hispanic, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese backgrounds, and revised in light of these findings. Although the back-translation, pilot testing, and additional reviews were time-consuming and expensive, they were deemed to be important for establishing the cross-cultural validity of the questionnaire (Sasidharan, 2001).

Pre-notice letters were sent to the ethnic samples two weeks prior to mailing the questionnaires. These letters, written in English and (except for the African-American and "resident" samples) also in their presumed "native" language, informed subjects that they had been selected for participation in the survey, and requested they return an enclosed postage-paid card if they were *not* a member of the designated ethnic group or if they wanted the survey form in a language other than English. Mailing of the questionnaire two weeks after the pre-notice letter was followed by a reminder postcard the following week, and two subsequent follow-up letters, both including duplicate survey forms.

A substantial proportion (30%) of the ethnic addresses proved to be inaccurate and the letters were returned as undeliverable. Of those that were not returned by the postal service, response rates for the ethnic samples ranged from 20% for the African-American and Hispanic samples in Philadelphia to 30% for the Chinese-American sample in Atlanta, with an average response rate from all of the ethnic samples of 27%. However, these rates may be misleading since it seems likely that some (and perhaps many) of the households that received the materials simply discarded them if they were not in the targeted ethnic group. Response rates for the random samples of "residents" were slightly higher, with 40% of the sample households

in Atlanta and 32% of the Philadelphia households responding. A total of 1570 completed survey forms were received and formed the basis of the current analysis.

Measuring the Independent Variables

To confirm the ethnicity of the individual sample members, subjects were asked on the questionnaire to self-specify how they would describe their ethnicity: Hispanic, Chinese or Chinese American, Japanese or Japanese American, Korean or Korean American, African American, White/Caucasian, or Other. Respondents who answered "other" or who failed to answer this question or to report their gender were deleted from the analysis, a total of 65 cases. Among the remaining respondents, 28% ($n = 427$) reported they were White or Caucasian, 19% ($n = 290$) were Chinese or Chinese American, 15% ($n = 231$) were African American, 14% ($n = 205$) were Korean or Korean American, 12% ($n = 180$) were Hispanic/Latino or Hispanic American, and 11% ($n = 172$) were Japanese or Japanese American; 54% ($n = 815$) were males and 46% ($n = 690$) were females.

Measuring the Dependent Variables

The park preferences, visitation, and perceived benefits items and their corresponding scales were developed through discussions with researchers from the U.S. Forest Service, review of the literature, feedback from the study reviewers, and suggestions from the University's Methodology Center. These items along with other survey questions were piloted among university students and their spouses, belonging to the population groups selected for the study to clarify and refine both the format and content before the survey instrument was finalized.

Respondents were asked how important ("not important," "somewhat important," "very important") it was for a park to have each of a list of specific attributes. A principal components analysis with varimax rotation suggested the presence of six factors (Table 1). The cut-off point was .50 to select the factor items, which explained 25% of the variance. Items loading highest on the first factor referred to *Recreational Facilities*. The second factor contained *Water Amenities* (lakes, rivers, streams). The third factor dealt with *Wildlife* (birds and fish). *Logistics*-related items ("proper signs and instruction boards," "parking spaces," etc.) dominated the fourth factor. The fifth factor focused on *Ethnic Sensitivity/Representation*. The sixth factor described *Traditional Park Landscapes* (short grass, open forests, paved paths, shade trees). Cronbach's Alpha for the six factors ranged from .65 to .89. Composite scores were calculated by scoring the item responses from 1 = "not important" to 3 = "very important," and calculating the mean score for the items contained in each factor.

Frequency and type of park usage were measured by directing subjects' attention to a page containing twelve color photographs of parks and open

TABLE 1
Factor Loadings for Items Dealing with Park Preferences

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
<i>Recreational Facilities</i>						
Family/group recreation facilities	.72	.04	.07	.17	.11	.09
Game fields/courts	.72	-.03	.02	-.04	.18	.15
Picnic areas	.72	.09	-.01	-.07	.05	.16
Outdoor cooking facilities	.67	.14	-.03	-.09	.22	-.01
Recreational facilities/programs	.61	-.02	.03	.12	.13	.03
Drinking water/fountains	.56	.06	.04	.30	.03	.18
<i>Water Amenities</i>						
River or rivers	.05	.89	.22	.03	.02	.06
Lake or lakes	.12	.83	.21	.05	.04	.16
Stream or streams	.03	.83	.30	.04	.07	.12
<i>Wildlife</i>						
Animals	.02	.22	.85	.00	.05	.04
Birds	.00	.21	.84	.05	.02	.19
Fish	.13	.31	.79	.06	.10	.06
<i>Logistics</i>						
Parking spaces	.14	.09	-.04	.71	.13	-.04
Litter-free facilities	.00	.03	.05	.69	-.05	.18
Proper signs/instruction boards	.21	.05	.07	.62	.25	-.07
Safety and security	.11	.03	-.08	.57	-.05	.27
Trash containers	.14	-.05	.13	.56	.00	.19
<i>Ethnic Sensitivity/Representation</i>						
Presence of others from your ethnic/ racial group	.17	.09	.00	.01	.81	.15
Availability of information in your language	.17	.00	.06	.00	.79	.14
Staff who know visitors' customs	.28	.02	.09	.17	.59	.10
<i>Traditional Park Landscapes</i>						
Open forests with visibility through trees	.07	.17	.08	.09	.15	.70
Short, evenly mowed grass	.22	.00	.05	.15	.18	.67
Shade trees	.06	.36	.08	.14	-.07	.56
Paved paths	.21	-.02	.14	.17	.24	.54
Eigenvalue	5.62	3.09	1.79	1.33	1.21	1.06
%Variance explained	23.4	12.9	7.5	5.5	5.0	4.4
Cumulative variance explained	23.4	36.3	43.7	49.3	54.3	58.8
Cronbach's Alpha	.79	.89	.85	.66	.70	.65

Note: Items were coded on a 3-point scale where 1 = not important, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = very important.

TABLE 2
Perceived Importance of Various Park Characteristics, by Gender

Park Characteristics	Overall Mean	Gender		F-value (df = 1, 1319)
		Male	Female	
Recreational Facilities	2.29	2.28	2.30	0.53
Ethnic Sensitivity/Representation	1.78	1.74	1.82	6.65**
Traditional Park Landscapes	2.31	2.25	2.38	23.08***
Wildlife	2.04	2.03	2.05	0.36
Water Amenities	2.22	2.24	2.20	1.21
Logistics	2.78	2.76	2.80	5.55*

Note: Importance rating scored as 1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = very important.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

spaces included with the survey form. Respondents were asked how often in the last 12 months they had visited parks similar to those in the photos. Answer categories ranged from 7 = "almost daily" to 1 = "never." In addition, they were asked: Of your visits in the last 12 months, how many of these were: "alone?" "with one or two people?" "with three or more people?" and "with others from your own ethnic group?" Response categories were 1 = "none," 2 = "some," and 3 = "almost all."

Perceived benefits from parks were assessed by asking respondents whether they "agreed," were "neutral," or "disagreed" with each of the following descriptions of park-effects: 1) improve overall health, 2) improve social well-being, 3) are unnecessary tax burdens, 4) attract crime and create unsafe conditions, 5) increase littering, 6) improve the economy, 7) improve environmental quality, 8) attract undesirable animals, 9) improve spiritual well-being, and 10) attract desirable animals and birds.

Statistical Procedures

Three separate MANOVA analyses were carried out to test the relationships of ethnicity and gender (and their interaction) to: 1) the six factors assessing park preferences (recreational facilities, water amenity, wildlife, logistics, ethnic sensitivity/representation, and traditional park landscapes); 2) frequency of overall visitation and each of four types of visitation (alone, with one or two people, with three or more people, with others from your ethnic group), and 3) the ten perceived positive and negative effects ("benefits") of parks. Cases missing data on the dependent variables were deleted within each section of the analysis.

Each MANOVA analysis involved three steps: 1) Omnibus or overall (multivariate) F-tests (using Pillai's Trace) tested the null hypotheses that there were no differences in mean scores of the combined dependent vari-

ables associated with ethnicity, gender, or the (ethnicity X gender) interaction. This analysis called into account the relationships among the dependent variables and provided protections against the Type I error that would occur if separate ANOVA tests were run on the individual dependent variables. If an omnibus test failed to reach significance, no further analysis was necessary. 2) When a significant overall F-value was obtained, tests were carried out for the separate relationships of ethnicity, gender, and their interaction to each of the dependent variables. 3) In those cases where significant relationships were found in (2) above, post hoc tests (Bonferroni) for the differences between the individual means were carried out and reported. However, it should be noted that, because the number of cases in each ethnic category differed, the results of these tests were sometimes misleading. As a result, some of the descriptive presentation of the findings focused on direct comparisons of the relative sizes of the means themselves.

Results

Urban Park Preferences

The omnibus (multivariate) F-value for the interactive effect of ethnicity and gender on the importance respondents given to the six factors dealing with park characteristics was not statistically significant ($F(30, 6590) = 1.25$, $p = .163$), suggesting that the relationships of ethnicity to importance ratings did not differ for males and females. Both the multivariate F-value for gender ($F(6, 1314) = 6.04$, $p < .001$) and that for ethnicity ($F(30, 6590) = 10.48$, $p < .001$) were statistically significant. Gender was significantly related to three of the six characteristics: *Traditional Park Landscapes*, *Logistics*, and *Ethnic Sensitivity/Representation* (Table 2). In all three cases, women more than men, felt that these were important park characteristics.

There were significant differences among ethnic groups in the importance given to the presence of *Recreational Facilities* (Table 3). African Americans and Hispanics gave the highest importance ratings to the presence of *Recreational Facilities*, followed by the Koreans, and the Chinese and Whites; Japanese subjects reported the lowest mean scores. African Americans were significantly more likely than any of the other groups to emphasize the importance of *Ethnic Sensitivity/Representation*, followed by Korean, Hispanic and White subjects, with the Chinese, and Japanese the least likely to judge ethnic concerns to be important park attributes.

There were also significant differences among the ethnic groups in regard to the importance given to *Traditional Park Landscapes*. African Americans and Hispanics were more likely than the other groups to view this characteristic as important. White and Hispanic subjects gave somewhat greater importance ratings to the presence of *Wildlife* than did the other ethnic groups. The availability of water (lakes, rivers, streams) was slightly more likely to be rated as important by the Hispanics and Chinese respondents, followed by Whites and Koreans, with Japanese and African Americans reporting the lowest ratings for these amenities, but the individual post hoc

TABLE 3
Perceived Importance of Various Park Characteristics by Ethnicity

Park Characteristics	Overall Mean	Ethnicity						F-value (df = 5, 1319)
		White	African- American	Hispanic/ Latino	Chinese	Japanese	Korean	
		Mean Importance Score						
Recreational Facilities	2.29	2.18 _a	2.53 _b	2.48 _{bc}	2.20 _a	2.02 _d	2.34 _c	32.32***
Ethnic Sensitivity/Representation	1.78	1.70 _{ab}	2.13 _c	1.85 _{ad}	1.62 _{be}	1.52 _e	1.87 _d	27.51***
Traditional Park Landscapes	2.31	2.24 _a	2.49 _b	2.44 _b	2.29 _a	2.19 _a	2.23 _a	12.74***
Wildlife	2.04	2.14 _a	1.98 _b	2.17 _a	1.96 _b	2.08 _{ab}	1.93 _b	5.91***
Water Amenities	2.22	2.22 _a	2.14 _a	2.32 _a	2.29 _a	2.16 _a	2.20 _a	2.72*
Logistics	2.78	2.76 _a	2.82 _a	2.82 _a	2.80 _a	2.75 _a	2.76 _a	2.32*

Note: Importance ratings scored as 1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = very important. Means in the same row that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in the Bonferroni comparison.

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

differences among these ethnic categories did not reach significance at the .05 level.

For all of the ethnic categories and for men and women, the park attribute given the highest importance rating was *Logistics*. Bonferroni's Test found no significant differences between the individual ethnic categories in regard to this park characteristic. The mean importance ratings for *Traditional Park Landscapes*, *Recreational Facilities*, and *Water Amenities* ranked second, third, or fourth for all groups combined, for both men and women, and for nearly all ethnic groups. *Wildlife* was considered somewhat less important and *Ethnic Sensitivity/Representation* was given the lowest rating scores by all groups except African Americans.

Frequency and Type of Park Visitation

The multivariate F-values relating gender ($F(5, 878) = 1.42, p = .213$) and the interaction of ethnicity X gender ($F(25, 4410) = .731, p = .830$) to the five measures of visitation frequency for those who did visit parks during the last twelve months were not statistically significant. The omnibus test for ethnic differences was statistically significant ($F(25, 4410) = 5.02, p < .001$), and for four of the five measures, the individual F-values also reached statistical significance (Table 4). Hispanics and Whites reported the highest overall frequency followed by Chinese and Japanese with African Americans and Koreans reporting the lowest number of visits. These differences, however, were small and not significant using post hoc Bonferroni comparisons.

Similarly, African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites were more likely than were Chinese, Japanese, and Korean respondents to report that at least some of their visits were alone, but these individual differences were also not statistically significant in the post hoc analysis. The tendency to visit parks with three or more people was not significantly related to ethnicity, however, the relationship approached significance ($p = .069$) with Hispanics, Koreans, and Chinese most likely to do so. Whites, African Americans, and Hispanics were the most likely to visit parks accompanied by one or two other persons, while Koreans were the least likely to do so, but only the difference between White and Koreans reached statistical significance in the Bonferroni comparisons. African Americans and Whites were the most likely to report that they visited parks with others of their own ethnicity at least "some" or "all or almost all" of the time; Hispanics, Chinese, and Japanese were less likely to do so. In summary, within every ethnic group except Koreans, respondents were most likely to report that they visited with one or two people, followed by visiting with three or more people. Visiting parks "alone" was not common for any of the ethnic groups studied.

Positive and Negative Perceptions of Parks

MANOVA analysis of the items measuring respondents' positive and negative perceptions of parks, found only the multivariate F-value for ethnicity

TABLE 4
Overall Frequency and Frequency of Various Types of Park Visitation, by Ethnicity

Frequency of Visitation	Overall Mean	Ethnicity						F-value (df = 5, 882)
		White	African-American	Hispanic/Latino	Chinese	Japanese	Korean	
Overall Frequency	3.81	4.01 _a	3.67 _a	4.12 _a	3.73 _a	3.72 _a	3.64 _a	2.76*
Types of Visitation		Mean Importance Score						
Alone	1.46	1.51 _a	1.57 _a	1.53 _a	1.35 _a	1.44 _a	1.34 _a	2.84*
With 1 or 2 others	2.14	2.22 _a	2.20 _{ab}	2.21 _{ab}	2.17 _{ab}	2.07 _{ab}	1.98 _b	2.46*
With 3 or more others	1.98	1.90	1.97	2.10	2.00	1.85	2.08	2.12
With own ethnic group	2.11	2.36 _a	2.38 _a	1.94 _{bc}	1.97 _{bc}	1.78 _b	2.20 _{ac}	13.80***

Note: Overall frequency score was measured on a 7 point scale as follows: 1 = never; 2 = once or twice in the last 12 months; 3 = 3 or more times in the last 12 months; 4 = once or twice a month; 5 = 3 or more times a month; 6 = weekly; 7 = daily or almost daily.

For the various types of visitation, subjects were asked, "Of your visits [to parks] in the last 12 months, how many of these visits were undertaken . . . ? Response categories were coded as 1 = none; 2 = some; 3 = all or almost all. Analysis contains only subjects who reported visiting a park in the last 12 months. Means in the same row that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in the Bonferroni comparison.

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

TABLE 5
Perceived Positive and Negative Effects of Parks, by Ethnicity

Positive/Negative Effects	Overall Mean	Ethnicity						F-value (df = 5, 1370)
		White	African-American	Hispanic/Latino	Chinese	Japanese	Korean	
		Mean Importance Score						
<i>Positive Effects</i>								
Improve overall health	2.69	2.72 _{ab}	2.61 _a	2.67 _{ab}	2.74 _b	2.76 _{ab}	2.62 _{ab}	2.58*
Improve social well-being	2.61	2.68 _a	2.56 _b	2.62 _{ab}	2.61 _{ab}	2.69 _{ab}	2.50 _b	3.05**
Improve the economy	2.14	2.24 _{ab}	2.30 _b	2.11 _{abc}	2.12 _{ac}	2.04 _c	2.04 _c	6.03***
Improve environmental quality	2.68	2.69	2.62	2.65	2.76	2.69	2.64	1.58
Attract desirable animals and birds	2.55	2.71 _a	2.49 _{bc}	2.57 _{abc}	2.43 _c	2.64 _{ab}	2.49 _{bc}	7.88***
Improve spiritual well-being	2.64	2.68	2.58	2.69	2.63	2.69	2.56	1.80
<i>Negative Effects</i>								
Are unnecessary tax burdens	1.46	1.30 _a	1.37 _a	1.32 _a	1.56 _b	1.43 _{ab}	1.76 _c	17.07***
Attract crime/create unsafe conditions	1.58	1.51	1.60	1.53	1.57	1.68	1.61	1.81
Increase littering	1.56	1.48 _a	1.53 _{ab}	1.49 _{ab}	1.60 _{ab}	1.58 _{ab}	1.67 _b	2.67*
Attract undesirable animals and birds	1.50	1.39 _a	1.42 _{ab}	1.44 _{ab}	1.55 _{bc}	1.58 _{bc}	1.65 _c	5.64***

Note: Responses were scored so that 3 = agree; 2 = neutral; 1 = disagree. Means in the same row that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$ in the Bonferroni comparison.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

to be statistically significant ($F(55, 6820) = 3.84, p < .001$). Chinese were more likely to indicate that parks improved overall health, while African Americans were somewhat less likely to do so. Japanese and White respondents were most likely to agree that parks improved social well-being, with African Americans and Koreans least likely to agree. African Americans and Whites were the most likely and Japanese and Koreans the least likely to indicate that parks improved the economy. Whites were the most likely, followed by the Japanese and the Hispanics, to report that parks attracted desirable animals and birds. There were no significant differences among the ethnic categories in perceptions of parks as improving environmental quality or improving spiritual well-being. There were statistically significant differences associated with ethnicity in the negative perceptions of parks as: unnecessary tax burdens, increasing littering, and attracting undesirable animals and birds. Whites, Hispanics, and African Americans were less likely to agree with these three items than were the Japanese, Koreans, and Chinese. Ethnicity was not significantly related to feelings that parks attracted crime and created unsafe conditions.

Although there were ethnic differences in respondents' perceptions of the positive and negative effects of parks, there were also important similarities. For all groups, the items describing the positive effects of parks received much higher scores (indicating higher levels of agreement) than did the items describing negative effects. Moreover, the positive perceptions, such as parks improved environmental quality, overall health, and social and spiritual well-being, tended to be shared by all of the ethnic groups surveyed. There was less agreement that parks improved the economy. While subjects were unlikely to agree with any of the negative effects, the negative item with the highest overall rates of agreement was that parks attracted crime and created unsafe conditions.

Discussion

This study examined the preferences, visitation patterns, and perceived benefits of urban parks by ethnically diverse adults in Atlanta, Georgia and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Differences between men and women and among six ethnic categories were assessed in regard to the importance given to various park characteristics, the frequency of visits with varying numbers and types of companions, and the positive and negative perceptions of park areas. While a number of important differences were found among the six ethnic groups, only a few were found between genders, and no significant gender by ethnicity interactions were found. Thus, while ethnicity was associated with park and open space preferences, there was no reason to conclude that the differences among ethnic groups varied by gender.

Female park users did not differ by ethnicity in giving greater importance to the presence of *Traditional Park Landscapes*, *Ethnic Sensitivity/Representation*, and *Logistics* than did male users. Others have reported that women are more likely than men to view the forest environments as threatening and

to prefer that park managers be present (Virden & Walker, 1999), and apparently such concerns exist across cultures. It could be that concern for safety helps explain why women preferred open space with a high degree of visual access. No significant differences were found between male and female park users in terms of types of visitation, perceived benefits, and preferences in regard to *Recreational Facilities*, *Water Amenities*, and *Wildlife*. It was, however, not surprising that there were no gender differences in these items in that the items may reflect individual preferences based on variables other than gender, such as personality and life experience.

Compared to gender, ethnicity played a stronger role in shaping park users' preferences. Consistent with previous studies (Dwyer, 1993; Dwyer & Hutchison, 1990; Gobster, 2002; Johnson et al., 1997; Talbot & Kaplan, 1993; Virden & Walker, 1999), African Americans preferred more developed settings/facilities and scenery with more open space and built structure than Whites. Different from previous research (Virden & Walker, 1999), however, Hispanics were nearly as likely as African-Americans to prefer *Recreational Facilities* and *Traditional Park Landscapes*.

It is noteworthy that the importance given to *Ethnic Sensitivity/Representation* was much greater for African Americans than for any of the other ethnic groups, perhaps reflecting the historic discrimination against African Americans in the United States (Floyd, 1998; Loury, 2002; McAdam, 1999). In addition, Korean and Hispanic subjects also tended to report that such things as availability of information in their language, presence of others in their own ethnic group, and the presence of staff knowing their customs were important park characteristics. With regard to type of visits, on average, both males and females seldom went to parks alone, but no statistically significant difference was found between them. Similarly, visitors from all ethnic groups seldom went to parks alone, implying that companionship is an important factor in people's park visitation (Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993; Iso-Ahola & Park, 1996).

Bhugra, Bhui, Mallett, and Desai (1999) proposed that, because of language or social network, ethnically homogeneous groups may tend to remain socially segregated. Discrimination experienced at work or in school may influence their personal interactions in other settings (Stodolska, 1998). For instance, to avoid similar discrimination, members of such groups may make their leisure choices "ethnically enclosed" to attenuate the contact with members of other groups and to negotiate the constraints of perceived and anticipated discrimination (Stodolska & Jackson, 1998). The preference for availability of information in their language and presence of others in their own ethnic group among Hispanics and Koreans, as noted earlier may reflect this issue. From another perspective, Whites' tendency/preference to visit parks in ethnically homogeneous group further justifies this phenomenon in that Black-White segregation and other forms of ethnic discrimination could be the will of Whites being imposed on others (Allen & Chung, 2000). Different from other minority groups, with higher educational achievements, Chinese and Japanese generally have higher socioeconomic status and are

situated in the social and work environment with emphasis of skills and professions (Waters & Eschbach, 1995). Language and cultural adaptation, therefore, are less problematic to them, which somewhat alleviates discrimination and facilitates their integration with the mainstream American society.

Language may also affect the recreation participation of ethnic minority groups (Juniu, 2000; Stodolska, 1998) and their group size in park visitation. With language barriers, visiting with a larger group could increase the sense of safety and increase the willingness to visit parks. In some cases, it could be that some group members translate or mediate the park visit for others. Difference in group size may also be associated with park users' preferences. Park users going to parks as individuals or couples may prefer more remote areas, while those in larger groups may choose more developed areas and facilities. For example, people who enjoy team sports would be more likely to visit parks with well-established facilities and equipments, such as soccer fields and basketball courts. People who enjoy social-oriented activities (e.g., picnicking and socializing) are more likely to go to parks with barbeque areas. For people who enjoy engaging in individual activities such as jogging and hiking, parks with natural scenery, less artificial facilities/equipment, and wildland activities are likely more favorable. Thus, differences in group sizes are likely to reflect differentiated park users' activity patterns, and differences in activity patterns would be expected to affect preferences and demands.

While Whites, African Americans, and Hispanics were relatively more likely to go to parks alone than were Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, other ethnic groups (Chinese, Hispanics, and Koreans) have been reported to show an inclination toward collectivism (e.g., picnicking and socializing) in outdoor recreation (Cordell et al., 2002; Dywer, 1994; Floyd et al., 1994; Gobster, 2002; Payne et al., 2002; Walker et al., 2001). Individualism and collectivism can be seen as the representation of culture, and these different inclinations influence the activity patterns of people with different cultural backgrounds. This notion corresponded to the ethnicity perspective proposed by Washburne (1978), which holds that leisure patterns of different ethnic groups are based on their subcultural norms and value systems.

In a study which explored ethnic and/or racial variations in leisure and recreation activities among White, Black, and Hispanic groups, Hutchison (1987) also supported this notion and concluded, "meaningful social and cultural differences between ethnic and racial subgroups produce distinctive patterns of recreation behavior" (p. 205). Similarly, Winter, Jeong, and Godbey (2004) examined outdoor recreation attitudes and behaviors among four Asian American cultural groups residing in the San Francisco Bay Area. Findings of their study indicated that outdoor recreation participation varied significantly by cultural group after accounting for by income, education, gender, and linguistic acculturation. Thus, as suggested by previous studies (Park & Cho, 1995; Shaull & Gramann, 1998), the centrality of family in Korean, Chinese, and Hispanic cultures may help explain their tendency to

visit parks in larger groups. The ethnicity perspective along with the concepts of individualism and collectivism offers an appropriate explanation for justifying the findings of this current study.

Men and women did not vary with regard to perceived benefits of urban parks. While both men and women agreed that parks provided many benefits, ethnicity again played a more important role in understanding peoples' perception of the benefits of urban parks and open spaces. In general, all ethnic groups agreed that parks and open spaces improved overall health, social/spiritual well being, environmental quality, and attracted desirable animals and birds. For all ethnic groups and for both men and women, however, economic benefits were rated somewhat lower than all other benefits. These findings are consistent with those from a nationwide study of the benefits of local recreation and parks by Godbey et al. (1992) and a study of watershed open space conservation by Elmendorf and Luloff (2001), which found that economic benefits were mentioned less than other types of benefits.

Conclusions

Given the many systematic differences which historically have existed between men and women in the various ethnic groups studied, it is surprising that gender was found not to be an important variable interacting with ethnic status. Such a finding supports ethnicity theory far more than marginality theory. That is, while men and women within a given ethnic group vary systematically in terms of education level, social status, and income level or earning potential, such differences are not reflected in their evaluations of urban parks and open spaces. Rather, ethnic status predicts such differences for both men and women.

The findings of ethnic variations in park preferences and use have implication for park and recreation planners and administrators. First, they need to call into account the ethnic composition of their constituencies. While this analysis has suggested a number of differences in ethnic park preferences and use, further research in these distinctions is needed if effective implementation is to be accomplished. It may be that something as simple as the number of park users a picnic table can accommodate could enhance the desirability and increase the use of a park for some groups.

Moreover, ethnic differences in the importance and "support" given to urban parks and open spaces may mean park and recreation professionals need to muster support for their services in different ways and to different degrees based upon the ethnic characteristics of potential users. Some differences can reflect either "lack of understanding" about urban parks and open spaces or "different understandings." In other words, a member of an ethnic group may simply have less knowledge about the attributes and benefits of urban parks or, conversely, he or she may be informed but has arrived at different conclusions concerning these matters. Marginality theory would seem to imply an individual from an ethnic group would be less informed

while ethnicity theory would seem to imply such differences would continue to exist after the individual was informed about such issues (Hutchison, 1987; Washburne, 1978; West, 1989). For the recreation and park manager, this difference is critical. In one case, it means responding to differences by supplying more information and otherwise "teaching" the individual how to use such services. In the other, it means re-orienting the management of urban parks and open spaces to suit the informed interests of the individual.

It is also important to note that, while there were differences among the various ethnic groups, there were also many important similarities. Regardless of ethnicity, subjects agreed that park characteristics included *Logistics* (parking, litter-free facilities, signage/instruction boards, safety and security) were most important, and that *Recreational Facilities* and *Traditional Park Landscapes* were highly desirable. For all ethnicities, visiting parks was largely a social rather than a solitary activity. Moreover, there was widespread agreement that urban parks and open spaces provided important benefits such as improving overall health, social/spiritual well-being, and environmental quality, while there was little support for the idea that parks were unnecessary tax burdens. Such findings suggest that, for all ethnicities, the availability of parks and open spaces represent desirable amenities, and underscore the importance of making these facilities accessible and desirable for all citizens.

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