

# Constraints to Outdoor Recreation among Ethnic and Racial Groups

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## Introduction and Literature Review

Leisure constraints comprises an important area of inquiry among leisure researchers. By leisure constraints, we mean those factors that limit people's participation in leisure activities, people's use of leisure services (e.g. parks and programs), or people's enjoyment of current activities. Researchers have long recognized that constraints impact leisure in different ways. This led Crawford and Godbey (1987) to delineate three types of constraints. Intrapersonal constraints are those internal factors (e.g., personality traits and reference group attitudes) that limit the development of preferences. Interpersonal constraints arise out of social interaction and shape both preferences and participation. Harassment and out-group hostility are examples of interpersonal constraints. Finally, structural constraints are those external factors, generally outside people's control, that intervene between preferences and participation.

There exists a growing number of studies devoted specifically to why people do not use outdoor recreation facilities. A few studies have sought to determine why people do not use specific facilities, such as public golf courses (Gobster, 1998) and nature centers (Rideout & Legg, 2000). Other studies have examined why people do not use local or regional parks (Arnold & Shinew, 1998; Scott & Jackson, 1996; Scott & Munson, 1994). Time constraints stand out as the principal reason why they do not use outdoor recreation facilities and visit parks. Researchers have identified a handful of other constraints that impact people's use of outdoor recreation facilities and public parks. These include lack of interest, lack of information, safety concerns, and lack of opportunities and access (Scott, in press).

Research shows income, gender, and age are excellent correlates of constraints (Jackson & Scott, 1999). However, comparatively little research has been pursued that focuses on constraints to outdoor recreation amenities among different ethnic and racial groups. A few studies show ethnic and racial minorities use of such amenities may be constrained by fear of crime and discrimination (Gobster, 2002; Rideout & Legg 2000; West, 1989). Ethnic and racial minorities may also be constrained by limited socioeconomic resources, value systems, beliefs, and socialization factors (Floyd, 1999, Phillip, 1995). Some studies have also shown that ethnic and racial minorities may lack interest (Gobster, 1998) and information (Johnson, Bowker, English, & Worthen, 1998) about outdoor recreation areas and wildland areas within close proximity to home.

Few studies to date have compared constraints experienced by Anglos, Hispanics and African-Americans. This study uses a state-wide sample of Texans to determine the extent to which race and ethnicity are related to constraints to people's use of outdoor recreation facilities away from home. Results from this study will expand our understanding of the range of factors that constrain people's use of outdoor recreation amenities. This study is important given that ethnic and racial minorities in Texas are far more likely than their Anglo counterparts to not participate in outdoor recreation activities away from home (Lee, Scott, & Floyd, 2001). Additionally, ethnic and racial minorities in Texas are projected to become a numerical majority in the next 10 years; by 2040, Hispanics are expected to comprise over half of Texas' population (Murdock, Hoque, Michael, White, & Pecotte, 1997). These trends make it imperative for researchers and natural resource managers to understand the factors that contribute to non-participation among Hispanics and other minority group populations.

## Methods

Data were drawn from a telephone survey conducted during the period of March 1 to April 30, 1998. The survey included responses from 3,000 Texas residents. Regional sample stratification was employed to make data from this study comparable to other regional data used in planning state recreation and conservation programs. Response rates across the 10 regions ranged from 57% (Upper Rio Grande) to 67% (West Texas). Anglos comprised 64% of the sample. Twenty-four percent of the sample was made up of Hispanics, 8% were African-Americans, and the rest 3% were other ethnic and racial minorities. Six percent of the interviews were conducted in Spanish.

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Forty-five percent of Texans said they had not visited an outdoor recreation facility away from home in the last 12 months. These “non-users” were asked how important 19 different statements were as reasons for not using these facilities. Response categories ranged from not important (1) to very important (3). A principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was executed to create dimensions of constraints. The procedure produced five factors (Table 1), which we labeled *intrapersonal constraints*, *economic constraints*, *information and access constraints*, *time commitments*, and *lack of interest*. We created multi-scales by averaging items within each factor. Cronbach’s alpha scores for the five scales ranged from .54 to .75. Schmitt (1996) proposed alpha coefficients of .50 or higher are adequate for research purposes. Four self-identified ethnic and racial groups were included in this study: Anglos, Hispanics, African-Americans, and others (mostly people of Asian background). Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to determine whether ethnic and racial groups differed in reported constraints. ANCOVA combines features of simple linear regression with one-way analysis of variance. Sex, age, education, income, and place of residence were used as covariates or control variables.

**Table 1-** Factor Analysis Results of Constraints to Use of Outdoor Recreation Facilities Away from Home

Factors and Items	Factor Loadings	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Factor 1: Intrapersonal constraints (<math>\alpha = .745</math>)</b>		<b>1.6</b>	<b>.50</b>
Family members or you have been in poor health	.65	1.7	.88
Facilities are poorly kept and maintained	.61	1.6	.81
You are afraid of getting hurt or being attacked	.60	1.5	.76
Weather conditions	.60	1.7	.84
Parks and outdoor recreation areas are too crowded	.54	1.6	.79
You don’t approve of the activities that other people are doing at recreation areas that you want to visit	.52	1.5	.72
You don’t have people to go with	.44	1.5	.77
(Eigenvalue=5.25; Variance explained=27.6%)			
<b>Factor 2: Economic Constraints (<math>\alpha = .743</math>)</b>		<b>1.5</b>	<b>.57</b>
The cost of admission is too high	.78	1.4	.74
Cost of camping fees are too high	.71	1.5	.75
You don’t have enough money to visit parks/outdoor recreation areas	.68	1.6	.80
Transportation problems	.50	1.4	.75
(Eigenvalue=1.5; Variance explained=7.8%)			
<b>Factor 3: Information and Access Constraints (<math>\alpha = .670</math>)</b>		<b>1.7</b>	<b>.63</b>
You don’t know where parks and outdoor recreation areas are located	.72	1.6	.78
You lack information about parks/outdoor recreation areas away from home	.68	1.7	.83
Parks and outdoor recreation areas are too far away	.62	1.7	.83
(Eigenvalue=1.3; Variance explained=6.7%)			
<b>Factor 4: Time Constraints (<math>\alpha = .558</math>)</b>		<b>2.2</b>	<b>.75</b>
Lack of time	.78	2.2	.88
You are too busy with family responsibilities	.76	2.1	.89
You have too many other leisure interests <sup>a</sup>	.48	1.7	.83
(Eigenvalue=1.1; Variance explained=5.8%)			
<b>Factor 5: Lack of Interest (<math>\alpha = .540</math>)</b>		<b>1.5</b>	<b>.61</b>
You are not interested in participating in outdoor recreational activities	.78	1.5	.75
You don’t like visiting parks and outdoor recreation areas	.73	1.4	.71
(Eigenvalue=1.0; Variance explained=5.4%)			
<b>Total variance explained = 53.3%</b>			

<sup>a</sup> Item not included in the construction of the Time Constraints scales.

## Results

*Time commitments* ( $M = 2.2$ ) were the most important constraints to Texans' use of outdoor recreation facilities away from home, followed by *information and access constraints* ( $M = 1.7$ ), *intrapersonal constraints* ( $M = 1.6$ ), *economic constraints* ( $M = 1.5$ ), and *lack of interest* ( $M = 1.5$ ). ANCOVA revealed nonwhites reported more constraints to the use of outdoor recreation facilities away from home than did Anglos (Table 2). More specifically, Hispanics, African-Americans, and other minorities were significantly more likely than Anglos to report their use of outdoor recreation facilities was blocked by *information and access constraints*, *intrapersonal constraints*, and *economic constraints*. In addition, Hispanics were more likely than African-Americans and other minorities to report their use of outdoor recreation areas was constrained by *lack of information and access*. Ethnic and racial groups in the study did not differ significantly in terms of time commitments and lack of interest.

**Table 2** - Relationship of Race to Constraints to Use of Outdoor Recreation Facilities Away from Home

Constraint Category	Whites Adjusted Mean	Hispanics Adjusted Mean	Blacks Adjusted Mean	Others Adjusted Mean	F-value
Intrapersonal Constraints	1.55	1.67	1.61	1.68	4.56 **
Economic Constraints	1.41	1.63	1.62	1.51	3.88 **
Information and Access Constraints	1.58	1.93	1.72	1.70	7.72 ***
Time Constraints	2.22	2.31	2.20	2.21	0.37
Lack of Interest	1.43	1.46	1.54	1.45	1.12

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

## Discussion

What important lessons can we glean from this study? First, time commitments constrained ethnic and racial groups equally. Thus, like their Anglo counterparts, Hispanics, African-American, and other ethnic and racial minorities make decisions about to spend their leisure time in light of competing demands on their time. Practitioners must build into their marketing and programming efforts strategies that help mitigate the impact these demands have on people's lives, including expanded opportunities to make reservations and more information about the time requirements in promotional literature (Scott, in press).

Second, lack of interest was not an important constraint among any of the groups in the study. This suggests that all things being equal, ethnic and racial minorities may use park and outdoor recreation facilities as long as they developed and programmed in ways that are culturally relevant. Third, economic, intrapersonal, and information/access constraints appear to be much more problematic for ethnic and racial minorities than they do for Anglos. These constraints were particularly acute for Hispanics. These results may be partly explained in terms of exclusion from outdoor recreation areas in the past. Research suggests that many public areas are felt to be for "whites only" and that trouble can arise for minorities should they visit these places. Furthermore, members of racial and ethnic groups are often made to feel unwelcome when they visit parks (particularly when they visit in large groups). Natural resource managers will need to develop strategies whereby ethnic and racial minorities are regarded as "welcome customers."

One limitation of this study is that our criterion variable (use of outdoor recreation facilities away from home) is rather specialized. It is important for future research to include a broader array of variables to understand

the impacts of race and ethnicity on leisure constraints. Future research would also do well to incorporate a multiple hierarchy stratification perspective. This theory shows how diffuse status characteristics work in combination of one another to make leisure problematic for individuals. Finally, future research must be grounded in the idea that there is vast diversity among Hispanics, African-Americans, and so on. Thus, research may well show that constraints are most acute among minority group members who have low levels of income.

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