



# Perceived Discrimination in Leisure settings in Latino Urban Communities

## Authors:

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## Abstract

This study explored: (1) whether Latino residents of two highly segregated neighbourhoods in Chicago, IL, USA, experienced or witnessed any discriminatory incidents in leisure settings; (2) what were the most frequent places and types of discrimination they encountered; (3) who were the perpetrators of discriminatory acts and (4) how people responded to discrimination. Moreover, Latinos own interracial/interethnic attitudes toward members of other ethnic/racial groups were examined. Data were collected with the use of surveys and focus groups. The results suggest perceived discrimination is an important constraint on recreation behaviour among Latino urban residents. The findings revealed that Latinos most often experienced discrimination from African Americans and Whites visiting the parks, as well as from law enforcement officers. Verbal harassment from other recreationists, being stopped and searched by police and being denied a service or being given substandard service were named most often as the types of discrimination. Survey respondents indicated that they responded to discrimination by visiting the locations with a group of people or by notifying the police, whereas focus groups participants suggested withdrawal was the most often employed tactic. The findings also suggested a disconnect between Latinos' interracial/interethnic attitudes at the individual and group levels. Although the interviewees reported having positive to neutral interracial/interethnic attitudes, they were willing to acknowledge the existence of prejudicial attitudes among Latinos at the group level

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This study explored: (1) whether Latino residents of two highly segregated neighbourhoods in Chicago, IL, USA, experienced or witnessed any discriminatory incidents in leisure settings; (2) what were the most frequent places and types of discrimination they encountered; (3) who were the perpetrators of discriminatory acts and (4) how people responded to discrimination. Moreover, Latinos' own interracial/interethnic attitudes toward members of other ethnic/racial groups were examined. Data were collected with the use of surveys and focus groups. The results suggest perceived discrimination is an important constraint on recreation behaviour among Latino urban residents. The findings revealed that Latinos most often experienced discrimination from African Americans and Whites visiting the parks, as well as from law enforcement officers. Verbal harassment from other recreationists, being stopped and searched by police and being denied a service or being given substandard service were named most often as the types of discrimination. Survey respondents indicated that they responded to discrimination by visiting the locations with a group of people or by notifying the police, whereas focus groups participants suggested withdrawal was the most often employed tactic. The findings also suggested a disconnect between Latinos' interracial/interethnic attitudes at the individual and group levels. Although the interviewees reported having positive to neutral interracial/interethnic attitudes, they were willing to acknowledge the existence of prejudicial attitudes among Latinos at the group level.

**Keywords:** discrimination; Latinos; urban communities; recreation; parks

Cette étude explore: (1) si les résidents latino de deux quartiers très distincts à Chicago, ont été victimes ou témoins d'incidents discriminatoires en durant leurs loisirs (2) quels sont les formes de discrimination la plus rencontrée et ou (3) qui sont les auteurs des actes discriminatoires, et (4) combien de personnes ont adressé cette discrimination. Les dimensions interraciales/attitudes interethniques envers les membres des autres groupes ethniques par les latinos sont aussi examinées. Les données ont été recueillies à l'aide d'enquêtes par questionnaire et par groupes de discussions. Les résultats suggèrent que la discrimination est une contrainte importante sur le comportement des loisirs chez les résidents latinos urbains. Les conclusions démontrent que les latinos durant leurs loisirs sont souvent victimes de discrimination par des groupes afro-américains et blancs, ainsi que par les agences du maintien de l'ordre. Le harcèlement verbal à partir d'autres amateurs de plein air, les faits d'être arrêté et fouillé par la police, et le refus de service de qualité inférieure ont été nommés comme types de discrimination. Les répondants au sondage ont indiqué qu'ils ont répondu à la discrimination en visitant les lieux

avec un groupe de personnes ou par notification à la police, tandis que des groupes de discussion suggèrent que le repliement est la tactique plus souvent utilisée. Les résultats ont également suggéré un décalage entre latinos interraciales/attitudes interethniques au niveau individuel et de groupe. Bien que les interrogées ce déclare positif ou neutre vis-à-vis leurs attitudes interraciales envers d'autres groupes ethniques, ils étaient prêts à reconnaître l'existence de certains préjugés chez leurs groupes.

**Mots-clés:** discrimination; groupes latinos; les communautés urbaines; loisirs; parcs

## Introduction

Over the last 40 years, the issues of racism and discrimination have been debated by many researchers, social activists and the public. Although it is undeniable that racism and discrimination adversely affected life chances of minorities in the pre-Civil Rights Era, many individuals question whether these issues are still salient in times of increased participation of minorities in many areas of public life, including holding the highest office in the second largest democracy in the world. Findings of numerous studies conducted in recent years, however, show that the United States and Canada are still struggling with incidents of racial discrimination and that although it may have changed in form and intensity, racial oppression remains common in today's world characterized by increased migration, globalization and diversity (Bonilla-Silva, 2002; Henry, Tator, Mattis, & Rees, 1995; Mindiola, Niemann, & Rodriguez, 2002; Omi & Winant, 1994).

The incidents of blatant discrimination may have decreased during the last several decades, but modern, less overt forms of oppression, such as symbolic, aversive and colour-blind racism are still present in today's society. People who engage in symbolic racism openly support principles of equal opportunity, but disapprove the policies and programs whose specific aim is to provide such equal opportunities for all racial and ethnic groups (Brief et al., 1997). They believe that too much has been done by governments and society to increase social mobility of minority populations and that people owe their disadvantaged position to their lack of persistence and self-motivation. Dovidio and Gaertner (2000) and Gaertner, Dovidio, Nier, Hodson, and Houlette (2005) referred to similar behaviours as "aversive racism," which Gaertner et al. (2005) defined as the "conflict between the denial of personal prejudice and unconscious negative feelings and beliefs" (p. 377). According to Bonilla-Silva (2002), these days few Whites in the United States or Canada claim to be racist and most assert that they "don't see any colour, just people" (p. 1). However, racial inequality still persists in countries where most Whites claim that race is no longer relevant. Bonilla-Silva believed that contemporary racial inequality is produced through, what he called, colour-blind racism – new racism practices that are subtle, institutional and apparently non-racial. Henry et al. (1995) claimed that the so-called "democratic racism" is also typical of the Canadian society. They defined democratic racism as a set of beliefs and arguments that "reduces the conflict between maintaining a commitment to both egalitarian and non-egalitarian values" (p. 13) and allows the coexistence of democratic principles and discriminatory attitudes and treatment of minorities. Such democratic racism that is "deeply embedded within Canadian society" (Malhi & Boon, 2007, p. 127) is expressed through many covert practices, including blaming the victim, colour-blindness, "we-they" polarization and multicultural programs and policies that perpetuate inequality. This new ideology has become a formidable political tool for the maintenance of the racial order.

Blatant or subtle, actual or perceived, discrimination is one of the main factors that influence leisure participation among ethnic and racial minorities (Erikson, Johnson, &

Kivel, 2009; Flood & McAvoy, 2007; Floyd, 1998; Roberts, 2009; Stodolska & Walker, 2007). Issues of discrimination are salient in modern American and Canadian societies, where ethnic and racial groups constitute a growing portion of the population. According to the U.S. Census, in 2006 more than 30% of the American population consisted of representatives of the non-Caucasian minority groups (2006–2008 American Community Survey) and this proportion is expected to increase to 50.1% by the year 2050 (U.S. Census, 2009). The changes in the racial and ethnic makeup of the Canadian population are projected to occur even faster. While in 2001, 13% of the population of Canada belonged to a visible minority group, by 2017, 19–23% of Canadians are expected to be non-Caucasian (Census of Canada, 2005).

As multicultural societies, both the United States and Canada have long histories of interracial/interethnic conflicts and tensions. Attitude surveys conducted during the last several decades in Canada revealed that many mainstream respondents harbour prejudicial attitudes toward minorities (Henry et al., 1995). For example, in the 1970s, Henry (1978) found that “16% of the White [Canadian] population was extremely intolerant and 35% somewhat racist” (as cited in Henry et al., 1995, p. 87). According to the Ethnic Diversity Survey (Statistics Canada, 2003) and a report by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2003), the problem of racial discrimination and racial profiling is still prevalent in Canadian society. For instance, the Ethnic Diversity Survey revealed that almost a quarter of the Canadian population aged 15 years and older at some point in time felt uncomfortable because of their ethnicity, culture, race, skin colour, language, accent or religion. The problem may be even more widespread because of the previously discussed subtle ways of inflicting discrimination. As Henry et al. (1995) commented, an “important dimension of racism is its ability to be so subtly expressed or indirectly implied that its targets are not even aware of it” (p. 16). Moreover, prejudice and discrimination exist not only at the interpersonal levels, but rather, as many studies showed, racism in Canada is a societal issue that penetrates the sphere of workplace (Malhi & Boon, 2007), police (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2003), housing (Teixeria, 2006), education and art (Henry et al., 1995).

The importance of research on discrimination in the context of leisure was stressed by Arai and Kivel (2009), Floyd (2007), Philipp (2000), Shinew et al. (2006), Stodolska (2000), Stodolska and Walker (2007), as well as in the recent literature review by Floyd, Bocarro, and Thompson (2008). Even though many of these authors agreed that research on ethnicity and race has become more “mature” since the 1970s and 1980s and covers a greater variety of issues, including discrimination, this area of academic inquiry is still considered underdeveloped. For instance, Floyd et al. (2008) in their review of research published in five major leisure journals concluded that articles on race and ethnicity represent only 8% of the total number of articles in the leisure field and that studies on discrimination constitute an even smaller share of the literature.

Lack of attention to interracial/interethnic attitudes among members of minority groups and to horizontal (minority-to-minority) discrimination is particularly apparent (Mindiola et al., 2002). The diversified demographic makeup of the United States and Canada, changes in the perception of ethnic and racial categories, shifts in migration movements and the current economic crisis that leads to even higher levels of stratification in society are likely to increase the salience of racism and discrimination in the future. To try to reduce the persistence of racism in American and Canadian societies, we have to pay close attention to contemporary conflicts, analyze relationships between different racial and ethnic groups and examine the operation of racism and discrimination in the sphere of leisure (Floyd, 2007).

The main objectives of this study were (1) to explore whether Latino residents of two highly segregated neighborhoods in Chicago, IL, USA, experienced or witnessed any discriminatory incidents in leisure settings; (2) to examine the most frequent places and types of discrimination; (3) to identify who were the perpetrators of the discriminatory acts; and (4) to discover how people responded to discrimination. Moreover, we analyzed Latinos' own interracial/interethnic attitudes toward members of other ethnic groups. This article is a result of two larger projects that examined: (1) preferences, needs and expectations of minority users with respect to urban parks and interracial/interethnic interactions in park spaces, and (2) the use of natural environments for recreation among Latino urban residents. Because issues of discrimination and interracial/interethnic conflict featured prominently in both studies, we decided to explore this topic more in-depth in this article.

### **Background information**

This study took place in two urban communities in the city of Chicago, IL, USA – the working-class neighbourhood of South Lawndale (Little Village) and the lower-to-middle-class community of East Side (Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago, 2005a, 2005b). The two communities were selected as the sites for the study because their residents are predominantly Latinos of Mexican origin. There are three main areas of concentration of Latinos in the city of Chicago, but the third one (Humboldt Park) was excluded from the study because it is inhabited by Latinos of predominantly Puerto Rican descent and our objective was to maintain the ethnic homogeneity of the samples.

Little Village or *La Villita* (official name – South Lawndale) is the largest Mexican neighbourhood in the city of Chicago, which serves as a gateway for Mexican American migrants for much of the Midwestern United States. This area was initially settled after the 1871 Chicago fire by German, Czech (Bohemian) and later Polish immigrants (Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago, 2005b). By 1900, Bohemian immigration reached such proportions that Little Village was considered the largest Bohemian settlement outside of Prague. The community developed rapidly around the First World War and in 1930 reached a population of over 75,000. In 1950, it was inhabited primarily by Poles, Czechs and Germans, whereas African Americans started to slowly move into the area. However, since 1960, Little Village has become predominantly populated by Latinos. In 2000, just over 91,000 people lived in Little Village, 83% of whom were Latino (out of which, 76% were Mexican Americans) (U.S. Census, 2000). This represented a significant increase in Little Village's Latino population from 4% in 1970 to 47% in 1980 and to 83% in 2000.<sup>1</sup> In 2000, nearly half of the local residents were foreign-born, the median household income was \$32,320, 23.1% of residents lived below the poverty level and the unemployment rate in the community was at 11.7% (U.S. Census). Little Village is characterized as the youngest population of any Chicago neighbourhood – the median age of its residents is under 21 years. Even though the great majority of houses located in Little Village were built prior to the First World War, the community is starting to experience the process of gentrification.

East Side is a community on the south side of Chicago, located on the Illinois–Indiana border on the shores of Lake Michigan. It has been a site of heavy industry (i.e. iron and steel production) since the 1870s (Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago, 2005a). The presence of a natural port and proximity to railroads were key factors in attracting industry to the area. The area was originally settled by German and Swedish immigrants, and later by

Croatians, Slovenians, Serbs and Italians. The neighbourhood was a site of race riots that took place after African Americans attempted to move into the area following the Second World War. The majority of riots were concentrated in Calumet Park and in Trumbull Park located in the neighbouring community of South Deering. Today, East Side is predominantly a Latino neighbourhood. In 1980, 13% of East Side residents were Latino. In 2000, out of 23,653 residents of East Side, 68% were Latino, and of those, 88% were Mexican, 4% were Puerto Rican and 8% were other Latino (U.S. Census, 2000). In 2000, the median household income in the community reached \$39,724, the unemployment rate was at 12.5% and 12.4% of the residents lived below the poverty line.

Little Village and East Side are surrounded primarily by African American neighborhoods. The three communities that border East Side from the north and west (Calumet Heights, South Chicago and South Deering) are 94.5%, 70.7% and 62.5% African American, respectively. North Lawndale, which borders Little Village from the North, is 95% African American (U.S. Census, 2000). According to Mindiola et al. (2002), the proximity of Latino and African American neighborhoods may cause an “overlap of social spaces used by the two groups” (p. 13) and lead to interracial/interethnic tensions.

Chicago has always been a deeply racially segregated city and large portions of its minority populations have experienced rampant poverty caused, among others reasons, by the loss of manufacturing jobs because of closures of many industrial plants. Tensions fuelled by the demolition of public housing projects and resulting resettlement of predominantly poor African American residents as well as the widespread corruption and political manipulations have led to many conflicts among local minority groups divided along racial lines (Hagedorn, n.d.).

Another issue contributing to the development of conflicts among ethnic and racial minority groups is crime, much of which is related to gang activity that takes place along the neighbourhood boundaries and in public areas of the communities such as parks, streets, schools and bus stops. In North Lawndale, which extends north of Little Village, homicide rates in 2008 stood at 40.7 per 100,000 and aggravated assaults at 512.4 per 100,000 residents. At the same time, homicide rates in Little Village were at 23.1 per 100,000 and aggravated assaults were at 119.7 per 100,000 residents (Chicago Police Department, 2009). Gang-motivated murders constituted 33% of all murders that were committed in Chicago between 1991 and 2004 (Chicago Police Department, 2005).

There are at least 40 organized street gangs with an estimated 38,000 members in the city of Chicago (Chicago Police Department, 2007). Chicago gangs have a history that dates back to the nineteenth century, but they went through many transformations during the Civil Rights Era and in recent decades. Both Black and Latino gangs participated in the civil rights struggle and often clashed with each other and other militant political groups such as the Black Panthers (Hagedorn, n.d.). The 1970s witnessed the move of the gang leadership from the streets to the prisons (most notably, the Joliet Correctional Center) with established lines of communication with their “street units.” In 1978, Chicago gangs divided into two major constellations or alliances – Peoples and Folks. The decades of the 1980s and 1990s witnessed a rapid expansion and militarization of gangs that derived most of their income from the narcotics trade. As a result, Chicago communities have experienced an increase in violence related to gang wars over the control of the territory and the drug market. According to Trasher (in Hagedorn, n.d., p. 12), most of the Chicago gangs have membership persisting over generations and are “institutionalized,” meaning that they:

persist despite leadership changes (e.g., killed, incarcerated, or matured out), have an organization complex enough to sustain multiple roles of members (including children), adapt to changing environments without dissolving (e.g., police repression), fulfill some community needs (economic, security, services), and organize a distinct outlook of its members (sometimes called a gang subculture).

The four major gangs in the Chicago area are the Conservative Vice Lord Nation (or the “Vice Lords,” mostly African American), the Black Gangster Disciple Nation (or GDs – “Gangster Disciples,” mostly African American), the Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation (“Latin Kings,” mostly Latino) and the Black P Stone Nation (mostly African American). Chicago is also a home to other smaller gangs including the Insane Gangster Satan Disciples (or “Satan Disciples,” mostly Latino), the Black Disciples (mostly African American), the Two-Six Nation (or the “Two-Six,” mostly Latino), the Mickey Cobras (mostly African American) and the Latin Counts (mostly Latino) (Chicago Gangs, 2010; Hagedorn, n.d.).

Although street gangs exist in virtually every community, Little Village is considered to be “one of the most chronically . . . violent in the city” with several decades of inter-gang fighting history (Hahn, 1999, p. 1). The two major gangs in Little Village are the Latin Kings who belong to the Peoples Nation and the Two-Six who are associated with the Folk Nation. The Latin Kings are an older and more established gang, with significantly larger and better organized membership than the Two-Six (Hahn). The two other gangs that can be found in Little Village are Ridgeway Boys and Insane Two Boys. The North Lawndale that borders Little Village from the north is home to two large and well-organized, predominantly African American gangs – Vice Lords and Gangster Disciples. Such proximity leads to the high incidence of crime along the gang boundary and many cases of interracial tensions. There are also several gangs in East Side: Spanish Vice Lords, Almighty Insane Latin Counts, Aztec Souls, Latin Stones and Latin Kings. Spanish Vice Lords are a relatively young gang that was established in the 1980s, but nonetheless is infamous for its violence. Aztec Souls are an even younger (emerged in the late 1990s) and smaller gang that became known for its “war” with the Kings. Proximity of different gangs creates a very dangerous and volatile situation in the neighborhoods. Parks and other public areas (such as street corners and alleys) are often places where gang members gather, sell narcotics and engage in drive-by-shootings.

## **Literature review**

Before we proceed to examining the issues of discrimination in leisure contexts, we would like to clarify some of the terms that will be used in this study. Although the traditional, essentialist definitions of race have focused on people’s physical characteristics, many modern conceptualizations of race consider it to be a social concept based on the assumption that physical characteristics of a person (e.g. skin color, facial features) may be related to his/her “intellectual, moral, or cultural superiority” (Henry et al., 1995, p. 4). *Racism* is the ideology based on this assumption. It refers to beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of individuals, policies and practices of institutions and collective belief systems within a given society and/or culture (Henry et al., 1995). Although racism is certainly related to power distribution in society, it may not only be reserved for White Americans and Canadians (Omi & Winant, 1994). According to Omi and Winant, recent societal changes made it possible for certain groups of minorities to obtain enough power to engage in

racist and prejudicial treatment of other minorities or even members of the mainstream. Even though cases of horizontal racism have often been noted, White dominance is still characteristic of American and Canadian societies and the race-related power distribution discrepancy still largely revolves around the White–non-White dichotomy (Arai & Kivel, 2009; Henry et al., 1995). Receiving more attention in recent years, the discussions of whiteness have mainly focused on privileges and advantages and on what is considered to be “normal” (e.g. White, mainstream culture) versus what is thought to be “irregular” or “deviant” (e.g. culture of Blacks and other minorities) (Arai & Kivel, 2009; McDonald, 2009; Mowatt, 2009; Roberts, 2009).

Similar to racism, *discrimination* may be enacted at the interpersonal, group or institutional levels (Feagin & Eckberg, 1980). Feagin and Eckberg defined racial/ethnic discrimination as “the practices and actions of dominant race-ethnic groups that have a differential and negative impact on subordinate race-ethnic groups” (p. 9). Tumin (1973) saw discrimination as the “translation of prejudicial beliefs into consequential behaviour” (p. 418), and Allport (1954) believed it occurs “when the object of prejudice is placed at some disadvantage not merited by his own misconduct” (p. 10). Although discrimination, as opposed to racism, does not have to be directed toward people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds, when using the term “discrimination” in this article, we will refer to racial or ethnic discrimination. Racial discrimination was defined by the United Nations (UN) as:

any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life. (United Nations Commission for Human Rights, *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, part I, Article 1, para. 1)

Any discussions of prejudice, discrimination and racism should not lose sight of the fact that these terms are rather fluid and evolve over time (Arai & Kivel, 2009; Henry et al., 1995). Along with cultural changes and changes in social norms, meanings of these terms may be altered.

Although in this article we will not provide separate analyses of the effects of our subjects’ racial versus ethnic backgrounds, we would like to remind the reader that race and ethnicity are distinct concepts. Henry et al. (1995) cautioned that “race” should not be used interchangeably with “culture” or “ethnicity,” and Omi and Winant (1994) suggested that “‘Blacks’ in ethnic terms are as diverse as ‘whites’” (p. 22). The Ethnic Diversity Survey (Statistics Canada, 2003) also noted that visible minorities report higher levels of discrimination and unfair treatment than non-visible minorities. In the leisure field, Floyd (1998) also discussed the inappropriateness of using the terms interchangeably and criticized “reliance on racial categories and ethnic labels as measures of ‘culture’ to test for ethnic differences” (p. 6) prevalent in leisure research.

The leisure literature suggests that racism and discrimination are among the most damaging potential outcomes of interracial interaction and some of the most significant constraints on the use of leisure settings by minority groups. Philipp (2000) claimed that leisure itself may serve as a context conducive to discrimination and segregation because leisure is not controlled and regulated by others, people can choose with whom and where they participate in recreation and this may contribute to the persistence of racial boundaries. In other words, leisure settings may be used as places for “creation and reinforcement





of racist practices in contemporary society” (Floyd, 2007, p. 249). Floyd (1998) identified perceived discrimination as one of the three important theoretical frameworks, besides marginality and ethnicity, that condition minorities’ willingness to engage in leisure pursuits as well as the likelihood of their actual participation. In this framework, decisions about participation or non-participation in leisure are influenced by an individual’s perception of a given leisure activity or setting as likely to lead to discrimination or as welcoming and friendly (Flood & McAvoy, 2007). To enhance the clarity of this review, we will organize studies on discrimination in leisure contexts based on the types of discriminatory acts and people’s responses to discrimination.

### *Types of discrimination*

Discrimination can be classified in numerous ways; however, the most common typologies classify discrimination based on the sources of discriminatory treatment (Blahna & Black, 1993; Feagin & Eckberg, 1980). Blahna and Black identified six categories of racism: racism from other recreationists, racism from professional staff, differential upkeep and management of leisure settings, potential racism, historical racism and effects of past economic discrimination. Blahna and Black’s classification will serve as a framework for this review.

#### *Racism from other recreationists*

Instances of discrimination perpetrated by other recreationists were illustrated in a number of studies, including those by Doherty and Taylor (2007), Feagin (1991), Hibbler and Shinew (2002), Stodolska and Jackson (1998), Flood and McAvoy (2007), Tirone (1999) and others. Feagin, for instance, recounted a story of a 10-year-old girl who was called racist names in the swimming pool, Tirone described incidents of blatant discrimination encountered by South Asian Canadian teens, and Doherty and Taylor discussed unpleasant experiences of recent immigrant youth during physical education classes in Canada. Hibbler and Shinew reported that interracial couples experienced constant stares from other recreationists, whereas in Stodolska and Jackson’s study, Poles in Canada experienced frequent discriminatory acts, such as being ridiculed and spoken to in a patronizing tone. Livengood and Stodolska (2004) showed how frequency of discrimination can be related to contemporary political and social events. For instance, discriminatory acts perpetrated against American Muslims increased significantly in the post-9/11 period. Muslims were called racist names and experienced hostile looks and gestures in different leisure settings such as parks, libraries and on the streets. Flood and McAvoy reported that Native Americans experienced discrimination from groups of forest visitors on an almost regular basis. One of the Native Americans interviewed in their study described being watched and harassed by White recreationists and hunters in the Kootenai National Forest, which made him feel uncomfortable and prompted him to leave. The same person recounted how other members of the Salish-Kootenay tribe were threatened with firearms on their own reservation lands. Similar stories were recounted by Native Americans in McDonald and McAvoy’s (1997) study. Blahna and Black (1993) described the experience of two African American young men who were chased out of the beach in a White Chicago neighbourhood by a group of Caucasian boys who were throwing bats and balls and yelling racist comments. The research by Philipp (1999), who compared perceptions of welcomeness in different leisure activities, also brought attention to the existence of unwritten rules, which exclude minority members from certain recreation places and activities.

### *Racism from professional staff*

Hibbler and Shinew (2002) reported cases of poor treatment, substandard service or even refusal of service experienced by interracial couples in leisure settings. In the study by Blahna and Black (1993), instead of protecting the rights of young African American men, the police told them that they were not supposed to be on the beach in the White neighbourhood. Flood and McAvoy (2007) found that the “conflict with official personnel” as well as the “rules and attitudes of Forest Service” (p. 204) were among the three most often reported barriers faced by Native Americans recreating in National Forests. One of the respondents in Flood and McAvoy’s study described his experience of being closely checked by Forest rangers, whereas others reported being harassed, profiled and receiving threats from Forest Rangers. Moreover, even in cases when professional staff was not directly engaged in the discriminatory incidents, they often were unwilling to intervene when such incidents occurred. Similar indifference on the part of leaders of recreational programs reported by South Asians teens in Canada made them feel even more unwelcome (Tirone, 1999). On the contrary, in Doherty and Taylor’s (2007) study of adolescents who recently immigrated to Canada revealed that attitudes of coaches and PE teachers made a big difference in how welcome and accepted they felt. Some of the teenagers reported that these adults not only helped them enjoy participation in physical activities without feeling excluded but also became role models for the youth.

### *Differential upkeep and management of leisure settings*

Differential upkeep and management of parks in minority communities is a well-documented phenomenon (Floyd, Taylor, & Whitt-Glover, 2009). The examples of differential upkeep of parks in Black neighbourhoods were presented in the study by Blahna and Black (1993), in which several respondents noted that the amount of money spent as well as cleanliness and general upkeep of parks in their neighbourhoods were subpar as compared to the parks in White suburban communities. Stodolska and Shinew (2010) also provided evidence of poor maintenance of parks and other natural environments in Latino neighbourhoods that dissuaded minority recreationists from using these environments for physical activity.

### *Potential racism*

Blahna and Black (1993) defined perceived, expected or potential racism as “cases where respondents express general fear or discomfort due to potential for, or expectation of, prejudice or discrimination” (p. 114). It may be formed as a result of previous experience of discrimination by the individual or a person he/she knows, the incidents presented in the media, as well as generally known facts or even myths and rumours concerning mistreatment in “White” neighbourhoods. Floyd and Gramann (1995) suggested that the level of assimilation was an influential factor in the perception of discrimination among Mexican immigrants. Their study showed that Mexican Americans with higher levels of assimilation and education expected less discrimination and felt more secure. West’s (1989) study was one of the first to show how expectation of discrimination and feeling “unwelcome” and “uneasy” restricted African Americans’ visitation to suburban Detroit parks. Respondents in Tirone’s (1999) study reported that they “abandoned the idea of even trying to become involved in public sport and recreation programs for their leisure” (p. 2). The notion of perceived discrimination was also referred to in a number of other studies on discrimination in leisure settings, including the ones by Flood and McAvoy (2007), Hibbler

and Shinew (2002), McDonald and McAvoy (1997), Philipp (1999) and Stodolska and Jackson (1998). They all highlighted the important role of perceived discrimination in conditioning minorities' recreation patterns.

### *Historical racism and effects of past economic discrimination*

The effects of historical racism and "past in present discrimination" are still relatively unexplored in leisure research. As Floyd (1998) commented, "while the marginality hypothesis suggests that discrimination is a determinant of racial and ethnic participation differences, with few exceptions modeling the impact of historical and contemporary discrimination on racial and ethnic minority leisure patterns has been largely neglected" (p. 6). Moreover, he noted that studies commonly fail to investigate sources of socio-economic differences between groups and consider how they condition leisure behaviour among minority populations.

### *Responses to discrimination*

Responses to discriminatory acts were also noted in a number of studies that investigated incidents of racism in leisure settings. Several common reactions to perceived or experienced discrimination were described in the literature, including verbal and/or physical confrontation, withdrawal and changes in leisure behaviour.

### *Verbal/physical confrontation*

Verbal confrontation is a rather time- and energy-consuming strategy and may sometimes be impossible because of a person's shyness, lack of language skills or the brevity of the interaction. An example is when remarks are made from a window of a passing vehicle (Livengood & Stodolska, 2004). However, some people choose to respond to discrimination with a polite suggestion, sarcastic remark, or sometimes even aggressive verbal retort (Feagin, 1991). Others try to prevent acts of discrimination by being extremely polite, using icebreakers and even educating mainstream population about their culture or religion (Livengood & Stodolska, 2004). People have also been shown to use their middle-class status and resources to prevent discrimination. For instance, in Feagin's study, an African American president of a financial institution used his knowledge and social networks afforded to him by his middle-class status to defend his rights and to publicize the incident of discrimination he experienced in a restaurant. However, few people have the courage and resources to actively respond to discrimination and the majority of victims prefer the strategy of withdrawal and resigned acceptance (Feagin, 1991).

### *Withdrawal*

Withdrawal is one of the most common reactions to discrimination, but it often produces detrimental consequences for the members of minority groups and for the society as a whole. Withdrawal not only deprives people of valuable leisure experiences and reduces the number of possible places they can visit, but also masks the existing problem by creating an image of peace and happiness in homogenous leisure settings. The example of withdrawal as a reaction to discrimination was presented by Flood and McAvoy (2007). In their study, as a response to discrimination, more than 20% of interviewed tribal members chose not to return to specific places in the Kootenay National Forest. West's (1989) study

revealed more examples of withdrawal as a response to discrimination experienced by African American park users. In a similar way, many South Asian Canadian teens (Tirone, 1999) and recent adolescent newcomers to Canada (Doherty & Taylor, 2007) discontinued participation in certain sport activities when faced with discrimination. The problem of withdrawal was also discussed by Hibbler and Shinew (2002). Their findings showed narrow social networks resulting from racist attitudes experienced at work and in the families. Consequently, interracial couples were forced to withdraw from many activities they found interesting, such as travelling or participating in activities with their co-workers. They also chose to engage in more isolated leisure because of racist acts experienced in leisure settings.

### *Changes in leisure behaviour*

Changes in leisure behaviour may include changing place and time of participation, altering the activity *per se*, visiting leisure settings with a group of people, being more careful and aware of the surroundings and finding detailed information about the particular place before the visit. Flood and McAvoy (2007) and McDonald and McAvoy (1997), in their studies of Native Americans' leisure, showed that avoidance of contact with non-Native Americans, and changing the time and place of the visit were among the most popular tactics employed by members of this minority group. In both studies, interviewees chose to visit remote areas for picnics, fishing, camping, berry-picking and other traditional leisure activities. Besides avoidance, respondents preferred to participate in leisure activities only with members of their families or Native American friends. Leisure behaviour was also modified for African American and Hispanic participants in the study by Blahna and Black (1993). In response to potential and real discrimination, they visited leisure settings in large groups. Interviewees in Hibbler and Shinew's (2002) study chose to be more aware of their surroundings and to obtain information about the setting before the visit. Interracial couples usually called the place or asked friends for recommendations before visiting. Almost all possible responses to discrimination – alteration of place, time and co-participants, using caution and close examination of the information about activity or place and ethnic enclosure in leisure – were identified in Livengood and Stodolska's (2004) study of the experiences with discrimination among Muslims in post-9/11 America.

This research project is intended to contribute to the literature on discrimination in leisure settings by examining perceptions of discrimination experiences by Latino Americans, the perpetrators of discriminatory acts and responses to discrimination. Moreover, although the majority of previous research examined “vertical discrimination” (i.e. discriminatory acts perpetrated primarily by Whites on members of minority groups), this study will explore horizontal forms of discrimination, by paying particular attention to interracial attitudes among members of minority populations.

### **Methods**

The data analyzed in this article were collected in two research projects. In the first project, surveys of park visitors were collected in two parks – Piotrowski Park located in the predominantly Latino community of Little Village and Marquette Park located in one of the predominantly African American communities in Chicago. The study focused on preferences, needs and expectations of minority users with respect to urban parks and on the interracial/interethnic interactions in park spaces (including interactions among users and staff of different ethnic/racial backgrounds). A large section of the survey focused on the

locations, types, perpetrators and reactions to discrimination experienced by the visitors. Because reports of discrimination among the Latino visitors to Piotrowski Park were quite prevalent (almost a quarter of respondents reported experiencing mistreatment in the park), we decided to explore this issue further in the second project that was conducted two years later in the Latino communities of Little Village and East Side. In this study, in-depth information on interactions between people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds in recreation settings and interracial/interethnic attitudes among Latinos were collected with the use of focus groups.

This article presents the results of the survey that was distributed in Piotrowski Park and of the four focus groups conducted in Little Village and East Side. Because of the small sample size of the survey (only responses of those who had experienced discrimination were analyzed), the survey was treated as a preliminary source of information for the study.

### *Quantitative stage*

In the summer of 2005, 202 questionnaires were distributed to Latino visitors to the Piotrowski Park in Little Village. The 23-acre park features six baseball diamonds, five tennis courts, volleyball courts, basketball courts, field space for soccer, a large playground and walking/running paths. The field house contains a large gym and a theatrical stage. A large outdoor swimming pool is located next to the field house. The park is notorious for its safety problems mainly related to gang activity in the area. However, there is a visible police presence in the area surrounding the park. District 10 of the Chicago Police Department dispatches special patrol cars to monitor park areas in times of high use; police officers are assigned to visit the park field house at least once a day (our review of their logs indicated several daily visits); and certain areas of the park have been designated as “hot spots” for crime activity, which gives the police powers to disperse youths congregating on park corners.

The questionnaires distributed in the park were designed in English and back translated to Spanish. A pretest helped to modify questions and verify the Spanish translation of the questionnaire. Both English and Spanish language versions of the questionnaire were offered to respondents, the majority of whom chose to complete the Spanish version. Questions were designed to gather information about Latinos’ experiences with discrimination, types, perpetrators of and reaction to discrimination in the park. First, respondents were asked (Yes/No) whether they perceived having been discriminated against or treated badly in this park because of their race or ethnic background. People who provided affirmative responses to this question were asked how often they were discriminated against by staff, police and law enforcement, other recreationists, White people visiting the park, Asian people visiting the park and African American people visiting the park. They were also asked about the types of discrimination they experienced, including verbal harassment, being denied a service or being given bad service, being stopped and/or searched by the police, being physically attacked or experiencing other acts of discrimination. The fourth question queried people’s responses to discrimination. The list of options with which they were provided included: “I visit park less often”; “I let the park authorities know what happened”; “I still come to the park, but I don’t enjoy my visits as much as I would otherwise”; “I notify the police”; “I do nothing”; “I try to visit the park with a group of people” and “I confront the people who are harassing me.” Finally, respondents were asked whether they frequented other recreation places and, if so, how often they have been discriminated in these other places. The locations included golf courses, beaches, playgrounds,

restaurants, campgrounds and swimming pools. For each question, five-point Likert scales with response options from “never” to “very often” were included.

Questionnaires were distributed throughout the week (including the weekend) from morning to sunset by a male/female Latino team. We believed that their ethnic background and fluency in Spanish language would increase rapport of potential participants. An opportunity to win a US\$50 gift certificate to local businesses was used as an incentive to participation in the study.

Out of 202 completed questionnaires that were collected in Piotrowski Park, 46 individuals reported experiencing discrimination in the park. Most of the participants were young to middle-aged people of lower socio-economic status. Almost 70% of the respondents were between 21 and 40 years of age. The sample included nearly an equal number of male and female respondents (49.5% and 50.5%, respectively), the majority of whom (55%) were married. The respondents had low levels of education (almost 58% obtained less than high school education and only 4.2% graduated from college or university). A significant proportion of respondents (55.5%) were working full-time or self-employed, only 12% were employed part-time, 7.3% were unemployed and 16.8% were homemakers. The annual personal income for more than half of the participants was below US\$30,000, and only 1.2% of the respondents had annual incomes higher than US\$60,000. The great majority of the Latinos (70%) were born in Mexico and 27.9% were born in the United States. Four people were born in other Latin American countries, including Puerto Rico, Guatemala and Colombia. On the question regarding their English language proficiency, including the ability to speak, read, write and understand English, over 50% of the respondents described their English language skills as excellent. However, around 25% rated their English language proficiency as poor. Because of the small sample size, only descriptive statistics could be provided, and thus, the survey itself was considered to provide only preliminary information for the rest of the study.

### *Qualitative stage*

The qualitative stage of the project was based on an interpretative, grounded theory approach. Charmaz (2006) defined grounded theory as “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves” (p. 4). Strauss (2003) claimed that grounded theory is a style of conducting research, rather than a specific technique. He also emphasized the importance of researchers as “instruments” for developing the theory through the “intimate relationship with data” (p. 6). One of the unique characteristics of grounded theory is simultaneous performance and interplay of data collection and data analysis. Such an approach is adopted to increase the insights and clarify potentially unexpected findings (Davison, 2001).

To collect qualitative data in this study, four focus groups with residents of Little Village and East Side were conducted from June to September 2007. Focus groups were conducted until theoretical saturation was reached; that is, until no new or conflicting information was obtained in conversations with participants. Interviewees were recruited using snowball sampling through the existing contacts of the researchers, as well as through local churches and Latino-own businesses.

In total, 26 Latinos of diverse socio-economic, gender and age backgrounds participated in the focus groups. Two focus groups were conducted with first-generation immigrants and two with second-generation Latinos (i.e. born in the United States). All participants were of Mexican descent. An equal number of men and women (13 of each) of different ages (from early 20s to late 60s) took part in the focus groups. Participants

represented a variety of occupations, including childcare providers, teaching assistants, car mechanics, an airline customer service employee, a chiropractor assistant, three university students and two unemployed individuals. Interviewees also worked in construction, hotels, factories and nursing homes.

To ensure confidentiality and gain trust of participants, they were not asked about the legality of their status in the United States and were given pseudonyms. One of the research assistants participating in the research project was born in Mexico and, for a period, lived in one of the neighborhoods investigated in the study. His cultural background helped to establish trust and rapport with focus group participants. Moreover, his fluency in Spanish allowed two of the focus groups to be conducted in the native language of the participants. Four other researchers involved in the research project were of non-Latino descent.

Focus groups lasted between 1.5 and 2.5 hours, two of which took place in the residence of the participants, one in the residence of one of the researchers and the fourth in a local Mexican restaurant. Participants were paid US\$25 for participation. During each focus group, food and refreshments were provided. To eliminate one of the constraints on participation in the study and to create a less formal atmosphere, participants were allowed to bring their children.

This article presents an analysis of the discussions related to experiences with discrimination and Latinos' attitudes toward the members of other ethnic groups. Specifically, participants were asked whether the racial background of people who use the park and who provide services in the park mattered, whether they had experienced or witnessed any discriminatory acts in recreation settings in general and in parks specifically, how they reacted to experiences with discrimination and how they felt toward people of other ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Analysis of the data obtained from the focus groups began after the first focus group had been conducted. This preliminary interpretation of the information helped to adjust questions for the following focus groups and to identify issues pertinent to the participants. After all focus groups had been transcribed and translated into English, the transcripts were analyzed by the group of researchers using a constant comparative method (Boeije, 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The authors of the study were all women of different ethnic backgrounds, none of them being Latino. Two of the authors had significant experience studying issues of Latino population, had in-depth knowledge of the study setting and were involved in organizing and conducting the focus groups. The other authors became involved in the analysis process after the data had already been collected and, therefore, they first needed to be thoroughly debriefed on the context of the focus groups, including the particular characteristics of the communities and minority group examined in this project. Not being Latino themselves had certain drawbacks (e.g. one could not fully identify with the discriminatory experiences described by the interviewees), but on the contrary, it allowed the researchers to have a critical and unbiased look at the statements made by the participants that pertained to their own interracial attitudes and descriptions of interracial relations in the community.

The data were initially divided into two major categories: (1) experiences with discrimination in recreation settings and (2) attitudes of Latinos toward other ethnic/racial groups. After this initial broad classification had been made, the researchers examined the data separately and identified potential sub-themes within each category. After a number of subsequent discussions regarding the interpretation of interviewees' statements and the ways in which the data could be classified, a consensus was reached. Subsequently, the transcripts were reread again independently by each member of the research team to ensure no important aspects had been left out.



To increase trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), field notes were taken and meetings were recorded with the use of two independent recorders and a video camera. Focus groups conducted in Spanish were translated into English by the Mexican American research assistant and verified by two independent individuals fluent in both languages. No significant problems with the translation were noted in the verification process. All recordings were transcribed verbatim. At least two researchers compared each transcript with the recording to avoid possible errors. Because of potential undocumented status of some of the participants, they were not asked for their contact information. Thus, it was impossible to send the transcripts to focus group participants for verification and feedback. Findings of the study, however, were verified by several knowledgeable members from each of the studied communities (Baxter & Eyles, 1997).

## **Findings**

The findings of this study are divided into two sections. In the first part, we present preliminary results of the quantitative survey related to perceived discrimination reported by Latinos in Piotrowski Park and in other recreation settings. In the second part, we examine the results of the focus groups and, in particular, specific incidents of discrimination experienced by the interviewees and their own attitudes toward members of other ethnic and racial groups.

### *Survey results*

First, all 202 respondents to the survey were queried about their general experiences of discrimination at Piotrowski Park. In particular, they were asked whether they have ever felt discriminated against or treated badly in the park because of their racial or ethnic background. In response to this question, 23% ( $n = 46$ ) of the respondents indicated that they had encountered some level of discrimination. These results can be interpreted in two different ways. Although it is encouraging that the majority of the respondents felt safe from discriminatory attacks, it is troublesome that almost a quarter of Latino visitors to Piotrowski Park experienced some level of mistreatment.

Those people who had reported having encountered discriminatory treatment at Piotrowski Park ( $n = 46$ ) were then asked to identify the sources of discrimination. Among Latinos who indicated experiencing discrimination, 38.6% reported being mistreated by African American people visiting the park, 33.3% indicated that they had experienced discrimination from White recreationists and almost equal number reported having experienced discrimination from the local police and the law enforcement and Asian visitors to the park (26.7% and 25.0%, respectively). Only 15.9% of the respondents named staff of the park as perpetrators of discrimination (see Table 1). However, it has to be stressed that because relatively few people reported any acts of mistreatment, looking at the percentages alone can be somewhat misleading. Thus, we urge caution while interpreting results presented in Tables 1–3.

Respondents were also queried about the types of discrimination they had encountered. Among those who had experienced discrimination at Piotrowski Park, 32.6% reported being exposed to verbal harassment and 31.8% reported being stopped and/or searched by the police and being denied a service or being provided with a substandard service (see Table 2).

As reported in Table 3, responses to discriminatory attacks experienced at Piotrowski Park varied. Visiting the park with a group of people was the most frequently adopted tactic

Table 1. Perpetrators of discrimination in Piotrowski Park.

Perpetrators of discrimination	Frequency of discrimination			
	Never		Rarely to very often	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
African American people visiting this park	27	61.4	17	38.6
White people visiting the park	30	66.7	15	33.3
Local police and law enforcement	33	73.3	12	26.7
Other recreationists	32	74.4	11	25.6
Asian people visiting this park	33	75.0	11	25.0
Staff	37	84.1	7	15.9

Table 2. Discriminatory acts in Piotrowski Park.

Discrimination acts	Frequency of discrimination			
	Never		Rarely to very often	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Verbal harassment	31	67.4	15	32.6
Being denied a service/being given a bad service	30	68.2	14	31.8
Being stopped and/or searched by the police	30	68.2	14	31.8
Being physically attacked	35	79.5	9	20.5
Other acts of discrimination	29	80.6	7	19.4

Table 3. Response to discriminatory acts in Piotrowski Park.

Response to discrimination experience	Frequency of response					
	Strongly disagree and disagree		Neutral		Agree and strongly agree	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
I try to visit this park with a group of people	10	23.8	8	19.1	24	57.1
I notify the police	12	27.2	13	29.6	19	43.2
I confront the people who are harassing me	15	35.7	10	23.8	17	40.5
I let the park authorities know what happened	13	28.9	16	35.6	16	35.5
I still come to this park, but I do not enjoy my visits as much as I would otherwise	17	37.8	15	33.3	13	28.9
I visit this park less often	17	37.8	17	37.7	11	24.5
I do nothing	23	56.1	11	26.8	7	17.1

by the Latino respondents (57.1% of those who have experienced discrimination reported this type of response). Less than half (43.2%) of the respondents preferred to notify the police and 40.5% chose to confront the people who harassed them. Slightly more than one-third (35.5%) of Latinos let the park authorities know what happened, around 28.9%

Table 4. Visitation patterns to leisure-related locations.

Places of visit	Do not visit		Do visit	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Playgrounds	12	6.3	180	93.7
Restaurants	16	8.3	177	91.7
Swimming pools	20	10.3	174	89.7
Beaches	31	16.1	161	83.9
Campgrounds	40	20.9	151	79.1
Golf courses	118	61.1	75	38.9

Table 5. Frequency of discrimination at leisure-related locations.

Places of discrimination	Frequency of discrimination			
	Never		Rarely to very often	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Restaurants	125	70.6	52	29.4
Campgrounds	116	76.8	35	23.2
Swimming pools	134	77.0	40	23.0
Playgrounds	143	79.4	37	20.6
Beaches	129	80.1	32	19.9
Golf courses	61	81.3	14	18.7

continued to visit park, but did not enjoy it at the same level, and almost a quarter (24.5%) frequented the park less often.

All 202 survey respondents were also asked whether they visited such leisure settings as golf courses, beaches, playgrounds, restaurants, campgrounds and swimming pools. As can be seen in Table 4, the most often mentioned leisure-related places frequented by Latinos were playgrounds (93.7%), restaurants (91.7%), swimming pools (89.7%) and beaches (83.9%).

Respondents who visited these locations were queried if they had ever experienced discrimination at each of these places. As can be seen in Table 5, restaurants were the locations where the highest proportion of Latino respondents experienced discrimination (29.4%). Almost equal proportions of people listed campgrounds and swimming pools (23.2% and 23.0%, respectively) as places where they have experienced discrimination, followed by playgrounds (20.6%) and beaches (19.9%).

### ***Focus group results***

Four focus groups were conducted to obtain more detailed information about the personal experiences of Latinos with discrimination in recreation settings. The results of the focus groups presented in this section provide a broader understanding of the locations where the acts of discrimination took place, the types of discrimination encountered by the interviewees and the perpetrators of discriminatory acts. Moreover, our findings delve into the interracial/interethnic attitudes of the Latino interviewees toward the members of other ethnic/racial groups.

### *Experiences with discrimination in recreation settings*

When discussing their experiences with discrimination in recreation settings, many respondents commented that on occasion they felt unwelcome or experienced poor treatment in parks and other leisure locations and they attributed this treatment to their ethnic/racial background. They also mentioned that they had witnessed incidents of discrimination against other Latinos. Similar to the findings of the surveys, focus group participants commented that people were followed closely by the law enforcement personnel, were denied service or prevented from using the service and were even physically attacked. Latino participants recounted experiencing discriminatory acts in parks, recreation centres, playgrounds and swimming pools. The most often mentioned perpetrators of discriminatory acts included recreationists of other ethnic/racial backgrounds, the staff of recreation centres and the police. Moreover, fear of violent discriminatory attacks experienced on the way to and from the parks reduced the choice of recreational opportunities available to Latinos.

*Discrimination from other recreationists.* Several focus group participants offered examples of racial tensions between Latino and African American park users. A young mother described an incident where a fight broke out between African American and Latino women watching their children at a local playground. In the words of Izel, a middle-aged immigrant:

One time I was involved in one circumstance. My son goes to this after school program and he told me that he wanted to go to the park. (. . .) Well I got to see a Black mom that was fighting with a Mexican mom because Mexican mom was far and the kid was there and the Black lady took the kid from the swings. So they started fighting there. So much that they had to call the police. The boys pull each other's hair and then they went back to play. That thing, racism is between adults. I see that between adults and there is a few kids that are also like that as well.

Other male participants mentioned that they experienced stares and were sometimes treated with suspicion by other recreationists. However, they attributed it to their gender and attire and explained it by residents' fears of high crime activity in the area.

*Discrimination by the staff of recreation centres.* Staff of recreation centres also were perceived to be involved in acts of discrimination. For instance, Elena believed that Latino children were being prevented from using a local pool when African American attendants were on duty:

In the park which is right here in front, almost everyone who comes are Black, but in the mornings there are swimming lessons. My son goes there. Sometimes if the person who is taking care of the pool is Black, believe me or not, they sometimes don't let Mexicans go in there.

Asked to explain the incident, Elena shrugged her arms: "Racism. I have gotten the opportunity to see that. That has happened a lot of times."

Other participants stressed the importance of information about park programs being distributed in Spanish and considered lack of Spanish booklets and signs as a way of discrimination. For instance, Anna described, "They [White park officials] don't really make a big effort at communicating in [our] native language. . . . They never put out that information in Spanish. It would always be fliers in English, so the community doesn't find out that we have that." The points of contention were recreation programs offered by the local park district that were filled to capacity during the summer months. Some of the Latino

interviewees believed that the Anglo staff intentionally failed to distribute information in Spanish to give preference to White children. Similar comments were made with respect to disabled Latino children who, as their mother believed, were being prevented from signing up for local recreation programs. Conversely, based on the interviews with the staff of the local park, we were able to establish that 10 out of 11 staff members spoke fluent Spanish, that all information about programs distributed by the park was in Spanish and in English and that efforts were made to reach the local Latino population by distributing information through schools and local Spanish radio stations. Thus, it was unclear why there seemed to be a disconnect between the efforts of the local park and the residents' perceptions of poor treatment they received at recreation centres.

*Discrimination by the police.* Several participants commented that on occasion they felt unwelcome in parks and other recreation locations because of being closely followed by the local police. Some felt that they were being stereotyped and that all young Latino men were considered suspicious because of heavy gang activity in the area. Elias recalled the times of his youth:

We were never welcome. We would always get a look or we always get followed by certain police enforcements. "They're all guys. Hmm, they could be gangbangers, you know?" That's targeted as, "Oh yeah, let's follow these guys, make sure they're not causing trouble," which makes you feel unwelcome, you know?

Anna believed that racial stereotyping was not typical of all the police in the area but depended more on the attitudes of individual police officers. She commented, "I mean if you have a policeman that has racism issues or whatever, then he's going to follow you around." Focus group participants believed there was a positive correlation between the attire of the young male Latinos visiting recreation settings and the attention they received from the police. For instance, Katerina, who is a second-generation Latino immigrant, commented, "You see kids coming in and they are dressed up in baggies, they get targeted more than the kids, the people that dress up just normal." Although some Latino interviewees seemed to be discouraged by the undesirable attention they received from the police, others justified negative attitudes on the part of the police by the high level of crime in the Latino neighborhoods. They commented that while they were being mistreated as young teenagers, such acts of discrimination stopped once they grew out of this "phase," stopped dressing in a way that might have hinted their gang affiliation and adopted more mature dress patterns. For instance, Elias added,

I think there's a lot of targeting issues depending on how you dress and all, but once you assimilate into a certain lifestyle that's all around you like say, a yuppie park, and you dress yuppie as well, okay, they won't target you as much. But if you're in a yuppie area, and you're dressed semi-ghetto, of course you're going to get targeted. (. . .) Now we're a little bit more adult. We pretty much learned not to dress this way ["ghetto"]. We have our own sense of style. We're not really targeted as much.

*Discrimination by the local residents.* Discrimination incidents were experienced not only in parks and other recreation areas but also *on the way to* recreation destinations. For instance, several interviewees expressed a concern about passing through the neighborhoods where they are a minority. As Andres, a car driver in his twenties commented, "And they don't know you. They will be worsening you. They treat you like crap." Asked whether he was referring to people in the park or those who lived around it, he replied, "Live around

it and some times in the parks. Sometimes it happens. You know, mishaps happen.” Paulina added, “It’s a Black neighborhood too. You can see probably racial tensions.” Andres later described an incident when his car broke down in the middle of a “hostile neighborhood” and the fear he experienced while waiting for a ride from his family member. Since several parks in Little Village and East Side are located on the edges of the Latino and African American communities, fear of passing through the neighborhoods inhabited by members of other groups and visiting parks that were a part of “their territory” constituted an important constraint on recreation participation. Gang violence and turf wars prevalent in central-city Chicago neighborhoods aggravated this problem.

*Differential upkeep and management of recreation settings.* Most of the focus group participants commented on the poor state of the existing parks and described them as eyesores and sites of illicit activities. For instance, Paulina commented about Piotrowski Park in Little Village:

It is disgusting! When it rains it is always flooded on the path around the park. There are these big holes that they just filled them up with big rocks and part of the track around the park. There is broken glass all around. (. . .) The pool is just crowded, dirty.

She later added, “Inside the field it’s pretty gross. The tennis courts are messed up. There is gravel. The playground is falling apart. It’s rusty.” Martha agreed with Paulina and compared Piotrowski Park to parks in the suburban community where she worked:

I work as a nanny at La Grange and Burr Ridge. You just feel the sense of everybody is a community there. Everyone does take care. [When] I nanny, I take them [children] to the park, walk around. It’s just so much different to walk around La Grange than walk around here! Visual, it’s just prettier. (. . .) There is a big difference from parks here. Little kids, you don’t want them to get hurt with glass here. It’s not only unsafe because of the people around here. The little toys in the playground are so much nicer, bigger over there.

Anna, a 24-year-old resident of East Side, also remarked about better maintenance of parks in suburban communities: “More money goes into it, it’s the upkeep, and people keep it nice.”

*Exclusion through gentrification.* Interestingly, the focus groups also allowed for discovery of other, more indirect ways through which Latino residents felt excluded from visiting recreation environments. Issues of gentrification of central-city Latino communities seemed to be of particular concern to some focus group participants. Many areas in the neighboring Pilsen were being taken over by developers who rehabilitated dilapidated buildings and sold apartments to new, primarily Caucasians owners, many of whom were employed in the downtown Chicago business district. Expansion of the University of Chicago campus also contributed to the increase in rents in areas that were previously occupied by mostly working-class Latino immigrants. Focus group participants felt unwelcome and excluded from the newly beautified areas of these neighborhoods. As Elias commented,

They want to attract more and more people, you know, a lot of people have stopped moving to the suburbs. They’re starting to come more over here, which at the same time is also kicking other people out of the area, but at the same time, within recreational areas, they’re not natural anymore. If you look at condominiums, you know, apartment complexes, where the middle

or upper class live now, they have recreational areas inside those buildings, and the thing is, it's really inclusive to only those people in that apartment building. So like people around the area who don't live in that area, they can't go into those recreational areas. So it's kind of like limiting their space as well.

*Responses to discrimination.* With respect to possible responses to discriminatory acts, many participants mentioned that they generally tried to avoid conflict situations. Those who were concerned about their undocumented status rarely reported their encounters with discrimination and raised an issue with the authorities. As Daniel explained, "There is an issue about illegality. If you are undocumented you don't want to go and speak up. [they will ask you] 'Who are you?' You can't do that." Lack of fluency in English also seemed to hinder interviewees' ability to take on a more active stance in protecting their rights. Anna described that only by accident she managed to find out about programs offered by the local recreation centre: "I went one time because I was informing myself and it was then when I noticed all the programs that it has. That is because we are afraid of not speaking English – we don't go." Avoidance was also used as a strategy by Elena whose child was discriminated in the park pool. Describing her reaction to the incident, Elena said, "I don't go inside the water nor do I take my son. He goes with his group." Other interviewees tried to protect themselves by visiting recreation environments or travelling through a "hostile territory" in larger groups. For instance, Andres revealed that he made sure to travel through unfamiliar neighborhoods with friends from the local community. The presence of "insiders" served as his protection strategy from the attacks of local troublemakers.

#### *Attitudes of Latinos toward other ethnic/racial groups*

Despite experiencing acts of discrimination, when asked about their own interracial/interethnic attitudes, Latino participants claimed that they harbored no prejudicial feelings and did not mind living in the same neighborhood and recreating with people of other ethnic/racial backgrounds. When asked, "Is the racial background of those who use parks in your neighborhood important?" all participants showed neutral to positive attitudes to members of other minority groups. For instance, Elias replied,

Usually it's never a problem if a person is a person of color. For me I don't have anything against them because they are human beings like us. The only thing different is the color. They are like that, but one does not have to be mean with them.

Lucia, who immigrated to the United States 20 years ago, added, "It could be a Mexican or Hispanic and there could be another that is good or aggressive, just as could a Black person, a Puerto Rican, or anyone as well." Marc, an immigrant who came to the United States 20 years before the interview, also mentioned, "I don't care. I'll play with them, any type. I love the competition, so the more people the better." In response to a question about her feelings toward people of other ethnic/racial groups, Belen, an 18-year-old immigrant, replied that she liked interacting with members of other racial/ethnic minorities. She recounted a street festival organized in her neighborhood that provided opportunity for interaction among immigrants from different ethnic/racial groups. In the words of Belen:

I remember that a year ago there was a committee that got permission from the city to be going to houses on a Saturday saying that they needed to move their cars because they were sponsoring games, basketball, balloons, a carnival, hotdogs, lights, etc. around where I live in

Humbling. They closed about 10 streets and it was close to parks and they went to play. There was music, food, basketball, there were boys from 6 to 12 years old playing and competing in teams. You could see the mix of people between Blacks, Latinos, and Puerto Ricans. You could see the variety. I liked it because there were neighbors playing on the teams.

Such a positive attitude toward members of other ethnic/racial groups displayed by Belen, Lucia, Marc and Elias seemed to be typical of other focus group participants as well.

Several interviewees, however, admitted that they did not always embrace such positive attitudes toward the members of other groups and that they were exposed to many racist stereotypes during childhood. They claimed that it was only in their adult lives that they realized that all people were equal, regardless of their ethnic or racial background. As Elias commented,

Here's the thing, growing up, you pretty much learned that "Oh, stay away from these type of people, the Black people, they're bad." That's what you grow up with, what other people put in your heads. That's pretty much what you were grown to learn. But later on you learn there are Black people or Latino people that are just like you that are trying to move away from those types of issues, but, at the same time, you get the good side and the bad side. Like the Chris Rock's saying, "There are Black people and there's [the N word] . . . there's Mexicans, and then there's spics."

Lilia nodded her head and added, "There's ghetto people in every race, there's White people, and there's trailer park."

Crime problems in the community weighed heavily on the minds of the focus group participants and when asked more in-depth questions about interracial interactions in the neighborhood, it was revealed that many interviewees saw them through the prism of perceptions of safety, disorder and community decline. The participants claimed to evaluate people as potentially threatening based on their individual characteristics. They commented that they feared criminals regardless of their ethnic or racial background and that they judged people based on their demeanor, dress and age, and not on their racial or ethnic characteristics. For instance, Daniel observed, "If I see an older Black man I wouldn't be afraid of him, but I would be of a younger generation [person] like mine or Latino." Similarly, Andres, a car mechanic in his twenties, commented that Latinos were as afraid of African Americans as African Americans were of potential Latino gang members:

The Latino gangs are giving us a bad image that the Black people won't feel safe with us and say; hey it's another gang banger and start shit with us. And when they come over here we think the same thing too and we go "who the hell is this?" You don't know who that is, where is he coming? Does he have a gun? Does he not?

Interestingly, despite the reported positive attitudes toward members of other ethnic and racial groups and evaluating people based on their individual characteristics, interviewees also commented on racial tensions in their neighborhoods, on the existence of negative racial attitudes *at the group level* and even "ingrained racism" they believed characterized Latinos in general. For instance, Paulina commented,

There is just this engrained racism between Hispanic people and Black people, where Hispanic people wouldn't go to the park because that park is the *Black people's park*. You are starting to see Black people in Piotrowski Park, but you wouldn't see that many of them because, like I said, that is the *Hispanic park* [emphasis added]. There is always that definition.



Moreover, some tensions could be detected in participants' comments that hinted at a desire to protect ethnic boundaries of the relatively homogenous Latino neighborhoods. For instance, in Elias's words: "It's a territorial issue, too. Mexicans, they're like, 'Yeah, we want our area there, nothing but Latinos, and let's say they close down la taqueria for a Church's Chicken [the restaurant chain], it's like 'what the hell is that crap?'" Katerina, an interviewee from East Side, made another poignant comment about the response of Latinos to African Americans moving into their previously homogenous neighborhood:

It's not necessarily that they [African Americans] are bad people, it's just that . . . like 26th Street, for example in Little Village, it used to be Mexicans, lots of Mexicans. Now you see Black people everywhere crossing the streets. You see them going into the stores and a lot of people close their stores earlier because of the fact that . . . not necessarily that they're *bad people*, because you can't judge people just by their color, but it's just . . . a lot of people do that. . . .

The following exchange was not related to recreation *per se*, but to Latinos' settlement patterns. However, it provided interesting clues as to the interracial attitudes among Latinos. Asked whether access to quality recreation environments was a factor in their decision where to live, participants pointed to affordability of housing, crime rate and racial composition of the neighborhoods. Commenting on somebody else's response, Lilia summarized "She's saying that we [Latinos] run from Black people; you're saying that your parents move wherever there's more Latinos." Rosa and Katerina agreed, "Yeah, I like to be around Latinos," and "Yeah, me too." Anna added,

Or where there's White people. (. . .) Well, I think that's the thing. Most Mexican families, not so much Latino, but to be more specific most Mexican families tend to look for that place where their kids are away from gangs and all the bad crowd. So the further South you go, the more Anglos you find, and for some reason, our culture thinks that White people don't have those issues.

Another person interrupted Anna: "But then more Latinos move in, and more Black people and Latinos run away from them." Lilia continued with the discussion thread:

They're all running away from each other! Sometimes it's not that you're running from your own people, it's just that those are the ghetto-er people and you just don't want . . . you have nothing in common with them, you don't want to raise your kids around them.

Thus, first of all, although the participants distanced themselves personally from any negative interracial attitudes, they were willing to admit that *other Latinos* harboured negative feelings toward out-group members and engaged in acts of discrimination. Moreover, they made references to racial and ethnic neighborhood displacement patterns and to people's desire to move away from the "bad crowd" consisting of lower class Latinos and African Americans. Interestingly, some of the recently arrived Latino immigrants were also included in this category, as they were suspected of involvement in crime and lack of attachment to their communities.

## **Discussion**

### ***Latinos' experiences with discrimination in leisure settings***

The Latino participants in both stages of this study indicated having experienced discrimination. They discussed the types of discrimination they had encountered, the perpetrators

of discriminatory acts and their own responses to the mistreatment. Focus group participants also discussed their personal attitudes toward the members of other racial/ethnic groups. First, the results of this study provide confirmation of the findings of Blahna and Black (1993), Flood and McAvoy (2007), Gobster (2002), Philipp (1999), West (1989) and numerous others, who found perceived discrimination to be an important constraint on the use of parks and other public recreation spaces by ethnic and racial minorities. The findings of the preliminary survey and the focus groups revealed many similarities. For instance, the most often named perpetrators of discrimination were African Americans visiting the parks. Survey participants also mentioned experiencing discrimination from White people visiting the park, whereas focus group participants recalled instances of discrimination from the police and law enforcement and from the staff of recreation centres. It is interesting that African Americans, but not Whites, were identified as the main perpetrators of discriminatory acts, which is inconsistent with the findings of the majority of the literature discussing issues of racism in recreation settings. A possible explanation for this discrepancy may lie in the fact that local Latino residents may have more frequent contacts with African Americans than with Whites or the members of other ethnic/racial groups. Chicago is a deeply racially segregated city and both of the studied communities are surrounded by primarily African American neighborhoods. At the same time, non-Hispanic Whites constitute only 3.5% of the Little Village's population. A significant level of discrimination because of high frequency of contact with African Americans (and thus lower structural constraints on discrimination), would be consistent with one of the propositions put forth by Stodolska (2005) and with research that suggests that the relative size of the minority population tends to be positively associated with the incidence of discriminatory behavior (Fossett & Kiecolt, 1989; Giles, 1977; Quillian, 1995). Other explanations may lie in the complex interrelationships between Latinos and African Americans, particularly in the context of large urban centres of the Midwestern United States, which will be discussed in detail at the end of the Discussion section.

The survey respondents and focus group participants also reported experiencing similar types of discrimination. Verbal harassment from other recreationists, being stopped and searched by the police, and being denied a service or being given a substandard service were named most often. The majority of the survey respondents also mentioned experiencing discrimination in restaurants and swimming pools, which were the recreation places most often visited by the Latinos who participated in the study. Of all the leisure locations listed in the survey, they were also the ones where encounters with the staff were most likely to occur. Although the quality of service may be a good indicator of restaurant staff's attitudes (or training), overcrowded pools in Chicago minority neighborhoods are often sites of tensions and disputes among users, and cases of discrimination in these locations have been noted in the literature in the past (Blahna & Black, 1993; Feagin, 1991).

Overall, all categories of discrimination identified by Blahna and Black (1993), with the exception of historical racism and effects of past economic discrimination, were identified in this study. Additionally, participants mentioned discrimination by exclusion related to gentrification and the negative effects of discrimination from other residents of the area on minorities' ability to travel to recreation locations. We can argue that while the latter is likely to affect many minorities residing in heavily segregated neighborhoods, the former may be particularly pronounced in cases of activities and locations in which minorities may feel being priced out. This, in turn, may be the evidence of an effect of economic deprivation in other areas of life, previously mentioned by Floyd (1998), which acts to disadvantage minorities with respect to leisure choices.

With respect to perceptions of discrimination, the results of this study support the findings of other research both in our field and in other social sciences (Henry et al., 1995; Hibbler & Shinew, 2002; Stodolska & Jackson, 1998). For example, according to the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2003), the practices of profiling and over-policing are common in Canada. Williams (n.d.) discussed how profiling is often explained by police officers as a concern for security. Similarly, our respondents described how being an adolescent Latino male conditioned the attitudes and treatment they received from the law enforcement. On the contrary, however, they themselves engaged in profiling when they indicated that they feared and avoided people with certain characteristics related to their age, gender and the overall demeanour. Some of the focus group participants also justified profiling on the part of the police by the high crime level in the area and by the necessity to control gang crime. The ambivalent attitude toward the police was clearly detectable among the focus group participants. On the one hand, they feared the police as a source of harassment and immigration raids (even though, as of the summer of 2010, police in Chicago do not have the authority to enforce immigration laws), but on the other hand, they perceived them as their only allies in the fight against rampant crime. The question arises whether Latinos would also try to justify the profiling on the part of the police if the mistreatment was happening to them now, as opposed to only when they were teenagers. Research on racial profiling among African Americans (e.g. Feagin, 1991) tends to suggest that the respondents would probably be more concerned about racial stereotyping and mistreatment by the police if it happened to them continuously.

Reflecting the findings of the existing literature, the focus group participants also reported feelings of being unwelcome or even openly disrespected by recreation service providers. They claimed not to have equal access to services (because of language difficulties and lack of information about programs) and even mentioned being denied services by the pool staff based on their ethnicity. Similar problems were experienced by participants in previous research projects: unwelcome stares felt by interracial couples in various leisure settings (Hibbler & Shinew, 2002), rude treatment of Native Americans by forest rangers (Flood & McAvoy, 2007), being denied quality service in restaurants (Feagin, 1991) or indifference of staff when South Asian teens in Canada were subjected to discriminatory treatment by other recreationists (Tirone, 1999). However, the majority of such negative treatment in our study was attributed to the members of other minority groups or even to other Latinos (e.g. some of the interviewees commented that Latino police officers were the ones who treated them most harshly). As such, evidence of horizontal discrimination was clearly present in the narratives of the participants. Past research also suggested that minorities suffer from inequitable access to quality natural environments suitable for recreation and that public spending on parks and other open spaces in communities of colour is often significantly lower than in more affluent areas (Blahna & Black, 1993; Floyd et al., 2009; Stodolska & Shinew, 2010). The results of our study seem to confirm this assertion.

The participants also reported being discriminated against by other recreationists and visitors to the parks and other leisure settings. One of the participants recalled witnessing an incident when a fight broke out between African American and Latino women over their children's use of swings. Previous research confirms that discriminatory actions are often enacted by other recreationists: minority members being called racist names (Feagin, 1991; Livengood & Stodolska, 2004; Tirone, 1999), receiving unpleasant stares (Flood & McAvoy, 2007; Hibbler & Shinew, 2002; Livengood & Stodolska, 2004) and being ridiculed and spoken to in a patronizing tone (Stodolska & Jackson, 1998).

It needs to be noted, however, that this study examined *perceived* experiences with discrimination. For instance, our review of the promotional materials at the local recreation centre revealed that they were provided in both languages and yet some of the focus group participants believed that Spanish speakers were intentionally excluded from the activities offered at a local field house. Moreover, we cannot determine whether African American pool attendants deliberately prevented Latino children from accessing the pool or whether some of the decisions were made based on the objective criteria (e.g. overcrowding or inappropriate behaviour of users). Regardless, participants believed that it had a negative effect on their ability to enjoy leisure and to access recreation environments.

In several instances, findings of the preliminary survey were not confirmed in the focus groups. For example, to the question on the responses to discriminatory acts, the majority of Latinos replied that they notified the police or confronted potential attackers, while focus groups participants commented that few Latinos would actively seek protection of authorities because of their lack of trust in the local administration and their fear of potential deportation. Also, none of the focus groups participants mentioned experiencing discrimination in restaurants, which were mentioned quite frequently in the survey. Changes in leisure behavior as a result of discrimination were previously documented by Flood and McAvoy (2007), Hibbler and Shiner (2002), McDonald and McAvoy (1997), Livengood and Stodolska (2004) and others. Consistent with the predictions of Stodolska's (2005) model and other research on the subject (e.g. Blahna & Black, 1993; Carrington, Chivers, & Williams, 1987; Flood & McAvoy, 2007; McDonald & McAvoy, 1997; Tirone, 1999; West, 1989), Latinos tried to shield themselves from mistreatment by increasing structural constraints on discrimination through withdrawal, avoidance, recreating in larger homogenous groups or visiting sites frequented by other people of the same ethnic background (e.g. "Hispanic parks" or other "protected sites"). Findings of this study also point to the lack of resources (e.g. language skills, undocumented status) necessary to report or to actively address incidents of mistreatment. The problem of special vulnerability among some members of disfranchised groups, or the so-called "double whammies" when it comes to the minority status (Henderson & Bedini, 1997) (e.g. racial minority members who are elderly, have a disability, limited language skills or are undocumented), should be explored more in-depth in future research and paid attention to by the recreation service providers.

### ***Horizontal racism and the development of negative interracial attitudes***

One of the unique contributions of this study lies in its examination of potential horizontal racism and/or symbolic racism among Latinos. Although the great majority of studies in the leisure field examined discrimination experienced by members of minority groups from the representatives of the dominant population (e.g. Flood & McAvoy, 2007; Livengood & Stodolska, 2004; West, 1989), this study also focused on the interethnic/interracial relations among the members of minority groups themselves. Results suggest that discrimination often occurs between the members of minority groups and that recreation locations can serve as sites of conflict among members of different minority populations. Interestingly, all of the focus group participants displayed an almost "colour blind" philosophy – "they did not see race, but people" (Bonilla-Silva, 2002), and claimed that there were good and bad people in every racial group. However, some of the comments made by the interviewees made one wonder if the apparent differences between the interracial attitudes at the individual and group level (i.e. "I'm not prejudiced, but many of my people are") were not merely the evidence of hidden symbolic racism among some of the interviewees

and/or them trying to provide “politically correct” responses to a group of researchers (Brief et al., 1997).

Four additional explanations may be brought forward to explain some of the comments made by the interviewees. One can be related to the Latinos’ attempts at ethnic boundary maintenance suggested by Barth (1969). Some of the participants might have been concerned about their neighbourhoods losing their Latino character and may have developed negative attitudes toward newcomers from other racial/ethnic groups who were perceived as outsiders. Many of the participants expressed the desire to live in proximity to other Latinos and were concerned about the changes brought about by African Americans moving into their community from the neighbouring North Lawndale. As a result of the new restaurants being opened and non-Latinos being present in Little Village, they perceived that the community was losing its exclusively Latino character. Thus, some participants were contemplating to move either westward or to the safer and more affluent, predominantly white suburbs. This explanation is also consistent with Stodolska’s (2005) model that predicted that people may develop negative attitudes toward those who are seen as “trespassers” in an ethnically or racially homogenous area. Such trespassers “may constitute an immediate threat either to the personal safety of other participants or to the character of the setting” (p. 69). She commented “As a result of such a perception of threat that is not necessarily founded in facts, negative attitude may develop, which in turn can lead to discriminatory behavior” (p. 69).

Another explanation may lie in the subcultural diversity (or racial heterogeneity) and community decline models that predict the development of fear of crime (Lane & Meeker, 2003, 2005). The subcultural model suggests that people who live close to others of different racial, ethnic or cultural backgrounds develop feelings of fear because they do not understand the culture, lifestyle or behaviours of their neighbours (Lane & Meeker, 2005). In such communities, people are more afraid of strangers who are seen as different and who do not share their values and commitment to community (Lane & Meeker, 2003). The community concern (decline) model predicts that fear is a result of residents’ concern that the community is on decline and is less safe than in the past (Lane & Meeker, 2003; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981). In both cases, fear of crime may be responsible for the development of negative attitudes toward others who are seen as outsiders and who are believed to be contributing to the high crime rate, which poses a significant detriment to people’s quality of life. Fear of crime that was induced by having witnessed fights, drug deals and drive by shootings – many of which took place on the boundary with the neighbouring, predominantly African American communities – was deeply ingrained among the local residents.

Even though personal attitudes of Latinos toward members of other ethnic/racial groups proved to be quite complex and ambiguous, some of the interviewees commented that racist attitudes were “ingrained” in Latinos on the group level. Although such results need to be treated with caution as they may reflect opinions of a small number of focus group participants, the existence of stereotypical views of African Americans on the part of Latinos has been discussed in the existing literature. For example, Mindiola et al. (2002) conducted a study in the Houston area that focused on Latino–African American intergroup relations. The authors found that although both minority groups shared a certain level of negative attitudes toward each other, Latinos had more negative opinions of African Americans than vice versa. Mindiola et al. (2002) listed a number of reasons that could explain the existence of these stereotypes. They included the struggle for limited resources (including government programs), sharing common public spaces and lack of communication between residents of highly ethnically enclosed neighbourhoods. Johnson and Oliver

(1989) also attributed the development of negative interracial/interethnic attitudes and conflicts among minority groups to structural changes in the economy (e.g. sectoral shifts in employment), as well as to the demographic restructuring, social dislocation and spatial isolation. Many of the same reasons could be responsible for the development of negative interracial/interethnic attitudes among Chicago's Latino residents who had a history of tensions with the local African American population, and who had struggled for decades with the declining availability of manufacturing jobs, demographic shifts and residential displacements.

Finally, as predicted by the intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954) and by one of the propositions of Stodolska's (2005) model, it is possible that negative attitudes on the part of some Latinos may stem from the Latinos' lack of intimate, equal status contacts with African Americans that could allow them to verify certain myths that might be perpetuated among the more traditional immigrant families. As predicted by Stodolska's conditioned attitude model, the accuracy with which beliefs reflect the subjective characteristics of a group largely depends on the amount and the reliability of information specific to the group. Given the unfavourable nature of many popular myths regarding African Americans that our focus group participants were alluding to, it is likely that the beliefs regarding African Americans may be negatively biased, particularly among those Latinos with limited general knowledge. Such a negative bias of beliefs can contribute to an increased propensity for discrimination. As Stodolska observed,

whereas frequent but superficial contacts in leisure (such as frequenting the same recreation area by racially/ethnically mixed users) may reinforce discriminatory behavior both by aggravating existing prejudices and by reducing structural constraints on discrimination, more in-depth leisure-related contacts including attending clubs where personal, equal status interactions are required or socializing in informal circumstances can constitute an extremely effective vehicle for reducing racial hostility. (p. 70)

Because intimate interpersonal contacts in leisure-related settings among ethnically enclosed Latinos and African Americans occur infrequently, prejudices among the members of these minority groups are likely to develop.

## **Conclusions**

Although this study helped to uncover interesting information related to the discrimination experienced by Latino urban residents and helped to shed light on their own interethnic/interracial attitudes, it had several limitations. First, the small sample size in the quantitative part of the project prevented us from performing any advanced statistical analysis and from making generalizations that could apply to other groups and to other settings beyond these two communities. Moreover, as with any qualitative research, we cannot be certain to what degree the views expressed by the focus group participants were representative of the opinions of other community members. In particular, research indicates that perceptions of discrimination are highly dependent on minorities' generational status (Portes, 1984; Yi, 2005) or even on their level of collectivism (Shorey, Cowan, & Sullivan, 2002). For instance, among the 26 individuals who participated in the focus groups, we observed that men and those who were born in the United States or who grew up in the Latino communities were more likely to report experiencing discrimination by the police than women or those who immigrated to the United States as adults. Also, those who were

younger, better educated and born in the United States were more sensitized to the injustices and ready to address them at the institutional level than those who were less educated and who immigrated as adults. The latter were more likely to adopt avoidance as a response to discrimination. Interestingly, comments regarding exclusion by gentrification were also made by the interviewees with higher SES who grew up in the United States and who were more aware of the problems caused by the urban renewal projects and more sensitized to the fact that they were excluded from certain opportunities available to Anglo residents. This would support the findings of other research on the subject (see Portes, 1984; Yi, 2005). Discrimination by staff and by other recreationists and the differential upkeep and management of parks seemed to be more likely to be reported by women, many of whom commented about the instances of discrimination they had experienced or witnessed while being in the park with their children. Women who visit parks with their children may have more frequent contact with other users and staff or recreation agencies and thus be more exposed to this type of mistreatment. An examination of the characteristics of recreationists who are more likely to report discrimination in leisure settings would constitute an interesting area of future research.

Another disadvantage of the study was the lack of separation between the concepts of race and ethnicity. Although we acknowledge the difference between the two (Floyd, 1998), our study did not provide any suggestions as to the unique effect of racial versus ethnic backgrounds on people's experiences with discrimination and the interracial/interethnic interaction among groups.

Based on the findings of this study, we believe that there are several interesting topics that should be considered in future research in the leisure field. First, it would be helpful to examine to what extent perceptions of discrimination among Latinos and the members of other minority groups are influenced by their own interracial attitudes. The studies of horizontal racism and discrimination may potentially help to understand the high level of interracial/interethnic tensions and conflicts in urban communities. Another valuable topic for examination would be the role of leisure settings as places for positive interethnic/interracial interactions. As findings of past studies indicate (e.g. Glover, Shinew, & Parry, 2005; Shinew, Glover, & Parry, 2004), recreation settings may encourage positive interracial interactions among different ethnic and racial groups. How leisure may become a mediator and conciliator between people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds and what would make leisure settings safe and welcoming places where people of all types can meet and communicate as equal partners would constitute important topics of future research.

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### **Note**

1. The results of the 2010 Census were not yet available at the time when this article was written.

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