"Black People Don't Tip": Racism in the Restaurant Industry

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Due to discrimination, waiters are less likely to provide good customer service to their black dinners solely based on the assumption that they are poor tippers. The theory of discrimination is the foundation of this observational study where attentiveness is measured to determine waiters’ avoidance of African American diners. The study analyzes observational data from a sample of waiters (N=40). Findings reveal a subtle difference in attentiveness between races and a higher frequency of waiters’ interaction with White diners compared to African American diners. The study contributes to our understanding of social context of discrimination and the experiences of African Americans in restaurants.

Methods
This observational quantitative research design is used to analyze waiter’s attentiveness to African American diners. The target behavior in this observational study is the attentiveness. Through data collection, a duration data sheet is used to record the onset and offset time, and a tally system. The duration data sheet is used to record the time of the target behavior for which consists of the number of times the waiter comes to the table, and their offset. The absences data sheet will include the waiters’ demographics and the onset – offset. By observing waiter’s interaction with tables of two dinners, 40 dinners in total will be recorded including 20 African Americans and 20 White dinner. The onset is recorded as the time the waiter leaves the table after serving the meal marking the beginning of their absence. The offset is the time the waiters return to their table. The recording will stop here and this process is repeated until the dinners leave. Through the onset and offset, it will be able to determine the average duration of the waiter’s attentiveness at tables and black customers during each service. Another part of this study includes a tally system. This will record the number of times the waiter comes to the table since they ordered their meal. A descriptive statistical analysis will be done to carry out the results. This method will help retrieve the average absence time from each group (African American, and White dinners) reveals the difference in attentiveness.

Results/Discussion
Waters’ attentiveness to customers is measured by how frequently they approach the dinners from the time they sit to when they leave. Waters’ attentiveness is measured through their avoidance of dinners from the time they leave the table after bringing the meals to the next time they return. The results of this study indicate that waiters spend less time with African Americans compared to White dinners. The data was collected using a data collection sheet. This helped to record the water’s and dinners’ demographic (White Male Server, White Female Server, Black Male Server, Black Female Server), (Black Female Dinner, White Female Dinner, White Male Dinners, White Male dinners), the waiters’ absences from each category of dinners and the frequency at which waiters approached dinners. The data collected was first divided between African American diners n=20, and White dinners n=20. Results show that the average time waiters spent away from White dinners was 25 minutes while they spent an average of 29 minutes was spent away from African American dinners.

Figure 1 shows the average time (in percentage) waiters spend serving groups of African American and White dinners. By comparing the average time of attentiveness among groups, it was recorded that after African American dinners received their meals, waiters spent 53 percent of their time (shown in yellow) away from the table with African Americans, while they only spent 47 percent (shown in black) of their time away from White dinners. Further analysis on waiters’ attentiveness to African American dinners reveal the disparity in serving time toward African Americans and White dinners.

Figure 1 represents servers’ attentiveness to African American diners. Though there was not substantial information on Black male servers and their interaction with Black female dinners, the average time White Male Servers spent away from Black female dinners was longer. On average, while Black Female Servers spent 17.5 percent of time away from Black female dinners after they received their meals, White Female Servers spent 29 percent of time away, and White Male Servers spent 46.1 percent of time from African American female dinners. The average absence time waiters spent from each group (African American, and White dinners) reveals the difference in attentiveness.

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