

**Charles Phelps Taft Research Center
at the University of Cincinnati
Graduate Enrichment Award**

All required materials must be included in a single document, uploaded to the electronic submissions system, no later than 5PM on the published day of the deadline. Departmental review is required for this program, as well as a letter of support. Applicants should submit their application with enough time to receive departmental review prior to the close of the deadline. Taft does not accept an obligation to review applications that have not received intradepartmental review by the close of the deadline.

I. General Information

- a. Name: XXXXXXXX
- b. M#: XXXX
- c. Department: XXXX
- d. Position: PhD Candidate
- e. Project Title: “For Us By Us: Black Millennial Placemaking in white Leisure Spaces”
- f. Time Period: November 2019 – May 2020
- g. Travel Location: N/A
- h. Travel Dates: N/A
- i. Probable Results of a Grant: This grant will help with the completion of my dissertation. If awarded, the results from my research project will be presented at conferences in the spring semester, as well as submitted for publication following completion.

II. Budget

- a. Transportation: N/A
- b. Direct Research Costs: \$3611.00 (includes total cost of transcription services)
- c. Per Diem: N/A
- d. Total Amount Requested from Taft: \$2500.00 (transcription costs)
- e. Have you already or will you in the future apply for other grants for this project, including departmental support? Yes, I plan on applying for additional funding to support the remaining costs of transcriptions.

III. Taft Grant History

IV. Project Narrative

Background

How does it feel to be a problem? This question, posed many years ago by W.E.B. Du Bois, has just as much relevance today. Black life is often described in terms of deficits (Wilson 1996; Clark 1965; Moynihan 1965), and as a reaction to racialized institutional oppression (Massey and Denton 1993; Park 1936). This was characteristic of early sociological thinkers at places like the Chicago School of urban studies at the University of Chicago. The Chicago School tradition references everything and everyone against a white normal. However, thinkers such as Du Bois (1899) and Ida B. Wells (1892) resist centering the white normal in their research, because they document how there is room to look beyond oppression while keeping it in the frame. Du Bois, Wells, and scholars at places like the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory still reference everything against the white normal but critique how unfair institutions and structures are in recreating inequality (Wright 2002). Following calls by Hunter et. al (2016) to conduct research on Black placemaking—how Black people transform oppressive spaces in cities into sites for Black joy and celebration—this study examines how and why Black Millennials create and organize for leisure in white spaces in Cincinnati.

According to Anderson (2015) white spaces are locations with an overwhelming presence of white people, an absence of Black people, and where anonymous Black people are interrogated or challenged to prove that they belong. My research is guided by Black placemaking which considers the ability of Black residents –across genders, sexualities, ages, classes, and politics– to shift otherwise oppressive geographies of a city (see white spaces) “to create places that are sustaining, affirming, and pleasurable (Hunter and Robinson (2016:10).” Black placemaking is useful because cities are not shaped by faceless forces of nature, such as capitalism, outside of the control of human agency (Logan and Molotch 1987). My research builds on work that describes the ways space has been appropriated, defined, and redefined by Black people despite the ways Whiteness, “a constantly shifting boundary separating those who are entitled to have certain privileges (white people) from those whose exploitation and vulnerability to violence is justified by their not being white,” manifests in their everyday lives (Kivel 1996:19).

Methodology

To study Black placemaking, I conducted an urban ethnography of the spaces where Black Millennials organize to gather, and I also interviewed the hosts and attendees of these events. Urban ethnography helps us understand the experiences of individuals who live in cities, especially the practical measures marginalized individuals take to thrive despite changing city dynamics like rapid gentrification, rising housing insecurity, and increasing eviction rates (Kirkland 2008). This dissertation traces the public presence of three prominent, local Black organizations that plan and host reoccurring events, through participant observation at events they will host. The three groups are listed. The *Black Young Movers and Shakers* is a group of Black professionals that provides monthly professional and social networking events, plus service and outreach events throughout the city. The second group is *Intellectuals Who Sip*, whose events bring Black millennials together to discuss trendy topics affecting their lives, with intermissions to network, mingle, dance, or enjoy beverages from the fully serviced bars. *#IssaMove* is the third promotion, and this group hosts various party-like events in the city for Black millennials including: brunch events, day parties, and themed night-time parties. These promotions do not have permanent locations, but instead invite their networks to different locations around the city. Using interviews from the leaders of these three Black promotions, as well as interviews from frequent attendees of the promotion-hosted events, my analysis of this data focuses on the utilities of leisure spaces for Black people, and the strategies organizers use to make space for Black people in Cincinnati. Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, I use a modified grounded theory approach which is used when one tries to “learn participants’ implicit meanings of their experience and to build a conceptual analysis of them.” (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Impact

This dissertation contributes to understandings of how deeply racism is imbedded in dominant culture, even informing the social lives of individuals. I use critical race theory to analyze the impact of placemaking on how Black millennials negotiate leisure opportunities and urban spaces amid ongoing anti-Blackness. To understand leisure spaces, we must recognize that leisure spaces, even clubs and bars, like most other institutions are constricted by the invisible mechanisms of power. The reality of racism influences where and when Black people can gather

for leisure (May 2001). My study intends to amplify the voices of Black people seeking leisure in white spaces (Anderson 2015), because when Black people create temporary leisure spaces these often function as places to recharge after the daily effects of racism (Hunter and Robinson 2016). Additionally, leisure spaces created for Black people are where they come to feel liberated by escaping the white gaze (Kelley 1996).

By using a Black placemaking perspective, and centering Black people's agency, I investigate if and how the creation of leisure sites for Black people and by Black people are integral to Black identity in the changing world. This approach focuses on how the actions and attitudes of urban Black Americans shape the creation and evolution of places, groups, institutions, and policies. There is a continuing need for studies to understand Black life. First, because the everyday impacts of systematic racism continue to transform, and thus Black life changes with it. Research is needed to continue to illustrate how Black city dwellers' lives are affected by the localized sets of implications from their ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, gender identity, and gender presentation (Robinson 2014). Second, as Small et al. (2018) suggest, to understand the experiences of people "requires paying far greater attention to heterogeneity, conducting more ethnographic observation in ostensibly unconventional cities, and addressing the historically extreme conditions in a newly unique subset of cities" (1). Third, more research should focus on why segregated social settings exist, and the utility of these settings for Black Millennials in places like this mid-sized city of Cincinnati in the Up South. Unlike white people, who have free reign in most places, Black people constantly feel venues do not welcome them (Hunter and Robinson 2016). Leisure is a domain where oppressive stereotypes can be resisted. Leisure can be a place of liberation, exploration, and resistance.

Status of Project

Under the direction of my dissertation committee, I have already finished writing drafts of my literature review and methods chapters. I received IRB approval and successfully passed my dissertation proposal in the spring semester of 2019. I have also received funds from the Kunz Center research to fund interview incentives and costs of ethnographic observation engagement. I spent the spring, summer, and early fall months doing data collection. During these months, I conducted 26 formal interviews and observed my field sites for a total of 200 hours. In August of 2019, I attended the Annual Association of Black Sociologists conference and the Annual

American Sociological Association conference where I presented preliminary dissertation research and received valuable feedback that helped improve my work. Now that it is the Fall 2019 session, and I have mostly departed from the research field, my plan is to analyze the data I have collected from my interviews and ethnographic observations. I will transcribe my interviews and organize my field notes thematically. That is why I am currently applying for this grant to help pay for the transcriptions of my dissertation audio. After the interviews are transcribed, I will use NVivo, a data analysis software, to code and analyze my interviews. The funds requested will help with my matriculation and the completion of my dissertation work in the late spring of 2020.

I am requesting funding to pay a third party, Landmark Associates, for transcription services for my interview audio. Being awarded a Charles Phelps Taft Research Center grant will help me avoid time and financial obstacles that would interfere with the research and writing schedule approved by my dissertation advisor, and would allow me to make progress toward the completion of the doctorate in time to apply for post-doctoral positions for the next academic year. A Charles Phelps Taft Research Center grant would allow me to send off the interview audio and begin data analysis in November and continue over the holiday break. The proposed budget for this project will be used to fund the transcription of some of the interview audio.

My ultimate objective is to develop my expertise in the areas of qualitative research methods, racial and ethnic inequality, and Black urban sociology while attaining my PhD in sociology. By mastering these sub-topics, I will be able to continue a career as a public sociologist and scholar-activist. My dissertation is a timely and beneficial project for my future goals: translation work in the discipline of sociology and delving in public policy informed by social science research. A research study on the use of space as a form of racial inequality is particularly important as U.S cities continue to grow and change. My methodological choices allow me to investigate changing city dynamics through the eyes of Black millennials, a population that is constantly moving to cities. We must include their voices in discussions of city growth and change if we truly want to improve our cities, and improve locations where people spend their free time and economic capital. My dissertation will be useful in city policy discussions of how to create more equitable city centers in places like Cincinnati, where I have conducted my research.

References

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V. Project Budget and Schedule

My dissertation project includes the collection of 26 interviews. I am applying for the Charles Phelps Taft Research Center grant to help support the transcription costs of some of these interviews. On average, each interview is one hour and 15 minutes long. Transcription services cost between \$1.50 - \$2.50 per minute. Most of my interviews were conducted in public places so I am budgeting for “difficult audio” charges due to background noise (pricing for this begins at \$1.89/minute). At \$1.89 per minute, the transcription of twenty-six interviews (at about 75 minutes each) will cost \$3, 611.79. Since, the maximum available to be awarded through the Charles Phelps Taft Research Grant is \$ 2, 500.00, I am requesting the full amount to cover the cost of some transcription services. I plan to apply for the Kunz Graduate Student Research Award to fund the remaining transcription costs. Upon receipt of these grants, I will immediately submit my dissertation interview audio. The turnaround time is 3-5 business days for the level of transcriptions I will be requesting.

Item	Cost
Transcription Services	Twenty-six, 75-minute interviews = 1911.79 minutes X \$1.89 per minute. = \$3,611.79
Total Amount Requested	\$2,500.00
Amount to be Requested from Other Sources:	Amount to be requested from Kunz: \$1,000.00

Dissertation Timeline to Completion

November 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn in interviews to get transcribed. • Code data from interviews & ethnography.
December 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze data from interviews and ethnography
January 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesize and analyze findings from multiple data sources (Observations and Interviews). • Complete 1st findings chapter
February 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete 2nd finding chapter
March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete 3rd findings chapter
April 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize findings chapters. • Finish dissertation writing: Introduction, Methods chapters, and Conclusion.
May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete and Defend Dissertation

