History, Race, and Attachment to Place Among Elders in the Rural All-Black Towns of Oklahoma

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This research examines place attachment among older residents of the all-Black towns of Oklahoma. Social-historical occurrences, personal experiences associated with race, and expressed differences between social-historical groupings of older African Americans influence the level of social and autobiographical insideness among the elderly residents. The findings extend current conceptualizations of place attachment by showing that (a) place attachment is not a constant, even among long-term residents; (b) social-historical factors can play an important role in the level of place attachment; (c) race can be a salient element of place attachment; (d) experiences outside the community, such as racial discrimination, can influence the level of social and autobiographical bonding to the community; and (e) subgroup identity within minority groups can be associated with variations in community place attachment. The findings point to the value of carefully examining the issues of history and race in research focusing on older minority group members.

This article draws upon data from a research project aimed at comprehending the lived experiences of older residents of the all-Black towns of Oklahoma. The term "all-Black town" is commonly used by town residents to refer to the incorporated municipalities in rural Oklahoma that were established by African Americans. The general thesis of this article is that the issues of history and race, especially the African American history of Oklahoma, are important integrating themes for understanding social and autobiographical insideness and the levels of place attachment that are expressed in the life narratives of the elders in these towns. I use the term "race" in this article not as a biological term, but to denote social constructs that are reflected in social institutions as well as in group and individual actions (Gregory & Sanjeck, 1994).

The all-Black towns of Oklahoma are small rural African American communities scattered throughout the eastern half of the state. Most Oklahomans, White or African American, find it difficult to name more than 2 or 3 of the 12 towns that remain out of the approximately 30 that once existed. By focusing on these special rural communities, we may uncover themes that expand our understanding of place attachment, especially within racially homogeneous minority settings.

BACKGROUND

Place attachment is a concept that geographers and demographers have used to describe the strong social-psychological attraction to a specific location among long-term residents. Through his work in a rural Appalachian community in West Virginia, Graham Rowles (1980, 1983a) enhanced our understanding of the dimensions of place attachment in old age. According to Rowles, place attachment can be expressed in three categories of geographical insideness. These dimensions include the following: (a) physical insideness — based upon familiarity with surroundings, (b) social insideness — the social integration of the elders into the community, and (c) autobiographical insideness — or the lifelong accumulation of experiences in the community. The more "inside" one is with regard to these dimensions, the deeper the level of identification with a place and the greater the sense of belongingness to it (Relf, 1976). This article focuses specifically upon autobiographical and social insideness and the roles of history and race in the development of these forms of attachment. Though an equally compelling argument might be made for the relevance of physical insideness to the place attachment of older residents of the all-Black towns, space does not permit a full explication of this argument.

Autobiographical and social insideness may be particularly powerful aspects of place attachment in old age. With regard to autobiographical insideness, aging in place promotes the temporal layering of actual experiences and fictional elements that converge to establish one's personal identification with a place (Rowles, 1983b). The development and reinforcement of social ties can also bond the older person to the community by creating a high degree of social insideness that establishes a sociogeographic "refuge" for coping with the transitions that occur in old age.

Because racism and racial segregation are powerful and pervasive in their impact on minority group consciousness (Brazier, 1973), research on place attachment in minority communities may be counterproductive unless investigators directly examine the nature of racism and its consequences for attachment to specific locations. Among older minority group members, the autobiographical and social insideness associated with a community may be influenced by a lifetime of discrimination, limited life chances, and minority group identification (Broman, Neighbors, & Jackson, 1988; Smith & Thornton, 1993). The social context in which minority groups are reared, including their collective deprivation, influences the level of minority group consciousness (Smith & Thornton, 1993).

Discrimination, segregation, limited life chances, and minority group consciousness act in concert to create socially
About the All-Black Towns of Oklahoma

A majority of the all-Black towns of Oklahoma could be easily overlooked — it is quite literally difficult, with a good map, to know for sure whether you have successfully located certain of them. They tend to be very unlike the image many urban residents may hold of a “town.” Many of their streets are unpaved. It would be an indulgence to call the roads gravel, because in many cases it has been years since any gravel has been applied. Even the main access roads to certain of the towns are unpaved.

Table 1 displays census data for 11 of the 12 towns. The town of Vernon is not separately identified in the census. These data do not, in all cases, accurately portray what they are really like. According to the mayor of Clearview, the town has about twice the number of residents as the census suggests. Many residents refused to complete the census forms because they were concerned that the information might threaten their welfare eligibility. Similar stories have been offered by mayors of some of the other towns. Therefore, some towns may be somewhat larger than the census figures, and the income and poverty figures may also be incorrect.

The census data indicate that certain of the towns have relatively large White populations and many young adults, although this is not what one sees when one visits them. Boley is a good case in point. A few years ago, Boley annexed a nearby correctional facility that houses many young adults and Whites who, due to their incarceration, have no involvement with the town. Langston is the home of Langston University, a historically Black state university whose student body remains predominately African American. Therefore, much of the town’s young adult population consists of students at the university. The permanent population in Langston has a higher percentage of African American elders than is suggested by the census.

The town residents are defined by the census as rural-nonfarm. They tend to have low incomes, and the quality of the housing stock is generally very poor. The median age of homes in certain towns is over 40 years, although some towns do have at least a few modern, well-constructed homes. Some homes are without indoor plumbing and many do not have access to natural gas. Some of the towns have sewage and/or water systems, although not all residences are connected.

There are few businesses in any of the towns today. Some have a convenience store. A few have a cafe. One has a liquor store, and one has a blues club. In many cases, the schools that once served the children in the towns are abandoned; some have burned down. With the exception of Boley, which still has public schools, the children now attend consolidated schools elsewhere. A number of the towns continue to make use of the old school buildings as town halls or community centers. Some of the towns have managed to garner sufficient state and district grant funds to build new community centers or to remodel older buildings for this purpose. Churches are frequently the most prominent buildings in town.

In spite of their small size, the communities are incorporated and have mayors and town councils. The governmental structures tend to be simple, but they are sources of great pride. Town services, such as water and sewerage, are managed by volunteers in many cases. Some towns have small police departments. A few also have fire departments (usually volunteer), whereas others depend on services from nearby communities.

Table 1. Selected Statistics on Oklahoma’s All-Black Towns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Percent African American</th>
<th>Percent Age 60+</th>
<th>Per Capita Income</th>
<th>Percent of Persons 65+ Below Poverty</th>
<th>Median Home Value</th>
<th>Median Year of Housing Construction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boley</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>$6,625</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>$18,900</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearview</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>$2,098</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>$14,999</td>
<td>1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grayson</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>$6,669</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>$23,900</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langston</td>
<td>1,441</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>$2,944</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>$28,300</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lima</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>$4,373</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>$14,999</td>
<td>1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redbird</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>$4,058</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>$15,500</td>
<td>1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rentiesville</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>$4,222</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>$14,999</td>
<td>1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summit</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>$5,170</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>$22,900</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taft</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>$5,532</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>$29,300</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatum</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>98.2</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>$5,181</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>$14,999</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tullahassee</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>96.2</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>$5,235</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>$25,800</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>3,145,585</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>$11,983</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>$47,600</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a The town of Vernon is omitted from this table because it is not separately identified in the census.

The number in parenthesis is the per capita income for African Americans in Oklahoma.
METHOD

A variety of approaches were combined to gather information about the lived experiences of elders in the all-Black towns of Oklahoma. I visited each of Oklahoma's all-Black towns at least once and most many times. Some of the visits were for the purpose of observing and recording the characteristics of the towns, whereas others were made to conduct interviews. During and after each visit I wrote field notes that have been incorporated into the analysis. When traveling to towns in which I had previously interviewed, I also made informal return visits to past respondents. These return calls, although primarily social in nature, sometimes resulted in new information.

Research by Rowles (1988) has shown that qualitative interviews can be a rich source of information about the meaning of residence to elders in a particular area. Active interviewing, with its emphasis on both the process of meaning making and collaboration between the interviewer and the respondent, is a valuable method for guiding the participants through the identification and discussion of salient topics encompassing an issue (Gubrium, 1993; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). This interview approach was used with nine older residents in three of the all-Black towns. The respondents were selected by means of a combination of purposive and opportunity approaches. I approached some after spotting them in their yards or in other locations on my travels to the towns. I was introduced to some respondents by community leaders, and others were recommended to me because of their age and their long tenure in the town. The four men and five women range in age from 61 to 91. Two are married, and five are widowed. All of the individuals have lived for an extended time in their town. With the exception of one respondent who arrived in her town in early adulthood through marriage to a resident, all were born in or very near the towns. Some of the individuals have spent time away from the towns for education or work or to serve in the armed forces. Two left school before completing high school. Seven completed high school, and two of these completed some college.

I used a semistructured interview guide. Because a major focus of the project was to understand the health situations of the residents, the guide focused on the health status, health perceptions, health practices, and health care utilization of residents. Additional questions were designed to elicit descriptions of the history of the towns, the personal life narratives of the respondents, and their general views about life. The interviews required from approximately 80 minutes to 5 hours to complete. Most interviews were carried out over at least two sessions.

In addition to these individual interviews, I conducted a group interview with seven female residents of one of the towns, all within the age range for the investigation (60 and over) and all members of the town's informal Retired Senior Volunteer Program group. I also interviewed a group of three male residents of one town: a former mayor and two town council members. Two of these people were over 60 years of age.

For those towns that have post offices, I made a point of regularly stopping by on my visits to the towns. The post offices are, in many cases, the towns' centers of activity. More than once, I met people at the post office whom I had already interviewed or who might become respondents. The postmasters are familiar with all of the adult residents and know a great deal about their circumstances and activities. Although I did not ask postmasters to share their insider's knowledge with me, they sometimes volunteered useful information.

I completed face-to-face interviews with the current mayors of three towns. One of the mayors accompanied me around town to introduce me to some of the older residents. In another town, a former mayor drove through town with me and identified the homes where elders reside. This type of support was common, and it helped a great deal with gaining acceptance. All of the individuals whom I asked to serve as respondents/informants agreed to do so.

I also interviewed two African Americans who, although not residents of the all-Black towns, have made the study of the history of African Americans in Oklahoma their mission. Ms. Eddie Faye Gates, a resident of Tulsa, has spearheaded a number of historical displays and oral history projects in northeastern Oklahoma. Mr. Napoleon Davis, of Muskogee, has single-handedly built an impressive Creek Freedmen Memorial. As a descendant of Creek freedmen, he has spent decades gathering and archiving information about his ancestors.

I also regularly attended the bimonthly meetings of the Oklahoma Council of Black Mayors. This group consists of the mayors of the original all-Black towns, as well as the African American mayors of other Oklahoma communities. I used these meetings as a forum to explain my research and to work with the mayors on projects beneficial to their towns. The Council endorsed my work and gave me a regular place on the agenda of each meeting. The Council meetings were an extraordinarily rich source of information and of contacts.

One valuable way of "locating" a place in social research is to consider its historical context. Because the all-Black towns have rich histories, which include issues of race pride and racial discrimination, there is value in bringing the social–historical context of the towns to light in the analysis. Therefore, another critical element of my work has been a review of historical documents pertinent to Oklahoma's African American history, including The WPA Oklahoma Slave Narratives (Baker & Baker, 1996), photographs from the photographic archives of the Oklahoma Historical Society, and the literature on the history of the all-Black towns of Oklahoma.

All told, I completed several hundred hours of field work and interviews and have reviewed a large quantity of primary and secondary historical information. This article draws upon all of these resources. The analysis has consisted of multiple phases of listening to audio recordings and reading transcripts, field notes and other written materials, along with note-taking regarding emerging themes. Each new review phase consisted of (a) discovery of new themes; (b) searches for passages that confirm, refute, or refine the themes; and (c) refinement of themes. In the findings section, respondents' names are pseudonyms and towns are referred to by number to protect confidentiality.
HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALL-BLACK TOWNS

The history of the all-Black towns is more than an interesting backdrop to their current circumstances. The distinctive social-history of these communities establishes the context that substantially defines their current character and condition. Also, through their narratives, the older residents link the social history of the towns with their lived experiences as they attach meaning to the communities. Although the history of each town is unique and is relevant to the issues under investigation, space limitations permit only a brief general overview.

Early Establishment

The all-Black towns of Oklahoma were organized during the period from just after the Civil War into the early 1900s. Most of the approximately 30 original all-Black towns were established in the section of Oklahoma that was designated as Indian Territory (Carney, 1991) prior to statehood. In many cases, individuals who developed the towns did so on land that had been previously assigned by the federal government to African American freedmen of one of the Five Civilized Tribes at the conclusion of the Civil War (Knight, 1975). Many freedmen of these tribes received land allotments due to the revised treaties that the Five Civilized Tribes were forced to sign after the Civil War (Teall, 1971; Tolson, 1972).

African American freedmen of Indians rarely settled in the towns (Crockett, 1979). Instead, the towns grew through the continued in-migration of southern freedmen or their descendants. Some town promoters distributed circulars throughout the South to attract settlers (Carney, 1991). The documents advertising the availability of land in the towns appealed to African Americans on several levels, including economic opportunities related to the opening of the West, the chance to live with members of their own group and be in charge of their own destiny, the prospect of personal and family safety, and freedom from White domination (Bogle, 1994; Carney, 1991). A recruitment bulletin for the town of Langston exemplifies these themes.

To better our sad conditions, we must act at once; if not we will let our best and only chance for independence pass. . . . Our city is incorporated. Not a single white person lives in our town. . . . What will you be if you stay in the South? Slaves liable to be killed at any time, and never treated right; but if you come to Oklahoma you have equal chances with the white man, free and independent. Why do southern whites always run down Oklahoma and try to keep the negroes from coming here? Because they want to keep them there and live off their labor. White people are coming here every day. . . . Langston City and its addition promises to be one of the great cities of Oklahoma. A negro city for the exclusive use of and benefit of our own race (Tolson, 1952, pp. 66–70).

The towns grew rapidly during the period from 1880 through Oklahoma’s statehood in 1907 (Carney, 1991). As African American farmers from the South settled in the nearby countryside, the communities became agricultural commercial centers with a large array of businesses (Tolson, 1952). In 1912, the Boley Commercial Club claimed that Boley was the largest and wealthiest exclusively African American city in the world (Jackson, 1968). The towns attracted professionals from southern states in large numbers prior to statehood due to the possibility of establishing an all African American state (Crockett, 1979). Oklahoma’s potential for entering the Union as an African American state was quite real toward the end of the 19th Century. There were sufficient numbers of African Americans in Oklahoma to encourage E. P. McCabe, developer of the all-Black town of Langston (Carney, 1991; Franklin, 1982), to meet with President Harrison in Washington in 1890 to seek Harrison’s approval for the establishment of an African American state in the Oklahoma Territory (Tolson, 1966). The President was generally in favor of the idea, providing a majority of the residents in the region were African American at the point of a petition for statehood. Ultimately, African American migration to Oklahoma was not sufficient to establish a majority African American population.

Racial Identity and African American Pride

There is evidence of strong African American racial pride and concern for racial fulfillment within the all-Black towns. These communities were settled less as racial ghettos than as enclaves where racial fulfillment and self-realization could be sought without interference from Whites (Bittle & Geis, 1957). After visiting Boley in the early 1900s, Booker T. Washington wrote:

Boley . . . represents a dawning of race consciousness, a wholesome desire to do something to make the race respected: something which shall demonstrate the right of the negro, not merely as an individual but as a race, to have a worthy and permanent place in the civilization that the American people are creating (Washington, 1908, p. 31).

Mozell Hill, a sociologist, has described the “Great Black March Westward” as a classical social movement based upon a powerful positive race ideology. He saw the organization of the all-Black towns of Oklahoma as the culmination of the institutionalization phase of this social movement—a phase in which African American group ideology was permanently established by the towns’ residents.

This racial ideology is giving permanence to the development and stability of the society. Under these conditions, it has become apparent that the movement has become established, it has become institutionalized (Hill, 1946a, p. 264).

In the mid 1940s, Hill compared the attitudes of the youth in an Oklahoma all-Black town with African American young people in a more biracial community in another state. He found that the youth in the all-Black town were far more likely to view positively such characteristics as dark woolly hair, dark skin, a flat nose, and thick lips—evidence of African American pride and positive race ideology (Hill, 1946b). The cohort that Hill interviewed is now within the age group targeted for the current research.

In line with Hill’s findings, Crockett contended that within the all-Black towns the residents asserted a robust sense of racial pride and experienced genuine freedom from White oppression.
in home, church, and school, black-town youth were taught self-respect, and the glorification of past racial accomplish-
ments. . . . To the sensitive, the black town offered a social paradise with freedom to walk the streets without encumber-
ing the thousand subtle reminders of membership in a subor-
dinate class. Also one need not fear that a look or gesture might be misinterpreted and bring down the physical wrath of whites. Each day the community blanketed the individual with a sense of well-being, and some who were born and grew up there became addicted to the environment (Crockett, 1979, p. 185).

Racial/Ethnic Animosity

Initially, Whites, who were also settling the region at this time, were unconcerned about the development of the all-
Black towns. As a matter of fact, the concentration of African Americans in specific locations may have been en-
couraged, because it limited the interchange between Whites and African Americans (Hill, 1946a). White intimidation began to be more open and destructive after the turn of the century, due in part to the possibility of African American statehood (Bogle, 1994). White Oklahoma farmers began to organize “Anti-Negro Farmer's Associations” to encourage farming by Whites and to discourage and harass African American farmers (Elahi, 1968). In the early Twentieth century, lynchings and house burnings by “Whitecappers” and the Ku Klux Klan were quite common in Oklahoma (Tolson, 1972). Whites began forcing African American res-
idents out of many mixed-race towns (Franklin, 1982).

One very clear marker of the extent of White animosity toward African Americans in Oklahoma was the Tulsa race riot of 1921, one of America’s worst urban racial conflicts. It started when an African American man was accused of at-
tacking a White girl. The man was arrested and jailed. White and African American mobs formed at the jail, and a shot was fired. The fight soon moved to the African American district, where shooting continued during that evening and into the next day. Ultimately, approximately 9 Whites and 68 African Americans were killed. Thirty city blocks that had previously housed 15,000 African Americans, were torched (Smallwood & Phillips, 1993; Tolson, 1972).

As a result of these occurrences, the all-Black towns in-
creasingly became places in which African Americans sought safety from White oppression. Some of the towns (i.e., Redbird and Tullahassee) showed population increases following the Tulsa race riot of 1921 (Knight, 1975).

As the towns developed and grew, there was also some animosity between two groups of African Americans that resided in rural eastern Oklahoma: the former slaves of Indians and the former slaves of southern White slaveowners and their descendants. For example, there is historical documentation of freedmen of Indians “shooting up” the town of Boley in the early years (Crockett, 1979). An expla-
nation is in order regarding some of the terms used in this article. With apologies for the sexist connotations of the terms, but in keeping with the preferences of most African Americans whose ancestors came to Oklahoma with the Five Civilized Tribes on the Trail of Tears well be-
fore the Civil War, I refer to them as “freedmen of Indians” or “Indian freedmen.” Although these two groups of African Ameri-
cans arrived in the Territory from the South, they came dur-
ing different periods and under very different circum-
stances.

Perhaps one reason for the initial disagreement between freedmen from the South and Indian freedmen was the fact that southern freedmen lobbied the government heavily for the right to land allotments in the Territory, based upon a misreading of the 1866 treaties between the Federal gov-
ernment and the Creeks and Seminoles (Tolson, 1972). If the southern freedmen had won this right, it would have been to the detriment of Indian freedmen. In addition, many of the Indian freedmen, who had little experience in land management or real estate transactions, lost the land they received as a result of the 1889 bill requiring allotment of the remaining Indian reservations in the Territory (Teall, 1971). In some cases, the land was lost through exchanges with southern freedmen.

OLDER RESIDENTS’ NARRATIVES

Narrative Descriptions of Town Histories

Most of the older residents of the all-Black towns can re-
count in considerable detail the early and recent history of their town and their family's role in its founding and de-
velopment. Autobiographical and social insideness emerged as important themes in their descriptions of the town's histo-
ries, and racial oppression and racial pride are frequent components of their narratives. Ms. Hanford is the oldest living resident of Town 1. Her story of her father's migration out of Texas to Town 1 includes references to the de-
sire for freedom from the racial and economic oppression associated with tenant farming. Her father “slipped off” (Segment 1.2–1.3) because he owed for share cropping and saw that he could never buy his way out of debt in Texas.

1.1 He didn't get quite along so good with all the White folks what he had to work with in Texas.
1.2 So he had some people what had come from Texas up here and said it was a nice place, and everything.
1.3 So he slipped off and came over here. . . .
1.4 [You said he slipped away. What do you mean by that?] 1.5 Well, the folks didn't know he was leavin'!
1.6 See, . . . \ at that time they'll still kinda hold onto ya in one way or the other.
1.7 If you owed them, you couldn’t leave the community.
They had that goin' down there.
1.8 And so he had to get outa there at night. And, that's what he did.

It should be noted that all narrative segments have been edited for continuity. I have attempted to maintain the basic pronunciation within the text. A modified version of Labov's (1972) text annotations have been used: ( ) explanations or replacements provided by the author, [ ] Questions or com-
ments of the interviewer during the interview, . . . narrative text omitted, \ hesitation (more marks indicate longer hesita-
tions), and ___ passages spoken with greater volume.

Expressions of opportunities for race fulfillment and freedom were also expressed in the respondents’ stories about the town histories. In her narrative history of Town 2,
Ms. Murton describes the land runs as extraordinary opportunities for African Americans to seek racial equality.

2.1 Well, it all began... with my grandfather... He was a minister.
2.2 And... in the South, as we all know, conditions were not very good, and people were leaving.
2.3 So... during the time they were leaving, was, oh, back in the '80's when...
2.4 the first real opportunity, equal opportunity... came along.
2.5 which was the Oklahoma Land Rush.

An important element of Mr. Bartle's narrative history of Town 3 is that it was controlled by African Americans. In describing the history of the town, he mentions several businesses; then he shows that White access was limited by describing the number permitted "inside."

3.1 They... operated ever'thang here,... the Negroes did.
3.2 So later on they... let two... Whites come in,
3.3 and one put in a feed store, and the other one put in a hardware.

Themes of the Towns as Refuges from Racial Oppression

Many of the older residents of the all-Black towns still leave their doors unlocked. More than once, when visiting a town post office I have found a car left by a patron with the engine running and the door open. There are many robust themes in the narratives of the towns as refuges, places of safety. Several residents mentioned the lack of "drive-by shooting," "gangs," and "drugs" — qualities that might be viewed as positive characteristics of many rural communities. However, many narratives also addressed the importance of the towns as refuges from race discrimination and oppression. Mr. Jennings describes the need to isolate oneself in urban areas. In the larger context of his narrative, the concept of "hiding" is related to both avoiding general crime and to avoiding problems with Whites.

4.1 Really, when you in, in Oklahoma City or anywhere else....
4.2 You hide from one element and you induce another element.
4.3 So, you not, you not really hide... Right here, I feel pretty free.

Mr. Jennings summarizes his viewpoint by offering a multifaceted perspective on Town 1 as a refuge. Passage 5.1–5.2, with its emphasis on freedom of action, is reminiscent of Crockett's description of the towns in earlier times.

5.1 So, that's the reason I like to live in (Town 1). Because, not the high hustle and bustle. The high crime rate.
5.2 The freedom of activity. The freedom to get up in the mornin' and go.

Ms. Merton offers another version of how Town 2 has served as a refuge from White oppression in both her youth and her adulthood. She describes how, when she was young, her father would take her into a nearby town in the wagon. He would go into the general store, and have her stay in the wagon. White children would gather around the wagon and taunt her.

6.1 Hey, little piccaniny! Hey, little piccaniny!

In a later conversation with Ms. Murton, she elaborates on the theme of racial harassment in later years.

7.1 I was comin' from Oklahoma City... I had to change buses in, ah, (nearby town).
7.2 Well, I don't know if you know anything about (town).
7.3 But (town) used to have the signs there about, you know, "Don't let the sun go down on you in (town)."
7.4 They didn't want to see a Black face there after dark....
7.5 Well, I was standing on the sidewalk waiting for the bus.
7.6 And a lady came by, and she had a little girl. And of course, the child, in passing by me, stepped off the sidewalk.
7.7 Well, the lady... pulled her and... tell her "No!"
7.8 She scolded her, "You never get off the sidewalk for a \" and I just looked at her.
7.9 The bus couldn't come fast enough for me.

Ms. Merton was always happy to return to Town 2, where she was not subjected to this type of racial abuse. Her narrative description of the town today conjures potent images of its continuing value as refuge. Segment 8.1-8.5 also offers a glimpse into her notion of "insideness" and "outsideness."

8.1 Well, we have peace... I tell the people that I don't think that they realize just what we have.
8.2 Like you don't have to answer to a lot, you know, on the outside. It's like bein' your own boss.
8.3 My mind goes back to Grandfather... in establishin' a place... which was... like a haven of rest.
8.4 Place to be away from a lot of things.

Another refuge-related theme has to do with opportunities to practice race pride and the freedom to reside with one's minority group — suggestive of Hill's description of the towns as the culmination of a social movement based on racial ideology. Mr. Bartle succinctly expresses this theme in the following passage.

9.1 I ain't nothin' much, but I'm a race pride person.
9.2 [Tell me what you mean by that.]
9.3 I believe be with your race... That's what I mean by it.
9.4 I don't mean to dislike you... But I just want to stay with my own race.

Insideness, Outsideness, and Boundary Violations

I also identified numerous passages in which the elders describe various forms of assault on the towns. These narrative elements strengthen the evidence that the towns serve as refuges from racial oppression. According to Mr. Hastings, Whites have long sought to do away with Town 3 because it is an all-Black town.

10.1 (White) people been tryin' to kill (Town 3) off for the last 40 years.
10.2 [Why do you think that is?]
10.3 Black people.
There are also many examples in the narratives of various physical encroachments, especially by Whites, that have served to heighten the elder's awareness of the town's boundaries and of what it means to be "inside" and "outside." Mr. Bartle speaks of Whites burning down Town 3's school building.

11.1 I remember when they had this big school up there in (Town 3). And when they went to
11.2 integratin' they tried to break it up . . . and couldn't
11.3 And they set that school afire and burnt it down.
11.4 [Who did that??]
11.5 The White people. \Set it afire and burned it down.

Mr. Bartle describes another incident many years ago that shows how a nearby White community violated Town 3's boundaries by seizing the train station late one evening.

12.1 The train station was straight down the hill there. \And it was operated by Negroes.
12.2 And you know, we went to bed one night, and that
12.3 [Is that right?]
12.4 They loaded that thing on a track and pulled it down
12.5 Yeah they . . . thought once they was just gonna take . . . over.

Ms. Murton also introduces an incident showing that town residents and town property are vulnerable to racial attack. Her sister, who lives out of town, maintains a mobile home in Town 2 that has been broken into several times. She speaks of a recent episode.

13.1 They came in through the kitchen window.
13.2 And they . . . takes this black paint;\ they and they just put it all over the walls \KKK. \|
13.3 Went all over the mirrors, all over the walls, on the table.

For Mr. Jennings, the issues of "insideness" and "outsideness" of Town 1 took on considerable importance in his youth. He tells how he had to deal with descendants of Indian freedmen and with Whites when he journeyed to an nearby town.

14.1 If I wasn't fightin' my way to town, then I was outa' town.
14.2 Fightin' my way to town with the colored boys, and fightin' my way outa town with the White boys.

Narrative statements about White encroachment, as well as mistreatment by Whites outside the towns, appear to demonstrate the elders' sense of individual and group vulnerability. The result is a strengthened social and autobiographical insideness, resulting in greater place attachment.

Descendants of Slaves of Indians as Outsiders

Intertwined with the issue of insideness versus outside in Passage 14.1–14.2 are perceived group differences between African American descendants of Indian freedmen and African American descendants of southern freedmen. The colored boys Mr. Jennings describes fighting with were descendants of Indian freedmen. In general, the descendants of Indian freedmen continue, as in the early days, to reside in settlements outside the all-Black towns, although I interviewed two who resided within the boundaries of the communities. The older town residents can name communities where descendants of Indian freedmen once lived, or where they live today, and these communities are clearly geographically and socially separate from the all-Black towns.

In a variety of ways, the descendants of Indian freedmen and descendants of southern freedmen are identified as separate African Americans groups by residents of the all-Black towns. For example, a number of terms, in addition to "Indian freedmen," are used by descendants of both Indian and southern freedmen to refer to this group, and thus establish their otherness: "Indian Territory Blacks" (often abbreviated to "ITs"), "natives," "Indian raised," and "African Americans of Indian descent." Conversely, the descendants of southern freedmen are also called "state raised" or sometimes "people of migration" by the town elders of both groups. Two elements of the language used by the elders, the diverse taxonomy for referencing Indian freedmen and southern freedmen and the facility with which they use this referential terminology, suggest that the two groups have held separate identifications for a long period. The fact that the elders rarely speak of individuals as descendants of one or the other group, but instead refer to them as members of a contemporary group (e.g., "he is an IT", or "she is state raised") indicates that there is a currency to the issue of group membership.

Ms. Hanford makes it clear that the majority of descendants of Indian freedmen live separately and were not responsible for the development of Town 1.

15.1 They settled about three miles south and east of here.
15.2 That's where they are put.
15.3 When these people (southern freedmen) came from the states, this was woods, and like that.
15.4 So they bought . . . little lots . . .
15.5 And that's why the town was created, because of them.

Mr. Hastings discusses the descendants of slaves of Indians as living apart from Town 3.

16.1 Here's what we called them "natives." They were Negroes that came here with Indians, see.
16.2 And there were quite a few of 'em down at (nearby town), . . .
16.3 Let me tell you. You fought one and you'd have to fight the whole crew.
16.4 Cause they'd jump on you and they'd eat you up!
16.5 Boy, down in (town) and (town) . . . when you go down there brother, you'd better go on your best behavior; cause . . . they had them 30-30's 'n they'd run you out of town!

Ms. Hanford explains the reasons for the rancor between the two groups in terms of the feeling of superiority on the
part of the descendants of Indian freedmen, due to their land holdings.

17.1 Naturally, they (southern freedmen) just came and didn’t have nothin' but themselves.

17.2 But these Indian raised people or what not, they inherited 40 acres of land.

17.3 Well, that made them feel that they were superior than the people that didn’t have anything . . .

17.4 And that kinda grew up in people my age. They had it real bad that they were superior to the people that came from the states . . .

17.5 Like I’m tellin’ you. They didn’t want to have nothin’ to do with one another. It was terrible!

Mr. Jennings claims heritage from both groups—a fact that made it somewhat difficult for him to be accepted back into Town 1 after living elsewhere, even though some of his ancestors were among the original town settlers and community leaders. He offers a version of what led to the animosity (what he calls “Black on Black”) that incorporates issues of land allocation, education, intelligence, and jealousy.

18.1 It is a matter of have and have nots.

18.2 It’s the same thing that has, has gone on in the world from the beginnin’ of time.

18.3 The strong take away from the weak, and the smart take it away from the strong . . .

18.4 So, the ITs or people of African Americans of Indian descent had the land. People of migration, Blacks that was migrated from Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, and Arkansas, did not have that right.

18.5 So there had to be a turnover some kinda way. The land had to be usurped . . .

18.6 I would say (southern freedmen were) intellectually at a level a little higher than African Americans of Indian descent . . .

18.7 All of this was caused by jealousy and undereducated people, because the ITs had no schoolin’.

All of the older all-Black town residents introduced thus far express very strong positive place attachment in their narratives. Their regard for their towns is high, and they frequently describe the towns with terms denoting deep affection. Ms. Murton’s description of Town 2 as a “haven of rest” (Segment 8.1-8.4) is indicative of its deep meaning to her. According to Ms. Hanford, (Town 1) is my heart.

19.1 (Town 1) is my heart.

Ms. Nash, another older resident, expresses similar views.

20.1 I just loooove here! I’ve been away workin’ but I come back.

20.2 You know, this is home . . . (Town 2) is my home.

In their narratives, place attachment is frequently related to social–historical circumstances that give meaning to the elders’ residence within the towns. The towns have been locations where the elders could experience race pride and freedom from much of the racial oppression that occurs on the outside, thereby enhancing their social and autobiographical insideness. Social–historical events have also established the towns as places in which Whites and White society are viewed as being on the outside. Negative experiences with Whites outside the towns and negative inclusions of Whites into the communities have enhanced the meaning of the towns as racial refuges, thereby amplifying the social and autobiographical insideness of the elders.

Social–historical events have also led to the identification of one group of African Americans, Indian freedmen, as outsiders. Thus, the meaning the residents attach to their towns is partly related to the process of identifying themselves as autobiographical and social insiders and partly related to identifying Whites and some other African Americans as social and autobiographical outsiders.

Narratives of Marginal Residents

It is beneficial, when examining issues of place attachment and integration, to seek the views of more marginal individuals in the community. I interviewed two such individuals who, like the other seven respondents, were long-term residents of their communities. Mr. Lincoln considers himself a marginal resident of Town 1. His pronouncements of community marginality are in consonance with his circumstance. He is a descendant of Indian freedmen in an all-Black town, which consists chiefly of descendants of southern freedmen, and his home, a mobile home, is just barely within the town limits on a perimeter street. He often speaks of leaving town, although he is deterred by the fact that his ancestors are buried nearby.

21.1 My holy grounds is in the field of a White man.

21.2 A White man got hold of that property soooooo kinda way, and he got a fence around it.

21.3 And my holy grounds have been desecrated.

Mr. Lincoln is very proud of his heritage. He calls himself an “African American of Native American descent” or, sometimes, an “aboriginal.” Like many of the other respondents, Mr. Lincoln evokes racial themes in his description of the town’s history. However, his narrative is offered from the vantage point of someone whose ancestral group was manipulated by others, both White and African American.

22.1 The people that incorporated (Town 1) were trained by slave masters somewhere else . . .

22.2 Slave masters that realized before hand what was gonna happen . . . trained people to come out here and to marry into our families.

22.3 So that when we died, half of our property would go automatically to them.

22.4 We lost it.

Another marginal person, Ms. Bradford, also a descendant of Indian freedmen, came to Town 1 because of marriage. Like Mr. Lincoln, she lives just within Town 1’s perimeter. Ms. Bradford, who has a daughter living very nearby, has tended to maintain her distance from other residents, even though she has lived in Town 1 for many decades. She attends church outside of town, a behavior that further establishes her marginality. Although her narrative does not associate her treatment by other residents directly with her heritage, she feels that she has not been dealt with properly by town residents.
24.1 There's too many people didn't treat me right.
24.2 The things they done, I didn't appreciate it. So, that's the way it is.

Ms. Bradford expresses her sense of personal marginality when asked about how important living in Town 1 is to her.

25.1 Well, I'd miss it and call it home. But the truth is, I don't care that much about it.

Thus, the expressed marginality of these two elders is related in part to the social–historical circumstances that establish their social and autobiographical status as neither insider nor outsider. On the one hand, their long-term residence in the town (their physical insideness), along with Ms. Bradford's having family nearby and Mr. Lincoln's attachment to his family's burial grounds, bonds them to their town. On the other hand, their membership in a group that most other older residents view as outsiders diminishes their autobiographical and social insideness as expressed in their narrative descriptions of place attachment.

DISCUSSION

The social–history of the all-Black towns and the personal histories of the older residents, as expressed through their life narratives, provide a fresh perspective on the place attachment of elderly rural minority residents. The findings serve to extend Rowles' conceptualization of social and autobiographical insideness and place attachment by showing that (a) place attachment is not a constant, even among long-term residents; (b) social–historical factors can play an important role in the level of place attachment; (c) race can be a salient aspect of place attachment among older minority group members; (d) experiences outside the community, such as racial segregation and discrimination, can influence the level of social and autobiographical bonding to the community; and (e) subgroup identity within minority groups can be associated with variations in community place attachment. To most of the older residents, whose place attachment is strong, the positive and negative aspects of racial history, including their narrative histories of the towns and of their personal experiences, give meaning to their lives in the towns. Their narratives establish horizons of meaning (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) between their social insideness, their autobiographical insideness, and their place attachment. As Hill (1946b) noted, there is, for many older residents, a well-defined group ideology that influences their attachment to the town. By focusing on history and race as they relate to the autobiographical and social insideness voiced in their narratives, we gain a deeper, more multifarious view of the development of place attachment. It should be noted that although social and autobiographical insideness are distinct concepts, I did not address them separately in this article, because they tightly intertwined in the elders' narratives.

An important finding of this research is that historically based minority subgroup identity is fundamental to our understanding of the marginality of some of the older residents of the towns. Many of the elders I interviewed drew distinctions between two African American groups — descendants of freedmen of Indians and descendants of freedmen of White southern slave holders. Many of them described bitterness between the two groups. In most cases these differences are presented as being most salient in earlier times. However, some elders offer stories of continuing divisions, and there is relatively little social interchange between the groups today. Competing versions of how the land in the towns was obtained play a role in the social distance between the two groups and also in the level of place attachment among older town residents.

This research has focused chiefly on how place attachment in an older rural minority population can be influenced by history and race. However, the findings also add to the increasing body of research suggesting that older rural populations, even within such apparently "homogeneous" groups as rural nonfarm African American populations, are anything but homogeneous. It has been written that "the search for a simple definition of rural in the context of growing old is probably a quest for an unattainable holy grail" (Rowles, 1988, p. 121). Support for this statement is the finding that in Oklahoma there are socially and spatially meaningful differences among African American rural nonfarm residents living in relatively close proximity to one another. The differences that emerge in the narratives are rooted in social–historical occurrences that predate the Civil War period, yet they appear to bear upon older respondents' current descriptions, social interchange, and place attachment.

It should be noted that the factors attracting individuals to a particular location may change over the life course. I did not specifically ask the elders what led them to remain in the towns during their young adulthood or at other points in their lives; nor did I ask what led them to return when jobs or military commitments took them away. I also did not seek out elders who have left the towns to determine how they differed from those who have remained. It would be most informative to compare versions of social–historical, racial, and minority subgroup expression in the life narratives of movers and stayers. These are valuable avenues for further research.

Due to the sampling strategy, the small sample size, the unique nature of the populations, and the qualitative analytical strategy, it is certainly unreasonable to apply the findings of this research to other rural African American populations. However, the results point to the value of examining intragroup differences in other minority groups and within both rural and urban locations. The findings also lead to two recommendations for future research on older rural minority groups.

First, when investigating such issues as the place attachment of older rural minority populations, researchers should pay attention to issues of history and race and should give careful consideration to the impact of autobiographical and social insideness, as well as physical insideness. Social–historical occurrences are likely to be meaningful to the lived experiences and life narratives of older residents of other rural and urban minority enclaves, just as they are for the elders of the all-Black towns.

Second, when investigating older rural residents, researchers should be careful not to assume homogeneity within any minority group. As an example, I am now extending my research to include older members of the two Seminole Black bands in Oklahoma. The Seminole Black
bands (the term used by the band members and Seminole Indians to describe their tribal status) are groups of individuals having cultural/tribal attachments to the Seminoles but who are primarily of African American ancestry. Of the Five Civilized Tribes, the Seminoles have historically had the most egalitarian relationship with the African Americans who were associated with their tribes, due to a symbiotic alliance organized around an expertise-based division of labor (Aldrich, 1973; McReynolds, 1957), though a movement is now under way by Indian tribal members to abolish the tribal status of the two Black bands. Because of intermarriage of African Americans and Seminoles, some Seminole Black band members have sufficient blood quantum to be eligible for Indian Health Services, whereas others do not. Therefore, access to health care can be dramatically different among African American elders who also identify themselves as having Indian cultural heritage and who live in close proximity to one another. When we “burrrow in” to the rural world with in-depth analysis, we uncover very complex and multifaceted populations and environments.

It is also possible to glean from the findings some implications regarding the delivery of home and community services to rural minority elders. Older rural residents, especially those in rural nonfarm communities such as the all-Black towns, tend to have higher rates of chronic illness and more limitations in activities of daily living than either rural farm elders or older urban residents (Clark, 1992). Yet rural elders are, in general, less likely to use formal services (Clark, 1992; Kenney, 1993), and their access to informal care may be no greater than for urban elders (Clark, 1992). A variety of explanations have been offered for the apparent discrepancy between need and formal service use among rural elders, including distance and transportation (Coward & Rathbone-McCuan, 1985; Kihl, 1993; Parkinson, 1981), availability (Coward, Duncan, & Netzer, 1993), awareness (Goins & Ingegneri, 1994), affordability (Shaughnessy, 1994), and acceptability (Shenk, 1991). Certainly, each of these factors may also influence the use of services among rural minority group members. However, the results of this investigation point to the potential importance of cultural acceptability as a service barrier among rural minority elders (Harel, McKinney, & Williams, 1987). Given their strong sense of race and minority subgroup pride and the accumulation of experiences with racial discrimination, cultural sensitivity on the part of service deliverers may be crucial to acceptance of formal care by the elders of the all-Black towns of Oklahoma. It is reasonable to speculate that other minority groups in other settings possess similar experiences and concerns that call for culturally sensitive home- and community-based services.

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