

AIN'T NO LOVE IN THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAINS: HIP-HOP,
EXCLUSION, AND THE WHITE WILDERNESS

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ABSTRACT

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The expectations of normative behavior in outdoor recreation are often taken for granted and naturalized within dominant cultural narratives about human/nature interactions. In particular, expectations of silence and an absence of evidence of humans and human sounds (anthrophony), are grounded within an understanding of nature and a wilderness/urban paradigm framed by whiteness. Hip-Hop provides an interesting point of analysis for thinking about the binary opposition of wilderness and urbanness. The intersection of Hip-Hop and wilderness is also the starting point for my research. This research aims to speak to just a few ways that white and masculine social norms in outdoor recreation settings operate as technologies of exclusion. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with 14 outdoor recreators, educators, and professionals, illuminated five technologies of exclusion within outdoor practice: 1) the social, cultural, and economic capital barriers to getting started, 2) the obscure standardization and operationalization of Euro-centric definitions of nature, wilderness, outdoor recreation, and front country and back country, 3) the role of competency and ecological ethics in navigating risk and trustworthiness, 4) the practice of policing bodies and practices that are seen as threatening to outdoor spaces, and 5) the politics of noise, silence, and anthrophony.

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INTRODUCTION

When I moved from a small town in the Colorado Rockies to Tacoma, Washington in the fall of 2012, I was acutely interested in constructing a sense of self in a spatial geography that had seemed particularly distant from the landscape I grew up in. Underlying this assumption of spatial difference was a sense that the wooded mountains and the rivers bordering and carving the valley of my hometown did not possess the symbolic qualities reflected in the music that had captured my imagination: Hip-Hop. The expressions of frustration, love, resistance, and passion mixed with urban-city imagery coming through voices in my headphones felt more *real* than the sanitized experiences of the white, middle-class escapism of my childhood – and I wanted to be a part of it. In critical hindsight though, it was a voyeuristic exercise in the experience of an eroticized struggle – a privileged position of moving between two conceptually dichotomous worlds in ways that suited my desire to cast off the guilt of my comfortable existence without ever divesting from the benefits it entailed. I could pronounce my shared experiences in the struggle in the heart of the city, while maintaining an escape to the seemingly sublime heart of the mountains.

It wasn't until I returned to the Colorado Rockies in the summer of 2018 to work for a high school program for low-income students of color excelling in STEM fields, that I began to trouble the difference in the socio-political racial and spatial dynamics of Hip-Hop and Wilderness. Two particular moments that summer informed the questions that this research seeks to engage. The first took place amongst a group of co-workers on

a day off when many of us decided to go rock climbing together. After setting up ropes on a few routes, one of us took out a small portable speaker and started playing music. I was initially a bit uncomfortable, having grown up trained and disciplined in the ethos of a silent wilderness, undisturbed by disruptive human noise, and annoyed by the sounds of ATVs and motorcycles – despite years of an intentionally noisy and disruptive existence in ‘developed’ spaces (including ski slopes) – and was begrudgingly thankful when the most experienced climber in our group walked over and diplomatically said “that’s not really great crag etiquette.” Yet, that started a discussion about the exclusionary politics of silence and the policing of standards of acceptable noise in different spaces. While there seemed to be a consensus that there was a practical safety concern to at least lower the volume (as not to disrupt communication between climber and belayer), the notion that wilderness allowed certain human noises and restricted others appeared less natural and more troubling to me.

A few days later, another group of us were leading a weekend hike in Colorado’s Maroon Bells, which is one of the most photographed places in North-America, with the USDAFS reporting 320,000 visitors within a 3 ½ month season with highest visitation rates on the weekends. As we unloaded the buses and asked 75 students to get into small groups of 5-6 (at the request of the Forest Service to minimize trail congestion), some groups started to form around someone with a portable speaker. One of our administrators asked me if I thought we should tell the students not to play music to not disturb other hikers. Reflecting on the conversation from a few days earlier, and observing there were likely a thousand hikers on less than a mile of trail (making it

unreasonable to expect an experience of an uninhabited wilderness), we decided it was best to respect the autonomy of our students and not dictate narrow standards of how to engage nature.

At the time it didn't seem that radical of a decision, but as we grouped up at the buses at the end of the hike a few students were discussing being yelled at on the trail by other hikers who told them *that didn't belong here*, and that *they needed to learn how to appreciate nature*. One group said that after an irritated hiker had yelled at them that they turned the music down, only for the hiker to turn around and demand it was turned off. Realizing these weren't isolated incidents some students were relieved, other students remained unphased and reminded me that experiences with angry white people are not unimaginable, but there was a general sense of confusion about what exactly was so unacceptable. I felt a degree of responsibility; the conversations I'd been having about music in the outdoors had certainly made apparent that there was an often-unquestioned social norm that restricted music in nature that I had not discussed with the students, but my inability to predict the proportionality of the response to the violation – imagining if hikers were annoyed they'd simply move on – is part of whiteness. As we discussed it, some students wondered if, other than the visible racial difference, the apparent transgression was due to the kind of music being played – Drake and Cardi B were on heavy rotation – theorizing that banjos, harmonicas, and acoustic instruments would not have been seen as quite so out of *place*.

The conversation didn't last long, but it was a topic that I kept thinking about and discussing with friends and family. The idea that Hip-Hop was specifically out of place

concerned me on a personal level, and I questioned why I had accepted a conceptual exclusion of two worlds that were foundational to my own identity – Hip-Hop (and music in general) and the outdoors. It was (and continues to be) a process of engaging my own complacency in making invisible the logics of exclusion; most notably the exclusions that have secured me special material and social privileges through my whiteness, citizenship, masculinity, heteronormativity, middle-class status, and level of education. However, it is also a reflection on how the logics that secure those privileges – and access to exclusive resources – actively disrupt my own humanity, not only through the collaborative capacities with others that are lost by buying into a possessive relationship with those privileges – thereby necessitating the exclusion of others – but by alienating important parts of myself in the process as well.

As I began to contemplate this research, these issues seemed immediately important. I did not wish to survey recreators to establish that Hip-Hop is in fact excluded (even if often implicitly) from wilderness, since there is adequate evidence to argue that music generally, and Hip-Hop particularly, does not fit the conceptual criteria of inclusion in dominant environmental and wilderness ethos. Rather I have chosen to question how outdoor recreators, educators, and professionals make sense of, and negotiate, exclusion. Thus, the primary question and concern of this research is how the creation, maintenance, and enforcement of social norms (both formal and informal) operate as technologies of exclusion in outdoor recreation settings. Guiding this analysis is a secondary question of how the normative exclusion of Hip-Hop serves to illuminate the broader ethos of exclusion throughout wilderness and mainstream environmentalism.

By engaging these questions, I hope to contribute to larger conversations of environmental justice and ecological knowledge in outdoor recreation, particularly by thinking about what, other than justice, is absent from the discourse in environmentalism by excluding Hip-Hop as valid socio-ecological knowledge. As well, this research seeks to make links between the technologies of exclusion in mainstream environmentalism and outdoor recreation, and the technologies of exclusion that are pervasive throughout American and western society.

In Chapter One, I present the relationship between race, space, and practice in relation to a re-imagination of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice utilizing symbols from Hip-Hop and giving a nod to A Tribe Called Quest's (1996) studio album *Beats, Rhymes, and Life* – or embodiment. Here I found Cheryl Harris' (1993) framework for understanding whiteness as property to be particularly helpful in thinking about that lasting significance of race. I then turn to contextualize the ways that race and nature have been constructed and gain meaning in relation to each other in western discourse. As well, I engage Edward Said's (1979) imaginative geographies to detail the ways in which the white wilderness has been constructed in opposition to the racialized city, which helps define and reinforce racialized hierarchies. Finally, I turn to linking dominant conceptions of appropriate practice back to the historical racial and nation building projects, highlighting the dominance of white, middle-class, masculine bodies and interests in shaping the politics of outdoor recreation, conceptions of rugged practice as authentic practice, and expectations of the absence of human derived noise (anthrophony).

Chapter Two consists of the methodological considerations of this research. I used semi-structured and in-depth qualitative interviews with fourteen participants representing outdoor recreators, educators, professionals. Here, as well, I discuss the demographic composition of participants, including the limitations of my sampling methods. Additionally, I discuss navigating my own positionality as a researcher and include auto-ethnographical considerations.

Chapter Three represents the data analysis portion of this research. Here five main areas of exclusion emerged throughout my conversations with participants. The first was in relation to the cultural, social, and economic capital that facilitate and obstruct the ways that participants got started with outdoor recreation. The second area involved the conceptualization of common terms including *nature*, *wilderness*, *outdoor recreation*, and *back country*, highlighting conformity to standardized definitions, as well as resistance to narrow western conceptualizations. The third area, has to do with navigating trust and risk, which are exceptionally important for outdoor practice, but which also illuminate the narrow and exclusive ways many dominant recreators imagine trustworthiness. The fourth area has to do with how power and authority intersect with the previous three areas to police the belongingness of bodies and behaviors. The final area has to do with perceptions of the appropriateness of music and Hip-Hop within a context of “everything has it’s time and place,” but the significance of power to draw the boundaries of time and place, voices how the exclusion of music is often bound in the first four areas of exclusion.

My main argument is that white, upper and middle-class men, have a profound catalog of cultural narratives, scripts, and conventions to maintain social hierarchies within outdoor recreation whether we intend to or not. What may seem as mundane practice carries all the weight of the history from which outdoor practice emerged and is embodied. Land management agencies have talked about diversity and inclusion since the 1970s, yet 95% of forest and wilderness users between 2012 and 2016 were white (USDAFS 2016). The persisting domination is in large part because of the possessive attachment with the cultural narratives that inform practice. When Bobby Blue Bland, and latter Jay-Z, contemplated that *there ain't no love in the heart of the city*, it seemed to me to indicate there was love elsewhere, yet if a 'mountain kid' could experience more love in the city than a 'city kid' could in the mountains, it seems necessary to say *if there ain't no love in the heart of the city then there certainly ain't no love in the heart of the mountains*.

What I hope is clear throughout this paper, is that the politics of belonging is complicated, and it is intentionally so. Many of us wish to imagine ourselves and our practices as somehow detached from history and that when we stand up for what we think is right we do not reproduce the violent legacies of history. For those of us that benefit from the organization of power in the US, we often like to imagine we don't benefit from a violent and exclusive history. If we then realize we do, many of us then become defensive of "the way it is," and naturalize our position through a discourse of merit. Or many of us stumble through the politics of undoing the organization of power, often without listening to those that have been doing this work for longer than we care to

admit, and often we do so in pursuit of answers and experiences we imagine will absolve us of the sins of our history. However, in doing this research, and in sitting with my own tangled mess of whiteness, toxic masculinity, wealth, status, and privilege, I have been thinking about the words of one of my professors referencing Michel Foucault: If you feel good, and pure, and clean, something is terribly wrong, we are messier than that.

CHAPTER 1: RACE, SPACE, AND PRACTICE

In the United States, race has invariably been, and continues to be, always and everywhere present. As an organizing principle of access and distribution of social, political, economic, and environmental resources, race takes on shifting meanings, invests those meanings into racialized spaces and bodies, and is performed, lived, reproduced, and resisted through embodiment and practice. Despite regular claims that we are a “post-racial” society, or that we have somehow moved beyond race, there remains a rhythmic imprint – a specter of an earworm so to speak – where the productive capacities of racism and white-supremacy continue to haunt landscapes, collective imaginations, bodies, and legal structures. There is a certain poetics of history, and of race and whiteness. To talk about poetics in this way is not to romanticize the violence of the past as playful or seductive – poetic expressions can be vulgar, repulsive, and raw (Mazzei 2007) – but to engage history and race as creative constructions full of abstractions, interpretations, expressions, obscurities, and subtexts.

Nature, similarly, is a social and cultural construction resulting from competing historical political projects across time and space. German sociologist Max Weber, famously referred to the “fundamental ambiguity of the concept of nature” (Foster, Clark and York 2010:32) in western discourse. However, the concept of nature, and wilderness as the space that nature exists, have been always been constructed in relation to the knowledge of race (Outka 2008). At the same time that the U.S. was constructing a national identity of “Nature’s Nation” (Miller 1967; Ray 2013), it was also forging its

power through slavery, genocide, and war. The dominant understandings of race and nature in our society are framed by whiteness and white-supremacy, which obscures, distorts, and re-writes history in an obsessive effort to dominate, control, and exploit nature and racialized others. Whiteness does most of its work in the shadow of those it benefits – it serves as a frame for valuing and ordering the world, sets narrow standards of appropriate practice, and obsesses over individuality and merit.

I find it helpful to reconceptualize Pierre Bourdieu's (1979) habitus and practice in relation to the discourse of Hip-Hop – the field as the beat, cultural capital as rhymes, and practice and habitus as the percussive embodiment and performance of race and history – where whiteness is most profound when it is not spoken, or when it speaks through the breaks and silence. This chapter seeks to illuminate the context through which outdoor practice has gained significance in relation to race and racialized space. Beginning with the racial projects of white-supremacy and whiteness, I then shift to outlining the imaginative geographies of wilderness and urbanness, and conclude with a discussion about perceptions of “authentic” outdoor recreation. Within outdoor recreation, or outdoor practice, perceptions of appropriateness and belongingness of bodies and practices, are the result of the intersections of the historical projects of white-supremacy and the white wilderness, which necessitate the exclusion of racialized and urbanized practices in order to jealously guard our nation's most valued resources: whiteness and wilderness.

Race

Beats, rhymes, and life: field, capital, and practice.

The kinds of practices we engage in, and the meanings we embody, are guided by contextual clues and socio-political mnemonics that are often unquestioned and taken for granted. There is a certain practice of “feeling” what is appropriate and possible in a given context, where we engage the repetition and resistance of the historical processes that have shaped the present, often without thinking about it. For Bourdieu, this “feeling” or “sense” of appropriateness and possibility is habitus, or “embodied history, internalized as second nature and so forgotten as history – it is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product” (1990:56). As we navigate space, people, and practice we draw upon conventions, or what Imani Perry describes as “predetermined grammars for doing things” (2018:212), which profoundly narrow our sense of what is appropriate and possible, and conjures forth the uncomfortable past that so many of us wish to escape. As the U.S. engages its troubled history of racialized violence and environmental degradation, our dominant cultural practices are so preoccupied with not explicitly repeating racist history, that many of us become complacent and actively reproduce its elastic and repetitive iterations, and rhymes.

Howard Omi and Michael Winant describe the process of race-making as processes of othering and “making up people” which are both basic and ubiquitous (2015:105). However, the distinctions and categorizations fundamental to our racialized social structure only began to appear alongside the expansionist drive of settler-

colonialism and merchant capitalism. As Edward Said (1979) makes clear, colonial processes of othering revolve around the logic of *binary-opposition* and the construction of *imaginative geographies*. Said explains that through constructing definitions of an inferior, irrational, weak, feminine, depraved, immature, and “different” East, that the West simultaneously constructs definitions of a superior, rational, strong, masculine, virtuous, mature, and “normal” self. Such definitions are reified and internalized through the construction and performance of corresponding roles of noble and savage, of intellectual and barbarian, of occupier and occupied where “the former dominate; the latter must be dominated” (Said 1979:34). In this way, the process of othering is not about making sense of difference, but about “making up” the significance of difference through what Margaret Werry describes as a repertoire of bio-poetical performances; “investing the subject imaginatively in forms of conduct that are viscerally, embodied, expressive, creative, improvisatory, and even eroticized” (2008: 396). The performance of conquest was seen as proof of superiority. However, the great drama and theatre of difference, distinction, and domination requires a stage, a canvas, or a beat as an architecture to guide and shape the performance; it requires a field, both of landscape and of knowledge.

In order to conceive of the difference between the East and the West, between us and them, between normal and other, boundaries are imagined between the space occupied, its immediate surroundings, and the territory beyond. Each layer of difference is further removed from the familiar, imagined to be “the land of the barbarians” host to all sorts of foreign and corrupting threats, and whose inhabitants need not acknowledge

the distinctions and boundaries (Said 1979). The use of geography in the process of othering remains foundational to racialized social structures, where “race and place are inextricably linked... [through] a process of constructing particular geographic landscapes that help define and reinforce social hierarchies” (Inwood and Yarbrough 2010:299). The process of othering is necessary for illuminating boundaries between belonging, where others are imagined not to belong, and to threaten the order of things, but their presence on the margins of society is essential to clarifying its boundaries (Collins 2009:70; Crenshaw 1997).

In this way space is weaponized in the service of power, but the meanings that power inscribes into geographies are also contested and resisted in the lives of those they disrupt and subjugate. Space and place serve a pivotal role in the construction of identity. In the pursuit to fill an endless appetite for land, labor, and natural resources, European settlers recognized the most powerful destabilizing governing technology was to sever and alienate subjects from the connection to land. The destruction of land and wildlife is central to the physical genocide and displacement of indigenous people – confined to the past or “reservations” – (Powell 2016), and the restriction of movement and the confinement of bodies has been central to the exploitation of black labor throughout systems of slavery, Jim Crow and the Prison Industrial Complex (Lipsitz 2018).

Despite the efficiency with which settler-colonialism destroys and exploits bodies and land, the framing of whiteness and colonialism fail to account for the ways bodies and land are intimately interwoven, where bodies are a part of, not above, the environment. Hip-Hop provides a profound disruption to the violent efficiency of settler-

colonialism and white-supremacy, by critically engaging and re-imagining weaponized space as the site of resistance and authenticity. Collins (2009) notes that despite the fact that ghettoization was designed for the political control and economic exploitation of Black Americans, these neighborhoods also provided a separate space to craft distinctive oppositional knowledge. Even some of the earliest iterations of Hip-Hop, like Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's *The Message* (1982) are grounded in place, and critically detail the dynamics of the physical environment. As Rosenthal (2006) explains "[The song's] opening line that "It's like a jungle sometimes" invokes not the rainforest jungle so predominant in the minds of environmental activists, but the urban jungle that remains unvisited by much of white America... a toxic environment antithetical to the survival of its inhabitants" (P 667). The critical engagement with place is central to Hip-Hop, but so too is the re-imagination of the significance of place, where the ghettoization of America's urban landscape served as an explicit racist racial project to confine and destabilize racial minorities (Lipsitz 2018), but the discourse of the ghetto in rap music at times serves as a symbolic location of solidarity and authenticity (Baldwin 1999). In this way, both the physical and conceptual constructions of space, place, and field, provide a textural, emotional, and thematic canvas for the continued significance of race.

The role of the body is foundational for the process of racial formation, but there is an important distinction to be made between bodies and embodiment. Bodies are not biological markers of race, but the ocular differences between bodies are imagined to be the significance of difference. Bodies become raced and ascribed meaning, which are

performed, resisted, and lived through the corporeal dimensions of embodiment (Omi and Winant (2015). The imagined difference carries material consequences for the organization and distribution of resources, which in turn shape the rearticulations of the meanings ascribed to bodies and “they become they accordingly” (Said 1979:54). Bodies then become the active containers and instruments of the cultural meanings of race, and here white skin and white bodies are not the problem, but the embodiment of whiteness – the practice of white-supremacy – is that “which creates the “problem” of race in Others; in itself it is how it feels *not* to be a problem” (Outka 2008:12).

In his poem *Coded Language*, Saul Williams provides a helpful conceptualization of this idea, theorizing “we stand as the manifest equivalent of three buckets of water and a handful of minerals, thus realizing those very buckets turned upside down, provide the percussive factor of forever” (2001). In this way, bodies are more dynamic than an inanimate repository of racialized meaning, but if the rhythms we channel draw from the taken for granted conventions, the predetermined grammars and cadences of a violent history, we engage in the embodiment and practice of whiteness. Disrupting and interrupting a seductive and violent cadence is part of beginning to develop anti-racist identities and is something Hip-Hop has been doing for more than five decades.

The racialized meanings that have been ascribed to bodies have never been fixed or static. Rather, as a product of competing racial projects, politics, and ideologies across time and space, the significance of race has been understood as a sign of divine pleasure or displeasure, as a marker of evolutionary progress and intelligence, a signifier of human geography, or more recently, as an outdated, meaningless idea (Omi and Winant 2015).

The shifts in dominant meaning of race are particularly important for thinking about the adaptive capacities of racial formation, where the continuity of significance is less an explicit duplication of previous frames, and more a recurrence of a conventional nucleolus with varying pronunciations, flavors, and dialects of the same grammar. In other words, they rhyme.

Two central factors remain consistent throughout dominant racist racial projects. The first is of whiteness, and Anglo-normativity, as an unmarked category of standardization against which difference is constructed. The second is the interdependent and mutually constitutive conceptions of race and nature. In relation to the literary device of a rhyme-scheme, these factors constitute the repetitive patterns of familiar, taken for granted conventions, which both perform a sense of progress, as well as serving as a socializing mnemonic to inform perceptions of appropriate practice. Like the poetic style of rhyme, white-supremacy does most of its work subconsciously by simultaneously nodding to expressions that preceded the present moment, while clueing in listeners to the architecture that frames the possibilities of what may proceed. The contemporary iterations of the meaningless of race – the silence of race – make white-supremacy more profound than if it was explicitly spoken. For example, the provision of the 13th amendment that legalizes slavery in the form of prison labor exploits all prison labor, yet the disproportionate presence of black and brown bodies in prison (Davis 2002), makes the Prison Industrial Complex rhyme with racialized slavery.

Such a tactic is utilized by rapper MF Doom in *Great Day* (2004). Doom engages a rhyme scheme of “wishes,” “glitches,” “twitches,” and continues “one thing the party

could use is more... *ahem* booze.” Here, in relation to the contextual clues, the listener could be forgiven for expecting Doom to rhyme “bitches.” Instead, he disrupts the rhyme scheme in a way that may feel jarring and uncomfortable because the taken for granted conventions and grammars become expected. However, unlike a dedicated lyricist like Doom, whiteness has no intention of disrupting the rhyme. It’s supposed to be seductive and comfortable and familiar, and it does so by seeming to be nothing in particular (Dyer 1998; Lipsitz 2018).

Whiteness and white-supremacy: property and frames.

George Lipsitz has observed, “as the unmarked category against which difference is constructed, whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations” (2018:1). The experience of whiteness, is again, how it feels not to be the problem (Outka 2008). Critical race scholars have identified the need to move beyond simply describing what whiteness is, and instead explain what whiteness does (Gabriel 1998; Roberts 2009). Particularly, I find it helpful to use Harris’ ideas (1993) for thinking about the functioning of whiteness as property. Harris provides a historical accounting of the process through which whiteness has evolved from color, to race, to status, and to property. Whiteness has always operated as a means of jealously guarding violently accumulated wealth and status. As Anglo Americans perceived themselves to be increasingly outnumbered (Powell 2016), whiteness was expanded to include European Americans who had “assimilated” into Anglo American cultural norms, where whiteness was defined less by any inherent unifying characteristic of skin tone, and more by the legal right to exclude.

This served a particularly productive utility (in the Foucauldian sense) regarding class, where white workers and European immigrants perceived they had more in common with their wealthy and powerful counterparts than with their Black co-workers. Minneapolis rapper Brother Ali engages this dynamic in his song *Before They Called You White* (2018), rhetorically asking when did poor European people that used to rebel against being forced to work land they did not own, “start to identify with power even though they’re powerless? Identify with wealth even though they’re broke?” and answering, “It’s the invention of whiteness.”

As legalized segregation and economic exclusion was dismantled, in order to maintain violently accumulated wealth, courts normalized and naturalized material inequalities among races, where “nature – not man, not power, not violence – had determined their degraded status” (Harris 1993:1745). De facto white privilege became legally protected, the courts refused to intervene in redistribution because of “neutrality,” and racial inequality was ruled to be an “unfortunate but unrectifiable inequality.” (Harris 1993:1757). Harris argues the legal standard of colorblindness, which protects white privilege, demonstrates that the parameters of the remedy will not be defined by the nature of the injury, but by the level of white resistance to the economic, social, cultural, and political threat of equality (1993:1757). In this way, whiteness has become less about snarling and contemptuous racism, and more about a possessive and protective relationship with the status quo (Lipsitz 2018), shaping the prominent cultural rhyme-schemes we’ve come to expect and framing itself as invisible.

Colorblindness involves four interrelated frames – set paths for interpreting information – or conventions to explain persisting racial inequality: abstract liberalism (individuality and merit), cultural racism, minimization, and naturalization (Bonilla-Silva 2006). The problematic notion of individual merit in our society leads many to believe that the social, political, and economic advantages accumulated through the legal systems, of slavery, genocide, war, Jim Crow, and immigration restriction are earned, and therefore protected under law. However, while the obsession with merit on the surface is presented as fair and just, the advantage to set the standards of what “counts” as merit has always privileged the cultural practice of whites (Harris 1993; Carbado and Harris 2012). Here cultural racism and victim blaming are often employed to argue that inequality and exclusion persists not because of institutionalized racism, but because racialized others who have been legally excluded from setting the standards of merit, have failed to adopt the dominant standards of Euro-centric values, behaviors, and knowledge – they need only “act right” and adhere to the conventions of whiteness, or so the logic goes.

Much of this discourse relies on the frame of minimization, which argues that racism is a thing of the past, that racialized minorities “play the infamous race card” and are “hypersensitive” as an “excuse” (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Minimization also engages in narrow standards of what “counts” as racism or discrimination, often claiming that only explicit interpersonal discrimination in hiring, housing, education, or environmental institutions “counts” as racism. Many times, de facto racism (persisting segregation despite legal dismantling) is explained through the frame of naturalization, “that people naturally gravitate towards likeness,” or employing a discourse of “self-segregation”

(Bonilla-Silva 2006). However, as Bonilla-Silva points out, few things in the social world are “natural,” and by employing dominant expectations of “just the way it is,” whiteness naturalizes itself and reproduces narrow settled expectations. As Harris concludes:

The law expresses the dominant conception of “rights,” “equality,” “property,” “neutrality,” and “power”: rights mean shields from interference [liberal individuality]; equality means formal equality [not equity]; property means the settled expectations that are to be protected [standards of merit]; neutrality means the existing distribution, which is natural; and, power is the mechanism for guarding all of this (Harris 1993:1778).

Therefore, returning to thinking about what whiteness does, it becomes evident that whiteness operates as both a form of property, and as a frame, convention, or worldview, for valuing and ordering social life. Whiteness involves obsessive liberal individualism, narrow culturally constructed standards of merit, and a possessive relationship with the “existing distribution.” Whiteness obscures the ways in which advantages were (and are) violently accumulated, rejects the way it benefits from racialized violence, and operates as an unmarked category against which difference is constructed.

Socio-natural hierarchies of race.

In detailing the frames of colorblind racism, Bonilla-Silva (2006) observed that the frame of naturalization is used the least compared to other frames, though about 50 percent of respondents in two projects used it particularly in relation to school and neighborhood factors. However, I am interested in other ways that “nature” or the “nature of things” is invoked as a technology of racialization, specifically within environmental discourse. In developing the contemporary conceptions of property and liberal personhood, John Locke and other European thinkers consistently situated racialized

others within the state of nature, a state of nature that whiteness (and masculinity) seemingly rescued itself from with rationality and the development of scientific knowledge (Perry 2018). By producing knowledge that framed racialized and gendered others within nature, European intellectuals justified the exploitation others and their relegation to forms of property. This logic, which was an extension of Judeo-Christian conceptualizations of an external nature (DeLuca 1998), would influence the hierarchal organizations of race that are still prominent in mainstream environmentalism. Racialized groups are positioned differently within hierarchies of nature and ecological knowledge, and while the racialized meanings assigned to distinct bodies has shifted over time, the positions within socio-natural hierarchies of race have not.

First, whiteness performed, and subsequently confirmed, its own superiority within socio-natural hierarchies by dominating, domesticating, and controlling “nature” (and the bodies it situated within nature) (Powell 2016; Ray 2013; Finney 2014). However, by the 19th century there was “the emerging sense that white Americans and the nation’s wildlife shared a special bond, and both were under siege from a host of corrupting, unnatural, and often foreign threats (Powell 2016:5). This special bond was precisely because dominating interactions with nature had perceptively legitimated white superiority – conquering nature was seen as “purification machine” where European immigrants infused themselves with vigor and rugged freedom, and became white (Braun 2003) – and there was a mourning for what had been destroyed, or a paradox of imperialist nostalgia (See Rosaldo 1993). In establishing the National Park System (NPS), Theodore Roosevelt recognized precisely this, that if wild land had been so

crucial in imagining “Americanness” then its last remnants needed saving as monuments of the nation’s most sacred myth of origin, “as an insurance policy for its future” (Cronon 1996).

In this way, whiteness which was once defined by the superior capacity to control nature, became more closely associated with a deep, personal, altruistic, caring for nature and the environment in ways that obscures the primary role of whiteness as a driver of ecological degradation. Whiteness imagines the good ecological subject – those whose actions are regarded as responsible for saving the world – in binary opposition to imagined racialized ecological “others” – “those from whose poor decisions and reckless activities the world ostensibly needs saving” (Ray 2013:5). As Paul Outka notes, “white ecocriticism needs to continue to move toward a more deeply historicized understanding of how natural experience has not only been defined by, but itself defined, whiteness.” (2008:202).

Second, under the legal regime of chattel slavery, the racialization of blackness drew heavily upon Locke’s rational/animalistic paradigm to justify enslavement and the conversion of black bodies into property. Within the intersections of capitalism and white-supremacy, animals are inputs to capital and are valued in relation to the potential profit they can produce (Collins 2009). However, Blackness is also continually racialized as ecologically threatening and lacking “ecological maturity” (Haymes 2018). Paul Outka (2008) discusses this as a white/nature/black hierarchy, where early conservationists like John Muir could proclaim the idealized parental nesting habits of birds in contrast to the “subnatural” and “filthy” dwellings of Black residents in urban cities. This has certainly

contributed to the sense of “white environmentalism,” where white environmentalists seem to care more for the spotted owl than “the survival of young blacks in our nation’s cities.” (Outka 2008:1).

Stephan Haymes has identified this trend among contemporary ecologists who contend African Americans are the “only group that does not value living diversity” (2018:41), lacking appreciation, recreational interest and willingness to support the protection of nature (Haymes 2018). Haymes counters that the ecological knowledge of many African Americans has historically been embedded in place-making practices, and specifically bell hooks’ notion of making homeplace, of “assembling plants, animals, water, land, and human beings into spaces of care and nurturance” (Haymes 2018:41). Haymes concludes that Eurocentric environmental ethics continuously narrows the definition of ecological knowledge, care, and concerns (2018).

Similarly, but distinctly, Orientalized bodies – presented as homogeneous Latinx and Asian immigrants – are racialized through what Sarah Ray (2013) terms the poetics of trash. Miles Powell (2016) makes explicit connections between the origins of conservation and preservation, and immigration restriction and population control, particularly by racializing bodies as foreign – as forever foreign (Tuan 1998) – as a threat to (white) American economic and cultural superiority (A. Smith 2014), and as a threat to the source of that superiority, namely “pristine” nature (Powell 2016). The first piece of legislation to restrict the immigration of a specific racialized group was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 – though the Naturalization Act of 1790 had reserved “citizenship to free white persons of good moral character” (Powell 2016:112) – which was heavily

driven by white fears of labor and economic threats, and greatly benefitted from the discourse of Chinese Americans having a “polluted touch” that had persisted for decades prior to the act.

The joining of ecology and nationalism, as the foundation of conservation projects and “nature’s nation,” has led to notions of “nation-as-ecosystem,” which racializes foreign bodies as “invasive species” (Ray 2013). There are of course more nuanced and specific meanings assigned to Asian and Latinx racialized groups (Asian-Americans are often represented as the model minority, and Latinx bodies are increasingly criminalized as “rapists and murders”) but the underlying logic of exclusion, both citizenry and ecologically, is that of a foreign, exotic threat to white national, moral, and ecological health, superiority, and property. While mainstream environmental organizations like the Sierra Club have attempted to grapple with their historical anti-immigration policies – arguing immigration-driven population growth was among the most serious concerns facing America’s environment in the 1990s (see Sussis 2018) – the contemporary racialization and foreignization of bodies as invasive, as well as the continued association of immigrants and “dirty” urban landscapes, maintains the fusion of white supremacy and hegemonic environmental discourse.

Where Black, Latinx, and Asian bodies have been historically and contemporarily racialized as ecologically and culturally threatening, American Indians are continuously racialized as an extension of wildlife. While the significance of that representation has shifted over time, its pervasiveness is the consequence of physical genocide and serves to maintain cultural genocide by constructing the indigenous subject as “locked in history,”

“premodern,” and always disappearing (Smith 2012:82). Coupling the myth of the Frontier and Lockean Labor Theory and collapsing indigenous bodies into the realm of nature historically legitimized rejections of indigenous sovereign land claims (Harris 1993). In this logic, American Indians’ interaction with the land did not constitute labor, but rather “animalistic subsistence” (Powell 2016:71) which did not meet the criteria of possession as defined by white settler-colonial customs (Harris 1993).

Taken together, the organization of socio-natural hierarchies of race represents the intersections of dominant conceptions of nature and race. The ways in which we make sense of the significance of race and nature carry very real material consequences for the distribution of social, economic, political, and environmental resources. Within outdoor recreation and mainstream environmentalism, the consequences of white ecology reproduce these hierarchies, contribute to environmental racism, and inform the narrow cultural narratives about who belongs, who respects nature, and who needs saving from nature. Invoking Black liberation theologian James Cone, Outka (2008) points to the critical need to grapple with racial and environmental degradation together – where fighting against white racism without connecting it to the degradation of the earth is anti-ecological, and fighting against ecological degradation without a sustained critical engagement with white supremacy is racist. The shifts in dominant meaning reflect the ways that the tactics of whiteness adapt to newer forms of domination that continue historical legacies, and while they may not mirror the tactics of explicit de jure supremacy, their subtler and seemingly altruistic and innocent iterations certainly rhyme.

Space

Constructing race and nature both engage a process of othering, particularly ecological othering, but these social and cultural constructions require imaginative geographies, fields, and symbolic architectures as a backdrop for the grand theatre of difference. As whiteness continually frames itself as ecologically pure and frames racialized others as ecologically threatening, distinct spaces become associated with either ecological or anti-ecological practices. The imaginative geography at one end of this forced binary is that of an ideal, pristine, and sublime white wilderness, and at the other is the racialized, dirty, morally corrupting, and dangerous urban city (Cronon 1996; DeLuca 1998; DeLuca and Demo 2001; Braun 2003; Ray 2013). However, these geographies and spaces have not always carried their contemporary meanings, the wilderness was once the “land of the barbarians” and the city was the site of cultural civility, nobility, and intellectualism. This shift was the result of the intersections of the historical projects of Judeo-Christian theology, the scientific revolution, the rise of industrial capitalism, the romantic transcendentalist movement, and the myth of the American frontier. What has remained consistent within the wilderness/civilization paradigm, is a privileging of space, and particularly the continual privileging of space dominated by middle-class whites over the spaces associated with poor communities and communities of color (Bullard 2000; DeLuca 1998; DeLuca and Demo 2001; Braun 2003; Ray 2013; Finney 2014; Stapleton 2019).

Constructing white nature and white wilderness.

Within the dominant American imagination, wilderness represents the space that nature, or at the very least ideal nature, exists (Nash 2014; Cronon 1996), but there is nothing “natural” about the concept of nature (Cronon 1996), nor anything particularly wild about federally regulated wilderness (Nash 2014; Cronon 1996). Geographer Ian Simons (1993) has noted that the concept of nature is not universal, but only exists when societies conceptually distinguish between themselves and their surroundings – engaging in the production of imaginative geographies. The external conception of nature has its origins in Judeo-Christian theology (DeLuca 1998), and gained particular prominence with the related developments of the scientific revolution of the Enlightenment Era and the rise of industrial capitalism (Braun 2003) – where nature was a distinct object of study and an input to capital. Many indigenous languages do not have a word for what we term nature in western discourse (Scarce 2001), and environmental sociologists have continually argued that knowledge of what nature *is*, is more a reflection of the mind and culture than of nature or reality (Foster et al. 2010). “The key point here is not merely that nature is a social category whose meaning is culturally defined, but rather that the various meanings of the ideograph nature do ideological work, buttressing certain beliefs, warranting actions, justifying forms of society, and naturalizing hierarchical social relations” (DeLuca 1998:219).

Wilderness is also a particularly contradictory construction, stemming from an obsession with the wild, untamed, uninhibited freedom at the heart of liberal self-hood and white-supremacy (DeLuca 1998; DeLuca and Demo 2001; Braun 2003; Mexal

2012). The modern conception of wilderness is the result of the intersections of the external conceptions of nature, the romantic transcendentalist movement (notable figures include John Muir and Henry David Thoreau), and the myth of the American frontier. Like whiteness, the wilderness is imagined to be the standardized ideal against which the failings of our human world are measured (Cronon 1996; DeLuca 1998). However, like whiteness, it is important that we don't naturalize wilderness, and although protections for landscape are vital for countering impending ecological crises (DeLuca 2007), doing so under the guise of wilderness preservation maintains problematic cultural narratives that privileges space, obscures history, and maintains narrow standards of acceptable practices.

In 1996, William Cronon forwarded a deconstructionist framework of wilderness arguing, "As we gaze into the mirror it [wilderness] holds up for us, we too easily imagine that what we behold is Nature when in fact we see the reflection of our own unexamined longings and desire" (1996:8). Yet, this has not always been the case, biblical references positioned wilderness on the margins of civilization: it was cursed, an arid wasteland, and a morally corrupting place where Satan tempted the morally vulnerable with the antithesis of all that was orderly and good (Cronon 1996:9; DeLuca 1998:220; Nash 1973). By the mid 19th century though, an oppositional conception of wilderness was taking hold, which invested in wilderness the sublime, religious, and spiritual sanctuary that was once reserved for the cathedrals of civilization (Cronon 1996; DeLuca 1998; DeLuca and Demo 2001), and the city was reconstituted with the same

terrifying barbaric imagery that was once reserved for wilderness (Braun 2003; Mexal 2012).

While the wilderness/civilization paradigm persisted, wilderness was reinvested as the privileged space, and benefited from the romantic traditions, at least back to Rousseau, and the belief that more “primitive” living was the cure for the effects of civilization, “embodied most strikingly in the national myth of the America frontier” (Cronon 1996:13). The frontier was imagined on the edge of wilderness – as the not yet civilized – as the necessary backdrop and counter-geography for the preservation of raw white masculinity (the stuff of the ideal American) which was endangered by a feminizing and multi-cultural modern society (Bederman 1996; Braun 2003; Ray 2013). By the early 20th century though, the frontier was imagined to be vanishing, and with it the source of imaginative white American superiority (Powell 2016). There was a sense of imperialist nostalgia (Rosaldo 1993; Ray 2013), a loss of the practice of conquering, so the American imagination constructed new frontiers, new spaces and fields to be explored or conquered (for Roosevelt it was Cuba and Panama, for Kennedy it was space), and the last remnants of “wild land” – the purification machine that produced ideal Anglo men (Braun 2003) – so vital to the rugged individualism of American exceptionalism, needed to be preserved as an insurance policy for the future (Cronon 1996).

The particular nature, and the particular wilderness, codified in the Wilderness Preservation Act of 1964, is what Kevin DeLuca (1998) termed “white nature” and “white wilderness.” It is important to note, however, that DeLuca would later critique the

efforts of Environmental Justice activists for “the blatant use of race and class cards” and disrupting wilderness preservation efforts with the “Sisyphean tasks” of social justice (2007:45). For DeLuca, the white wilderness is made up of external nature (othered nature), the sublime nature, the sanctuary of nature, and the pristine and pure nature (DeLuca 1998; DeLuca and Demo 2001; Finney 2014). However, there is another important aspect of the cultural myth of wilderness missing here, which is the etymological root of the word, which engages the racialized mythology of “the wild” (Mexal 2012).

“Wild” is often coded as “free” or uninhibited, and in the case of wilderness, wild means the absence of humans and is legally defined “as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain” (Wilderness Act 1964). Such a definition forwards an explicitly ontological separation of humans, and particularly men, from nature, but it also engages in two other dangerous distortions. The first, is that a notion of uninhabited and unaltered wilderness intentionally obscures the fact that wilderness was constructed as uninhibited through the physical genocide of indigenous people (Cronon 1996; DeLuca and Demo 2001; Braun 2003; Ray 2013) and maintains a racialized narrative of indigenous people as having already disappeared (Smith 2012). At the very least, it collapses American Indian interactions with the land as “merely animalistic subsistence” (Powell 2016), and that these interactions didn’t alter or transform nature (DeLuca and Demo 2001).

Second, the idea that wilderness is uncontrolled, uninhibited, or somehow untrammelled and unrestricted by humans, negates the very real relegation to the

bureaucratic orderings of the state. As Rodrick Nash notes “the National Wilderness Preservation System might be regarded as a kind of zoo for land. Wilderness is exhibited in legislative cages, clearly mapped, and neatly labeled” (2014:339). In this sense, wilderness is very much restricted by the imaginative boundaries of bureaucracies, where wilderness status can be revoked or gained with the scribble of a pen. Cronon speaks to this paradox that if wilderness is only able to survive through the most vigilant management “the ideology of wilderness is potentially in direct conflict with the very thing it encourages us to protect” (1996:18). Therefore, in establishing wilderness areas, it would seem that the goal of preserving the naturalness of something so unnatural was never attainable, rather the Wilderness Preservation Act of 1964 institutionalized a particular white cultural narrative, and preserved nature not for nature’s sake, but for the productive capacities of the wilderness purification machine.

Even more, the “cure” offered in the sanctuary of wilderness, as the escape from the feminizing and racializing ills of civilization, masks a more nuanced form of white flight (Outka 2008). In effect, many white recreationists and environmentalists “rescued themselves from the responsibility of protecting urban and inhabited rural areas and of critiquing industrial consumer society in general” (DeLuca and Demo 2001). Cronon points out that the very people who benefited the most from transforming landscapes through urban-industrial capitalism “were among those who believed they must escape its debilitating effects (1996:14). The escape “into nature” represents an escape from social responsibility and the uncomfotability upon which the privilege to escape rests, where the rhetoric of the sublime becomes where whiteness hides in plain sight (Outka 2008).

Underpinning the practice of escape is a deeply entrenched cultural narrative about who needs wilding – the middle-class white man debilitated by the confining structures of civility – and who needs civilizing and domesticating – the racialized, classed, and gendered ecological other who needs rescuing from their brute, savage, or foreign nature (Braun 2003; Mexal 2012). The primitivism romanticized by early environmentalists like Muir engaged a binary of racial difference between who needed to “return” to nature – the European whose “advanced development” had alienated nature – and racialized others, who were by definition closer to nature (Braun 2003; Di Chiro 1995).

The racialized city.

The racialization of the “inner-city” was never an accident, but was the result of explicitly racialized legal distributions of property. The Homestead Act of 1862, was one of the first government policies to subsidize white flight away from developed urban areas as a means of frontier expansion (Finney 2014). The Act, which is seen as the foundation of the modern US economy (Powell 2016), allocated parcels of 160 acres of millions of acres of land stolen from Native Americans (framed as public land) to white settlers, and today 46 million European Americans can trace their family wealth to this allotment (Lipsitz 2018). The Federal Housing Act of 1934, along with federal highway projects, urban renewal programs, and redlining practices, would continue this effort to subsidize white home and land ownership and, in the case of this act, allow white America to move out of cities which were increasingly inhabited by Black people and immigrants who had yet to achieve whiteness (Lipsitz 2018). This, of course, shrunk the

opportunities of urban social mobility for those who were not white (Lipsitz 2018). Between deindustrialization, economic restructuring, and the dismantling of social welfare policies in the 1970s (Lipsitz 2018; Omi and Winant 2015; Pulido 2000), cities were no longer a place of abundance and were reinvested with the terrifying imagery of the lawless, wild west, where the inner city became “a frightening, toxic “wilderness”” (Ray 2013:21), or the “jungle that remains unvisited by much of white America” (Rosenthal 2006:661). When Jay-Z drew upon Bobby “Blue” Bland’s love song and theorized, “there ain’t no love in the heart of the city,” he was speaking to the hyper-competition – those praying on (and preying on) the downfall of successful artists of color like the Fat Boys, The Fugees, Richard Pryor, and others – and voicing how the intentional lack of resources functioned to divide communities over jealously guarded status, leading Jay-Z to continually ask “where is the love?”

The intentional depreciation of property values, in concert with the deregulation of industrial zoning and hazardous land-use restrictions, also facilitated the financial attractiveness of locating environmental hazards in low income communities and communities of color (Pulido 2000). Pulido argues that the racialized patterns within the placement of environmental hazards is not the result of any single decision or act, but rather “they are the result of urban development in a highly racialized society over the course of 150 years” (2000:32). Part of the issue as well, has to do with the ways that the cultural narratives of the white wilderness and white environmentalism frame what counts as the “environment” (Stapleton 2019). The urban city is considered to be the epitome of human ecological destruction, industrialization, and modernity, and therefore

is not considered part of the “environment” (DeLuca and Demo 2001), which is continually narrowed to conceptions of wilderness (Allen 2007). As Sarah Ray explains, “privileged bodies could escape the dirty environments of the city, while less privileged bodies became associated with – even blamed for – the toxicity, poor hygiene, and dirt that became associated with the city” (2013:9). The point here is not that the ecological differences between urbanness and wilderness are fictitious, but that the difference in their ecological value is imagined, invested in, and materialized within cultural narratives about race and nature.

Urban parks provide some insight to the theatre of race and space. The development and construction of urban parks was a deliberate socio-ecological project that utilized exposure to “enclosed and captive nature” as a technology of social control (Bryne and Wolch 2009). Wilderness, National Forests, and National and State Parks are of course also enclosed and captive natures, and their designs similarly implemented the goals of socializing users to be morally proper, socially responsible, economically prudent, under the pretense that exposure to “untamed nature” invited corruption, anarchy, immorality crime and indolence (Bryne and Wolch 2009). In this way park and city planners imagined and constructed binary moral geographies, “Park makers constructed the park’s image as natural, sanctifying, wholesome and White, counterpoising it against a city construed as artificial, profane, insalubrious, and colored” (Bryne and Wolch 2009:747). However, like wilderness, urban parks often operate as a container for white racial, national, political, and ecological anxiety, which are informed by persisting narratives of race and nature (Mexal 2012).

Here, Hip-Hop and the discourse of wilding become particularly important for contextualizing the dynamics shaping the symbolic architecture of “natural” spaces. Stephen Mexal (2012) provides an analysis of the spectacle that “wilding” played in the Central Park Five case. The case ignited a particular set of cultural fears at the intersection of race and nature; between the binary oppositions of savage and civilized, evolved and primitive, and settled and wild (Mexal 2012). The media coverage and government statements obsessed over the hearing of the word “wilding” or “wiling out,” which was imagined to be an exotified and terrifying new criminal practice (Mexal 2012), rooted in an understanding that violating a social contract constituted the antithesis of civility, and is therefore wild, untamed, and uncontrolled. Within the geographic and spatial context of the park, heavily invested with narratives of race and nature (Bryne and Wolch 2009), such a notion ignited the public imagination, which had been socialized to read the contextual clues of the rhymes of race set against the textural backdrop of nature. Yet Mexal locates the tradition of the language and practice of wilding in early 20th century black naturalism and Hip-Hop as a strategic performance of wilderness – to contest the use of wilderness in sustaining racist discourse – as a considered response using irony, play and re-appropriation of the trope of the urban wilderness and assumed savagery (2012). For example, in her song *Goddess Gang* (2018) Midwest Hip-Hop artist Sa-Roc plays on this theme rapping,

Now I’ve been through too much, and I’m to grown to play around with
ya’ll
Now Ima wild out every chance I get, my rhyme delivery so animal...
The scared of this Black girl magic
My heritage packed well, baggage...

Bars laden with alien cadence, preying on enemy flags, just mayhem
My shit been down since day one, ready to take on this planet.

In this way, the practice of wilding is that of purposeful, semi-organized social disorder; a hyperbolic performance of primitivism in the theatre of the ghetto, which serves to expose and mock the contradictory and racist discourse of wilderness (Mexal 2012).

Outka's (2008) white/nature/black hierarchy was evidenced in the political language of the case as well. As the young men were increasingly characterized as wild, savage, and animalistic, Charles B. Rangel, a Black Democratic New York Congressman, proclaimed that not even animals engaged in such savage behavior and that likening the young men to animals and a wolf pack was an insult to animals and wolves (Mexal 2012:106). Such a representation speaks volumes to the re-imagination of inner-city urban spaces as the locus of the wilderness – as a repository for wild, treacherous, and dangerous racial anxieties. The inability to critically read the use of wilding – its employment as a tactic of resistance rooted in a mocking performance – is emblematic of the imaginative geographies of difference, and reflects the intentional investment of barbaric imagery in racialized others that maintains the virtuous status of euro-centric, white middle class ecological and cultural values. As well, it provides a pretense for policing and criminalizing Black and Brown bodies, where “wild” bodies that do not conform to the narrow standards of acceptable practice, need not be guilty to be charged and convicted, because our dominant cultural narratives serve as a socializing mnemonic for white Americans to imagine they are at least guilty of something.

There are of course material differences between the concrete of the city and the dirt of the wilderness, and I do not wish to advocate that we should understand the wilderness and the city as the same. As Kimberly Crenshaw (1997) and Patricia Hill Collins (2009) explain, equality does not mean treating everyone or every space the same, because “treating different things the same can generate as much inequality as treating the same things differently” (Crenshaw 1997:285). Rather, I wish to draw attention to the role of power and whiteness in shaping the boundaries between space and difference, the hierarchal privileging and organization of space, and the racist consequences of the cultural narratives of nature and wilderness. I also wish to highlight the ways in which the symbolic reading of space, in relation to the repetitive iterations of history and race, are embodied in our sense of what is appropriate or possible, which informs our practice.

Practice

The legacies of whiteness and the white wilderness in shaping expectations of appropriate and belonging outdoor practices is profound. Again, whiteness does most of its work by seeming to be nothing in particular, and our sense for what belongs is often naturalized, taken for granted, and unquestioned. However, there is a vast body of literature that details the dominance of white, middle class, men in outdoor spaces and practices (Washburne 1978; Johnson et al. 1997; Lee et al. 2001; Floyd and Johnson 2002; Bryne and Wolch 2009; Floyd et al 2014; Finney 2014; Floyd and Stodolska 2016; Stodolska 2018). Recently the scholarship on race and outdoor recreation has called for

more qualitative, interdisciplinary, and justice-oriented studies that engage socio-spatial, social and cultural capital, and critical race theoretical frameworks (Bryne and Wolch 2009; Floyd and Stodolska 2016; Stodolska 2018).

Set against the backdrop of the white wilderness, and informed by the repetitive and elastic iterations of whiteness, outdoor recreation practices are dominated by cultural narratives of liberal self-hood and rugged individualism (Braun 2003; Senda Cook 2012), the reproduction of wilderness as privileged space (Simon and Alagona 2009; Simon and Alagona 2013), and the narrow expectations of “natural quiet” (Mace, Bell, and Loomis 2004; Li et al 2018). Each of these narratives engage a discourse of belonging, and given the national importance and personal value invested in green geographies, those bodies and practices that are seen as not belonging are necessarily policed and excluded. Whether we consciously think about performing belonging, it is a performance we engage nonetheless. Utilizing markers of ecological knowledge, proper gear, and safe practice, outdoor recreators engage in distinctions of proper ways to be in relation to nature, which not only narrowly limit what is seen as appropriate, but represent the cultural practices of the white wilderness (sublime and frontier experiences) as the only way to be in relation to nature, “where whiteness is assumed to be the norm that must be preserved” (Roberts 2009:501).

Outdoor recreation.

The field of outdoor recreation and management has been grappling with questions about race and recreation since the 1970s (Lee 1972). Early theoretical perspectives were often limited by narrow understandings of race and ethnicity, both by

using the concepts interchangeably, and by failing to question diversity within racial groups (Johnson et al. 1997). At the same time, there was a recognition that preferences and uses of outdoor spaces were informed by the socio-cultural meanings ascribed to different places (Lee 1972). Randel F. Washburne (1978) proposed a formal theoretical framework to explain underrepresentation of African American's in wildland recreation by classifying socioeconomic factors (poverty and structural discrimination) within a marginality perspective, and racial/ethnic/subculture factors (cultural norms and value systems) within an ethnicity perspective. This theoretical approach acknowledged that barriers to entry included access to transportation, expensive gear, and specialized knowledge. The barriers to entry, however, are numerous, and aside from economic limitations, social capital in the form of social opportunities to get outside, as well as cultural capital in the form of knowing "the rules of conduct in natural spaces," have been identified as significant obstacles to access (Horolets et al. 2018), and privilege the embodied capital of "traditional" recreators – white, middle-class men.

Washburne's frameworks guided much of the research in the following decades until other researchers began investigating the significance of geographic residence (Woodward 1988), class identification (Floyd et al. 1994), and multiple hierarchy stratification (Lee et al. 2001), in relation to recreation preferences and behaviors. For example, one study found that "young Anglo males who have a college degree and make more than \$20,000 per year occupy the highest rank in the hierarchy [of outdoor recreation participation probability]" (Lee et al. 2001:427). Floyd and Johnson would go on to argue for the need to reframe the stakeholders of outdoor recreation as the public

rather than traditional or dominant users because “the politics of outdoor recreation have been driven by largely white, middle-class interests” (2002:72). This is increasingly important, as Schultz et al. (2019) identified that public parks don’t represent the public, the stories told about parks continue to be Euro-centric, and the National Park Service staff has expressed significant resistance to “diversity and inclusion” programs.

As researchers moved toward more multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary research questions, the process of racialized othering was engaged by discrimination theories, which explain differential use as the result of prejudice, overt discrimination and perceived hostility that lead people of color to avoid parks and places where they do not feel welcome (Bryne and Wolch 2009). However, this framework has been limited because it often treats discrimination as isolated incidents, rather than as part of a social system predicated and founded upon racial oppression (Bryne and Wolch 2009). More recently, there has been a shift to focus on the interpersonal, institutional, and structural practices of discrimination (Scott 2014) that account for the feeling of “unwelcomeness” in interactions with other recreationists, differential treatment and service from recreation center staff – including being followed by staff, park rangers, and the police – and the association with recreation resources and activities and historical racial violence (poverty, manual labor, and lynching) (Stodolska and Floyd 2016). The feelings of “unwelcomeness” are particularly relevant to contemporary de facto exclusion, because not being welcome is most likely not to be explicitly communicated – it is after all “public” space – and the subtler microaggressions that cause individuals to question their own belongingness carry significant psychological burdens (Sue 2010).

Rugged practice.

Performing belongingness has to do with conformity to dominant expectations of appropriate practice, and involves utilizing common cultural narratives (Nash 2014; Williams and Carr 1993), forms of technical and ecological knowledge (Senda-Cook 2012), and employing symbols, behaviors, and practices that communicate the possession of those narratives and knowledge. Within outdoor recreation, embodying “authenticity,” or being perceived as authentic, involves engaging in rugged practice (Senda-Cook 2012). For Senda-Cook, the characteristics of practice are fluidity (repetitive but not stable – like a rhyme), productive capacities (functioning as a marker of social status as well as capital to improve that status), ordinariness (seemingly natural and not cultural), and the symbolic interaction between materials and discourse (2012:132). Rugged practice – as authentic practice – then carries all of the historical weight of the frontier, colonialism, and white-supremacy, but is pronounced and articulated differently, for example, it is the conceptual difference between walking and hiking.

Three themes that constitute rugged practice are particularly relevant for this research: 1) exclusivity and solitude as authentic, 2) the discourse of freedom and liberal selfhood, and 3) the factors of risk and the performance of self-reliance. Senda-Cook makes clear that recreators engage in a practice of imagining and constructing a “real recreator” as the standard against which other behavior and practice is measured. One participant in her study made painfully clear “they are real if they pack out their trash, know the rules of the trails, when to yield and such... Don’t make a lot of noise. They should respect the park, the land, the rangers, and other trying to enjoy it” (2012:138).

The process of othering is both basic and ubiquitous (Omi and Winant 2015), but the ways that othering and the construction of normalcy plays out within the white wilderness, again imagines difference in relation to an unmarked category of whiteness.

The notions of exclusivity and solitude certainly have their origins in frontier colonialism, and gained new prominence with the romantic writings of Edward Abbey (1968). Getting away from others – from civilization and its racialized and feminizing ills – creates a tension between improving accessibility to promote white environmental ethos, while reserving such a space as a purification machine for productive citizenship. For example, Roberts (2009) references an experience of a Latina woman fishing with her son in a national park and was asked to leave by a white man who said she was fishing in *his* spot and that she did not belong. The individual ownership or territorial entitlement, is a repetition of frontier-scape claiming, which is not only incentivized by expectations of solitude, but facilitates the policing of bodies as well.

Even more, the discourse of liberal-self hood, and of individualized responsibility and practice, also reproduces expectations of solitude. Staying on-trail is considered responsible ecological practice, but trails are too confining – dictating and organizing the possibilities of movement – and many recreators prefer to have an “original” experience with nature “not shared by anyone else” (Senda-Cook 2012:140). Here there is a tension between responsible environmental ethics and the pursuit of the experience of risk and adventure. Leave No Trace (LNT) principles (See Appendix C), provide an interesting perspective on this individualized environmental ethic, which privilege wilderness space and provide conventional cultural scripts for the policing of bodies. Simon and Alagona

(2009) argue that LNT principles and curriculums do well to encourage recreators to think about their impact, but they forward narrow conceptions of pristine nature by encouraging the false belief that it is possible to leave no trace (2012), encourage consumption of expensive gear and “LNT” products as a remedy to environmental degradation (Simon and Alagona 2013), and stop short of encouraging recreators to think about the “external” impacts of their consumption and recreation.

Related to liberal-selfhood, LNT emerged in 1993 in response to what outdoor industries, educators, and managers identified as ignorance drive degradation, or what Roderick Nash famously called “loving the wilderness to death” (Simon and Alagona 2009). The response, however, came from the recognition that recreators, in their pursuit of rugged individual freedom, don’t like to be told what to do, so the curriculum was framed from a position of educate, don’t regulate (Simon and Alagona 2012). In a sweeping success for the initiatives LNT principles are “widely accepted as popular, common sense, and uncontroversial environmental ethic” (Simon and Alagona 2009). However, the construction of LNT principles is a cultural practice of making ethics, so their popularity, and commonness, reflect the dominant cultural values of whiteness and the white wilderness. In this way, they are often employed as a means of policing behavior and bodies that are seen as threatening the attainment of frontier mythology and engagement with a particular nature antithetical to urban symbolism. Williams (2019) explains that the knowledge of proper LNT etiquette is not only a privilege, but also serves as a standard to point to in order to assert that others (particularly racialized and urbanized others) are “doing it wrong.” Williams also explains that “being white does not

entitle you to personal ownership of public lands. Being brown, or “urban” or however we get coded in the hateful diatribes on social media doesn’t mean we don’t belong there” (2019).

The final factor of rugged practice pertinent to this research is the discourse of risk in relation to authentic recreation. Braun (2003) details the ways in which white, middle-class recreators engage in performances of risk to get in touch with a frontier heritage – to become more productive through nature’s “corporate ladder” and purification machine. This also illuminates the social positions of those “who have the resources and security to *take* risks, and those who are instead continuously positioned *at* risk (or imagined to be so)” (Braun 2003:177). Thus, when risk becomes associated with authenticity through rugged practice, very particular notions of self-sufficiency become articulated that privilege narrow definitions of survival, adventure, and freedom over the racialized and feminizing impulses of civility.

Take for example, Alex Honnold’s *Free Solo* of El Capitan (in Yosemite nonetheless) and the award-winning documentary (2019) based around the preparation for the climb and the climb itself. While the spectacle was certainly thrilling, the cultural narratives about the relationship between risk and “being the most alive” that the film draws upon and forwards are deeply problematic. A New York Times review that included “a Soul Freed in ‘Free Solo’” stated the movie “is less about climbing than it is about living” (Stephens 2018). Another Times review evoked the transcendental rhetoric of the white wilderness writing the film

represents a miraculous opportunity for the rest of us to experience what you might call the human sublime – a performance so far beyond our current understandings of our physical and mental potential that it provokes a pleasurable sensation of mystified awe right alongside the inevitable nausea (Duane 2017).

The fetishization of risk may not be the intention of the film, but the ways in which it is culturally consumed illuminates the close connections with the frontier narratives that inform perceptions of rugged practice. Reflecting on the film, Erin Monahan explains, “those of us who are white in America can live freely and take up space where we choose because we live in a culture that affirms that our lives matter. Risking your life on a rock face is easy when society is set up to keep you comfortable and in power” (2019).

Overly risky behavior, however, is considered inauthentic, where a “real recreator” has good judgement in all situations, and can recreate without putting themselves and others in danger (Senda-Cook 2012). Senda-Cook (2012) identified practices of running down “steep and crowded trails” were perceived to be inauthentic. At the same time, however, danger and risk are fundamentally part of the narratives about outdoor recreation. Such a contradiction would seem to undermine the reasons why *Free Solo* gained so much popularity, yet as Duane (2017) also notes in his review

Allow your mind to relax into the possibility that Honnold’s climb was not reckless at all – that he really was born with unique neural architecture and physical gifts, and that his years of dedication really did develop those gifts to the point that he could not only make every move on El Capitan without rest, he could do so with a tolerably minuscule chance of falling. (Duane 2017).

This threshold speaks again to the cultural narrative about the overly civilized, noble European-American man who needs to get back in touch with a more untamed and

primitive self, and the wild, savage racialized and feminized other, who needs to be disciplined and civilized.

Moreover, the way in which risk is negotiated highlights the exclusive barriers and requirements to engage in authentic controlled risk, including having increasingly expensive gear and specialized knowledge. For example, Senda-Cook found that recreators often discern group membership through foot-wear and shoes as a predictive sign of “who knew how to behave and those who did not” (2012:146). Being over-dressed can also be interpreted as a sign of non-membership; wearing heavy hiking boots where sneakers suffice calls a user’s knowledge into question. The intersection between gear and knowledge point to an important contradiction, not only in LNT practices, but in the binary opposition between technology and wilderness. Ray (2013) points to the ways advertisements for adventure technologies use the prospect of endangerment to sell gear, but such luxuries are only available to those with considerable resources. Within the purification productivity of wilderness “machines are dismissed as impure, but adventure culture relies on, even fetishizes, its gear” (Ray 2013:69). The distinction relies on assumptions that advanced technologies like GORE-TEX jackets, Vibram rubber soles, nylon tents, portable cooking stoves, and hand-held water purification devices (Simon and Alagona 2009) facilitate authentic exclusive experiences and are “green” products, but machines like portable speakers and technologies like wheelchair ramps are stigmatized as intrusive and ecologically destructive.

Anthrophony.

When Senda-Cook's (2012) interviewee made the connection between a 'real recreator' and someone who doesn't make a lot of noise, I could not help but think about all the unspoken assumptions about the politics of noise, the escapism, and the silent, yet salient, significance of race. The absence of evidence of humans is a foundational LNT practice and many studies have found that recreators report 'experiential degradation' when they encounter more people than they expected and noises or volumes that they perceived not to fit the space (Patterson and Hammitt 1990; Marin et al 2011; Senda-Cook 2012; Abbott et al 2016; Fix et al 2018). The connections between sounds and space echo the imaginative investments we make in different geographies; imagining that 'everything has its time and place' without questioning the role of power in discerning conceptions of what sounds belong in what places. Soundscapes, in all spaces, are made up of three types of sound: 1) Anthrophony, human sounds and sound from human-made objects; 2) Biophony, sounds coming from non-human species; 3) Geophony, sounds from geophysical entities (e.g. water, wind, trees) (Li et al 2018). Studies of soundscapes and soundscape ecologies within outdoor recreation have found that dominant recreators report a strong aversion to anthrophonic sounds, particularly machine generated anthrophony (planes, trains, and automobiles), and a strong preference for what participants in one study described as 'natural sounds' (both geophonic and biophonic) (Li et al. 2018).

While different kinds of recreation are associated with the appropriateness of different sounds and volumes (i.e. loud river noises detract from spending time with

family), anthrophony and loud noises are collectively stigmatized. Studies have found that 91 percent of national park visitors prefer ‘natural quiet,’ and that campgrounds close to urban areas have the greatest tolerance for noise “whereas primitive campground users would be most annoyed by [anthrophony]” (Mace, Bell, and Loomis 2004). The dichotomous geographies – urban and primitive – are important for the ways the dominant recreators distinguish between ‘natural’ and ‘fitting’ sound, and artificial and ‘polluting’ noise. Yet, there is also an ecological element to this; non-human species are certainly affected by different sounds, for example Chowdhury and Gupta found that “noise which is a non-rhythmic and unharmonious superposition of various audio frequencies... have a negative effect on the growth of plants,” while audio frequencies “in the form of music facilitated the germination and growth of plants, irrespective of the music genre” (2012:33). However, despite the benefits to plant growth, most music – understood as inherently anthrophonic – does not fit the conceptual criteria of wilderness nor does it conform to the expectations recreators maintain about ‘natural’ sounds.

Because race is always and everywhere present in our society, the racial implications of noise, and especially noise in wilderness areas, carries the narrow standards of whiteness – of appropriateness – and the racialized interpretations of who *is* considered noisy. In fact, the discourse of noise often serves as a form of colorblind racism, where a study investigating police enforcement of noise ordinance violations found that race was a significant predictive factor of arrest; “African Americans composed 87% of those arrested for an excessive noise violation in a vehicle” (Crawford 2000:223). Thus, while the police chief during the time of the study proclaimed that

officers aren't given a directive to stop anyone based on gender, color, or socioeconomic status, the disproportionate rates at which excessive noise violations are enforced indicates that race and noise are often intimately intertwined. Yet, the connections between race and noise (or loudness) spread across social institutions and intersecting social positions of gender and class. Evans (1988) and Fordham (1993) discuss the ways that African American women are socialized in school to be silent and invisible, where "loud Black girls" are those that refuse to conform to standards of 'good behavior,' – standards based in the values of whiteness and masculinity – where disruption, and deviance from narrow standards is considered loud.

This follows in the arena of outdoor recreation as well, particularly in the framing of 'real' recreators as quiet. The confrontation my students encountered on the trail echoes this sentiment; while the decibel level of the portable speaker was not loud enough to drown out the conversations within the group, the apparent violation of expectations of normalcy provided the context for white-supremacy to declare such an action loud, and therefore wrong, disruptive, and lacking the narrow values of appreciation dictated by the white wilderness. However, not all music is inherently seen as out of place in the white wilderness, the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) provides a list of 7 of the best instruments for backpacking, under the pretense that bringing pianos and guitars is too cumbersome, yet portable speakers and the "canned music you pump into your earphones" are still stigmatized in favor of acoustic and live music, or music more closely associated with 'natural sounds' (see Taswell 2016).

Therefore, within the overarching rhyme scheme of whiteness and white supremacy layered over the imaginative symbolic architecture of landscape and soundscape, the historical processes that inform the perceptions of wilderness and urbanness, of quiet and loud, of natural and artificial, are fundamentally intertwined with perceptions of race, appropriate behavior, and narrow standards of individuality. The dominant constructions of race and nature has always been a racist racial and nation building project that maintains Euro-centric racial, gender, and class anxieties. The white wilderness necessitates the removal and displacement of people and cultural practices that threaten its unmasking. The urban must remain othered in order to preserve the sanctuary of escape from the unsettling reality of the human and ecological destruction of white supremacy, upon which the privilege to escape rests. Through narrow and arbitrary standards of acceptable behavior, a fetishization of the wild at the heart of white liberal self-hood, and violent and symbolic exclusion of people and practices that do not meet the embodied representation of the white wilderness, white supremacy continues to haunt all corners of the US.

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

In recognizing the emphasis previous scholarship has placed on the need for more qualitative studies of race and outdoor recreation, this research is based on in depth semi-structured interviews with 14 participants. Participants were recruited through a combination of haphazard and convenience sampling methods that utilized my own formal and informal social networks. Interviews ranged from 60-100 minutes and took place in-person and over the phone with outdoor recreators, educators, and professionals, between July and December of 2019. Participants were asked to reflect on significant identity formation experiences, recreation preferences, and perceptions of normative and appropriate behavior. This study was approved by the Humboldt State University Institutional Review Board on May 15th 2019 (IRB# 18-201).

Participant Recruitment

Once contact with potential participants had been initiated, they were provided a copy of the informed consent agreement (see Appendix B) to review before scheduling an interview. Before each interview I reviewed the components of the agreement with each participant, highlighting the voluntary and confidential characteristics of participation, and extended participants the right to retract any information if they later decided to rescind their participation, though no one elected to do so. Participants were also given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym, with most providing their own.

In selecting potential participants, I was interested in several different social roles within outdoor recreation that have varying degrees of socializing influence and engage in the negotiation of normative behavior: recreators, educators, and professionals (including Law enforcement). The distinctions between these roles, however, are not easily classifiable, since they often overlap. At a minimum, all participants identified as outdoor recreators, though as the discussion section of this paper further explains, a collective definition of outdoor recreation, and therefore recreator, is absent. Therefore, while the term outdoor recreation may connote associations with adventure or risk activities for some, the common dominator for this paper's working definition is "a person who engages in leisure activities outside."

On the other hand, for the purpose of this study, outdoor educator refers to a role that has the explicit goal of developing outdoor capital in a formal capacity. This distinction is particularly important because recreation professionals – those whose occupations are tied to the delivery of outdoor services – often engage in the practice of education in some capacity within their jobs. Even other recreators act as socializing agents and informal educators. Therefore, while educators are by definition professionals and both professionals and recreators educate, this role refers to those whose occupation is explicitly instructional. For example, this research considers climbing coaches and trip leaders for outdoor education schools (e.g. Outward Bound, National Outdoor Leadership School) to be educators, while guides, Forest Service personnel, and outdoor law enforcement, whose directives are driven by the facilitation of outdoor experiences, are considered professionals.

It is important to note, while these roles are distinguished to provide insight into the different influence of positions within the field, they are more of a reflection of institutional legitimacy, than they are a measurement of socializing influence. For example, in reflecting on his time as a Refuge Manager for the Department of Fish and Wildlife, Dash highlighted how the strength of other relationships within an interaction may limit his cultural influence despite his position of government authority. “We found a father and son who were knowingly breaking the law [illegal bird hunting and over bagging more than 115 trout]. And the father got into it with us, but they broke the law... and we’re just enforcement. And that kid looked at us going at it with his father and probably hates game wardens for the rest of his life.” While the strength of the relationship between the boy and his father did not impede Dash from citing the violation and fulfilling the requirements of his job, it did however call into question his authority to shape notions of normative behavior. Thus, while the ways that participants negotiate the significance of authority will be engaged in further detail in the proceeding chapter, it is important to keep in mind that these roles are better markers of normative legitimacy than they are a uniform measurement of social power.

Demographics

While the participants of the study reflect a myriad of social positions, as a whole they do not reflect a representative sample of any particular population. Rather they reflect folks that you might encounter on a trail, river, climbing route, or bike trail all across the US (See Table 1). Of 14 participants, nine identified as white and six identified

as people of color. While this sample is more racially diverse than user trends identified by the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDAFS) – 95% of National Forest and Wilderness Users between 2012 and 2016 were white – it is important to highlight that none of the participants identified as American Indian, Native Alaskan, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander. Within research engaging the violence of whiteness and settler-colonialism, this is certainly a limitation.

In relation to gender, nine of the participants identified as cis-gendered male, four as cis-gendered female, and one participant identified as gender non-conforming or gender queer. Reflecting an oversight on my part as the researcher, I did not ask each participant to discuss their sexual identity, however four participants included this part of their identity as important to how they recreate. So, while I cannot speak to the composition of sexual identities across participants, it is important to note that the sample is not entirely heteronormative. The intersections of racial and gender identities among participants illuminates another limitation of this research. Five of the participants are white men, four are men of color, three are white women, and only one identified as a woman of color, as well as one participant identifying as white and gender queer. This limitation partly reflects my own social network, but is difficult to compare to USDAFS user data because intersectional identity data is not collected through the National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Name	Race	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Role
Jeff	White	Male	56	Some College Marketing	Fishing Guide	Professional
Jay	Asian	Male	26	BA Political Economy	Claims Investigator (Past Guide)	Professional
Princess Banana Hammock	Latinx	Male	43	BA Natural Resource Management – Some Grad	Financial Services	Professional
Dash	White	Male	65	BA Natural Resource Management – Wildlife Management	Retired Fish and Wildlife Refuge Manager	Law Enforcement (Professional)
Sam	White	Female	25	BA Environmental Science	Environmental Educator	Educator
M Dizzy	White	Female	24	BA English	Climbing Coach	Educator
Alanna	White	Female	25	BA Spanish & Gender and Queer Studies	Trip Leader	Educator
Charlie H	White	Male	24	BA Environmental Writing	Climbing Coach	Educator
Ted	White	Male	22	Some College Forestry	Student	Educator
Terry	White	Gender Queer	24	AA Recreation Management	Trip Leader	Educator
Poppy	Black	Female	27	Technical Degree Culinary	Chef	Recreator
Adam	Asian	Male	27	BA Computer Science	Software Engineer	Recreator
Calvin	White	Male	26	BA Political Science	Music Producer	Recreator
Stephen	Black	Male	27	BA African-American Studies	Auto	Recreator

In regard to age, 11 of the 14 participants were in their twenties, while three were above the age of 30, one of whom was above the age of 60. Concerning highest level of education, all participants had at least a high school diploma and some college. The majority of participants (n 10) had at least a Bachelor's Degree, two participants had a technical or associates degree, two had some college, and one had some graduate training.

Because of American cultural norms surrounding the privacy of financial status, there is often an absence of common language for talking about class. To get a sense for the socio-economic status of participants I asked questions about where they grew up, economic barriers to recreation, their parent's occupations, and their occupations as well. Seven participants discussed growing up working class or working poor, five discussed growing up comfortably middle class, and two indicated upper-middle class status. Several participants talked about upward social mobility, in particular two participants discussed growing up working poor, and now identify as middle class. I also did not ask participants about their partisan or political affiliation, though in reflecting on the conversations that took place in the interview there was an absence of conservative voices, or at least an absence of support for the current administration. Even more, while there were not specific questions about geographic sites of recreation, during the transcription and coding process I began to take note of the places that participants mentioned in their narratives (See Figure 1). Therefore, while this is not an exhaustive representation of where participants recreate, it does speak to the geographic spread of the trails, rivers, or climbing crags where participants engage in outdoor practices.

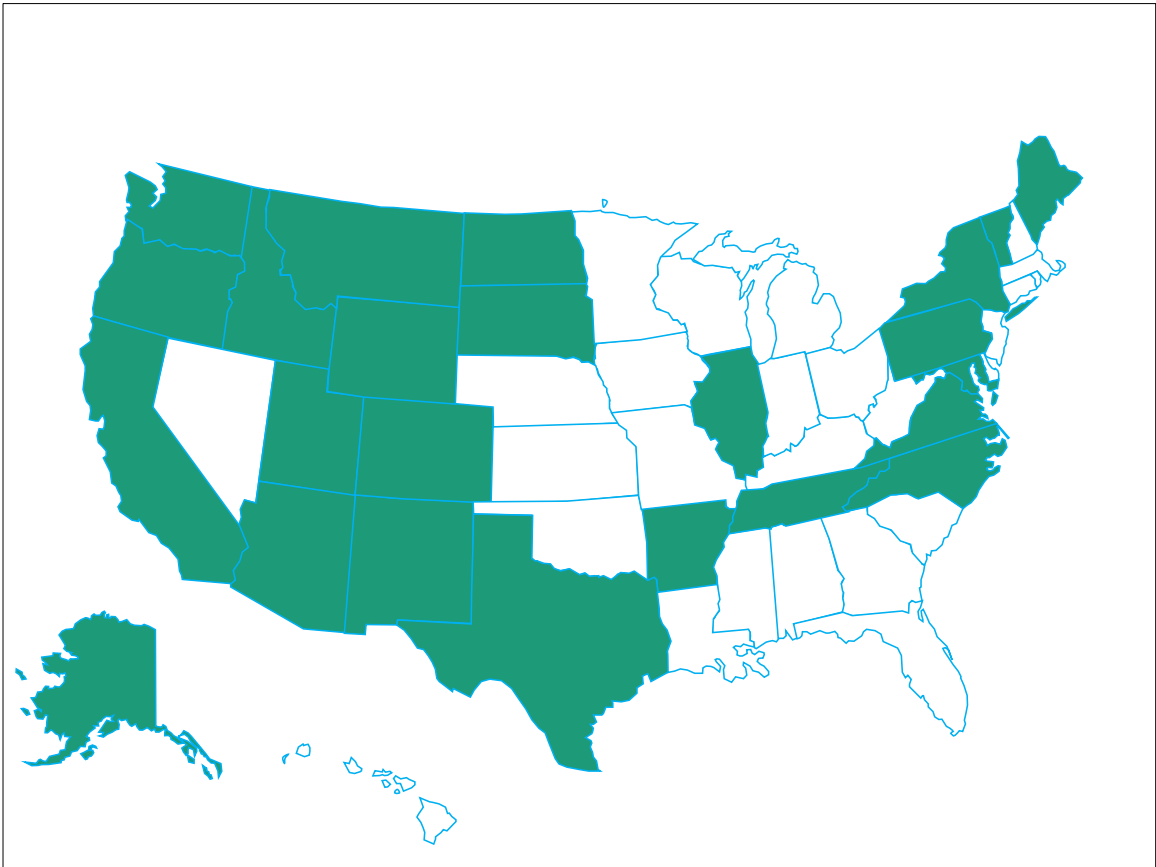


Figure 1: Geographic Spread of Participant Recreation Sites (Shaded)

Interviews

In thinking about the power dynamics of doing research, I carried lessons from Patricia Hill Collins (2009) black feminist epistemology. In thinking about the significance of dialogue and the extractive subject/object positionality of Euro-centric research, my voice was an active part of the interviewing process, sharing my own stories, opinions, thoughts, and often working through my own personal questions and

tensions with participants during the interview. This certainly added to the length of interviews.

The interview guide (See Appendix A) centered around themes of getting started and preferred activities (e.g. hiking, camping, kayaking, fishing, climbing, birding), barriers to and benefits of recreation, environmental concern/awareness, preferences concerning the presence or absence of other people, as well as the presence or absence of music. The second part of the interview focused on the negotiation and expectations of normative behavior. Participants were asked to identify “pet peeves” they see other recreators practicing, and were asked about what kinds of practices warrant their personal intervention (i.e. “what do you see that makes you feel as though you have to speak up”). Along these lines, I asked participants about both being policed and policing others’ behavior, as well as the tactics they use (or imagine using) to manage conflict and disagreement. Finally, I asked participants about their perceptions of, and experiences with, law enforcement.

Interviews were conducted both in person and over the phone. In-person interviews were recorded using my personal cell phone, and phone interviews were recorded using Cube ACR™. However, an unexpected Android update in December 2019 limited the ability to record phone calls, which I did not realize until after I had finished my interview with Stephen and learning the audio file had been corrupted. This obstacle did limit my ability to highlight Stephen’s voice, though references to our discussion are paraphrased from several pages of notes, rather than direct quotations. Audio files were stored in a password protected drive, and transcribed using Otter.ai™.

Coding and Analysis

Interviews were coded using Atlas.ti™. Initial code groups were generated from themes in the interview guide, and individual codes were refined as patterns began to become more apparent. For example, as discussions surrounding risk and safety became increasingly prominent, the relationship between trust and knowledge was regularly expressed in choosing a partner (or group), and female participants regularly cited social safety concerns and fear of other recreators when navigating the presence and absence of other people. Subsequently, I began to recode for these distinctions. The final code groups consisted of Behavioral Norms, Conceptualizations, Exclusion, Identity, Music, Outdoor Capital, Preferences, Symbols of Belonging, and White Wilderness. While several code groups overlapped at times (i.e. identity-based exclusion) the patterns that emerged from these groups informed the five main areas of exclusion identified in this research: 1) access to getting started, 2) narrow conceptualizations, 3) risk, trust, and safety, 4) policing behavior, and 5) expectations of silence.

As a white scholar doing research on whiteness, I have continually thought a lot about my own positionality within the process of analysis. Much in the way that my voice was active in the interviewing process – not just guiding the interview, but holding my own experiences in relation to participants – my voice and experiences are also active in the analysis of the data. It would be not only a disservice, but also a problematic obscenity, to represent this research as somehow detached from me, and not deeply personal and often uncomfortable. Methodologically, I have incorporated the process of

autoethnography, which is an approach to research that “acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher’s influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t exist” (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011:274).

Even more, given the positionalities of participants, the majority of who are white, this research is not an exercise in my own performative anti-racist superiority. I do not wish to point to “those white people” who are a part of the problem, but rather acknowledge the many ways that I continue to be tangled and bound in my own whiteness. In fact, many participants were more actively engaged in anti-racist work than I can claim to be. This has been a deeply personal research process, and my intention is not to police the seemingly detached voice of my participants. If I did not challenge an idea during the interview, that is my responsibility, and it would be unfair to challenge it in hindsight without a participant’s response. At the same time however, I do not wish to erase, obscure, or ignore, or otherwise not hold accountable, expressions and utterances of whiteness. To this effect, when I engage examples of whiteness seemingly hiding in plain sight, I do so without a pseudonym and contextualize it within my personal narrative. None of my participants expressed practices and embodiments of whiteness that I have not also contributed to, expressed, and even held close to my sense of self.

Therefore, it also seems important to acknowledge that the framework and worldview of whiteness I grew up with often obstructs my capacity to see and name different iterations and embodiments of whiteness. While I believe that I have taken the time and labor to be thorough and reflective in my work, prioritizing the significance of

different conclusions is still inherently informed by my positionality. That is to say, I do not doubt that I have missed something(s) in the data, and while there are certainly scope limitations to any research, I do not wish to explain away those short sights as a consequence of scope. Rather I encourage readers to read my work critically, as I read others' works critically – not to assume my intentions are good or that “at least I’m trying” – and to take with you what is helpful and interesting, and to know this work must be continuous and ongoing.

CHAPTER 3: DATA ANALYSIS

Getting Started: The Proverbial Hook

Participants expressed a range of experiences in getting started in outdoor recreation. For many it was something that started with their families when they were very young and the choice to begin was less profound than the choice to continue (as was my experience). For others, it came later in life, either seeking the excitement of the stories they had consumed from movies and books, or getting to college, shifting social groups, and wanting to learn new things. Participants also detailed how they got “hooked,” and the benefits of recreating that they held close, and which pushed them to keep seeking spaces that provided those benefits. At the same time, participants spoke about the limitations to their recreation, and the successes and challenges in navigating those barriers. The significance of exclusion and power here is grounded in structural privileges that facilitate the journey into the outdoors for some (mainly middle-class, white, men), and increase the barriers to access for others.

Perhaps the strongest hooks to investing in outdoor recreation were realizations that nature and being outside spoke to something deeply personal; Ted, Terry, and Alanna spoke about feeling more intimately connected to their own bodies; Charlie, Sam, Jeff, Dash, and Adam spoke about personal growth, patience, and work ethic that “*getting your fingers dirty*” (Jeff) or that “*the combination of stoke and terror*” (Sam) elicited; Jay, Poppy, Stephen, and Calvin discussed feeling more connected to other people in

natural spaces; and Princess Banana Hammock and M Dizzy said being outside connected them more deeply to the cultural stories they grew up with.

Social capital, including family involvement, played a profound role in getting started for most participants, but also served as an initial barrier for some, especially regarding race and gender. Several participants who were not white men talked about the barriers to finding mentors. As well, cultural capital was a factor that both facilitated and limited, not only getting started, but continuing as well. Participants identified other factors, such as time, energy, ability, and knowledge as limitations. However, the most profound and common limitations that participants identified to their recreation were economic factors in the form of money spent on gear, training, transportation, and the loss of potential income from taking a day off work.

For most participants, family was the biggest push into the outdoors. Jeff (White, Cis-Male, Professional) recounted the memories camping with his mother and stepfather:

You know, some of my favorite memories of that was that they would sleep in the cab-over portion of the truck camper, and I'd sleep on the fold down table, and when they got up in the morning, you know, I jump into their bed... and as a young kid laying up there, smelling the coffee percolating, my mom frying bacon and eggs... just stuff like that was awesome.

Similarly, Sam (White, Cis Female, Educator) talked about the positive sentiments towards the outdoors that she began developing early on: *“I hiked a ton with my family, during the summers and on weekends... if it was right before I went to camp, we would go on a big day hike, and that always signified fun things were going on and about to happen. So, I always associated it with positivity.”*

The impactful memories weren't always seemingly positive ones, however.

Charlie (White, Cis Male, Educator) talked about being “taken” into the outdoors as “just a wee lad,” and particularly a memory of learning to ski: “*The first really clear memory I have, backed up by some wonderful photos of me just having an awful time learning to ski. Just like viciously face planting... but just kept doing it. Definitely, definitely kept doing it.*” Charlie would go on to explain that the outdoors was a space where he learned that struggles weren't always failures.

For other folks, family activities would open the door for their curiosity, but friends and peers would be the catalyst into outdoor recreation. For example, M Dizzy (White, Cis Female, Educator) talked about growing up in a rural farming community and her father would take her and her brother hunting and fishing, but it wasn't until college that she had her light bulb moment.

I interacted a lot with the outdoors growing up, but it wasn't in an outdoor adventure sort of way, it was more hunting and fishing with my dad and brother. Never really biked or climbed... And then in college, that was my first big moment where I was like, Oh, I totally am going to switch my whole life path, because I went on an ice climbing trip, and I remember one night after we all got back... one of the people on the trip started talking about when he lived in Alaska and worked as a mountain guide and I just had this light bulb flip on in my head where I was like, this is something people can do? And it just, it just blew my mind.

Poppy (Black, Cis Female, Recreator) and Jay (Asian, Cis Male, Professional) had similar peer influence. For Poppy, some of her formative memories of the outdoors were came via sailing. She explained that her father, a Jamaican immigrant “*dropped his accent and ‘assimilated’ fully to like this degree that he joined a yacht club and a country*

club... and I started going to sailing camp when I was eight.” It wasn’t until she was 12 or 13 that it started to feel like her own thing, and then a few years later:

I just remember my friends and I were like finally at the point where we could go sailing by ourselves. ... we would go out after camp and just flip or like capsize our boats on purpose and the like sit on the bottom of our boat... and I just remember being like out on the bay in the water, and it was like, you know, we were just having fun like doing our own thing.

Jay explained that his father was a self-taught “outdoorsperson,” which limited some of the activities he engaged in. Jay explained,

I would have loved to grow up backpacking, but that’s not something my dad did, and I’m guessing that’s not something my dad did because he moved to [the Pacific Northwest] when he was 18 and grew up in Hong Kong and Tokyo. And similarly, my mom took us on a lot of wonderful adventures, but she wasn’t going to take us, take two kids backpacking as a single mother who had very little money, we were really poor growing up.

It wasn’t until college that he started to want to spend his free time camping and recreating, which came at a time of an impactful camping trip with friends.

And I went on this camping trip with some friends... and we just had the best time it was so fun. And you know, none of us really knew much about camping, we didn’t do a great job of it or anything, just like sitting around a fire in the middle of a dirt trail... going off into the woods and gathering fire wood, breaking sticks, and just talking and walking around at night and that changed everything for me honestly... but I just felt really connected to these guys and you know that connection couldn’t have happened if we weren’t out a way from other people.

Both Jay and Poppy’s fathers were aware of the pressures to “Americanize” and both Jay and Poppy talked about the tensions that caused in their own lives. As a Japanese American, Jay talked about internalized racism, where he was rejecting and repressing parts of himself that his peers – especially a predominantly white college – saw as different. Similarly, as a mixed-race woman of color, Poppy talked about navigating

social discourses about being “black enough,” as well as perceiving glorified outdoor recreation, like climbing Mount Everest as silly: *“Oh my god, black people and people of color are smarter than that. Yeah, I don’t need to hike Everest like, thanks... I’ll hike a small mountain like, I don’t need to prove anything.”* Poppy’s observation that there is a performance of “proving” speaks a lot to the notions of rugged outdoor practice, and the cultural narratives she identifies in this practice. Princess Banana Hammock (Latinx, Cis Male, Professional), whose parents had immigrated from Mexico, and who would go on to work for the Park service “for over a decade,” talked explicitly about the *“national narrative, like exploring, camping, building fires, conservation stuff or whatever you want to call it, you know, this, you know, kind of white recreation, right?”* continuing to explain that his initial interactions with parks were community oriented for baptismal and quinceañera celebrations.

These expressions struck a personal note with me. My own little sister, who is a Cambodian adoptee, had expressed similar identity conflicts growing up in a very white, outdoorsy family, and often feeling like she didn’t fit in, at one point declaring that *“white people were weird for wanting to suffer in the cold on the ski slopes.”* That observation, that skiing, and the outdoors generally, is dominated by white folks performing struggle, is definitely a barrier to feeling like you belong. Adam (Asian, Cis Male, Recreator) did not grow up doing a lot of what he considered “outdoorsy things.” His parents were

always working and really busy so I never really had the time or luxury... My parents never really had much outdoors experiences. I never really did as well. I don’t think my friends in elementary and middle school, when we’d hang out it

was basketball or whatever. But when I got to high school [switching from public to private] like everyone had been skiing or snowboarding like their entire lives or doing these kinds of activities that I hadn't really been exposed to... or could necessarily afford... and that's kind of how I lumped in those activities was like, oh that happened to be their passion, while my passion was music or something.

Adam's passions would change as he got to college; his freshman roommate introduced him to his love of climbing, and while his perceptions about the inaccessibility to outdoor recreation had been informed by economic barriers and "*lack of exposure*," the significance of race became more prominent as he waded into the "*very predominantly white inhabited space*" of rock climbing. Adam explained,

That was something that was difficult for me to kind of enter into it was, it was such a weird feeling... I just remember vividly like the very first time I started climbing I was having such a hard time meeting people or meeting mentors, and just being able to share this experience with people. Even my peers, like, it seems that like, a lot, not, not that people judge you for, like, your race, but it felt like I wasn't really quite supposed to be doing the sport. And I felt like that for a while.

The feeling that race is present, even if "people [don't] judge you for your race," speaks a lot to the tensions between interpersonal and institutional racism. Despite feeling like there wasn't overt racism, and that "it's gotten better since I started," Adam spoke to the ways race still influenced the obstacles he would face, that others had not.

Adam explained that mentor role was never really filled, and he subsequently spent most of his time learning and climbing on his own. Sharing,

I never got a mentor, I never met this person... I was reaching out to people and trying my best to meet new people to climb with. While other people's stories have been more like oh, I was at a gym, someone approached me, we talked, we climb together, and that's how I learned. I never felt like I got that. I felt like it was always kind of something that I had to actively look for and seek out while other people that I've met have had, you know, it seemed a smoother transition into the sport.

M Dizzy (White, Cis Female, Educator) also talked about navigating finding a mentor.

She said that some of her first mentors were boyfriends, which was really meaningful for her in a lot of ways, especially in relation to the trust she was looking for in climbing partners. Aside from boyfriends, she reflected that

All of my mentors in the outdoors have been men. And it could have been coincidental, I don't know, but I've thought a lot about how, for example, if we are at the crag, and there's, it's me and three guys, and they are trying something, it's easy for me to just say, like, I'll belay because they might think it's a waste of time for me to get on the climb, maybe. And so, I think that kept me at the same level for a long time... just because I was nervous to speak up you know?

That feeling of nervousness to speak up and the internalization of expectations that her growth would be a waste of time, says a lot about not only the difficulty of conceiving yourself as belonging, but finding people in white, masculine dominated spaces that make you feel like you belong and who are invested in your growth as well.

Luckily, M Dizzy would go on to find “the perfect mentor;” *“he’s a legend, very renowned, I think his heyday was probably the 80s.”* She recounted the beginning of what would become a very meaningful partnership:

We were both working for [this company he founded] at [an] Ice Climbing festival to put up a booth or whatever, and it ended up just being us there for like eight hours a day. He's really quiet, and at first, I'm really quiet, so we both kind of twiddle our thumbs... And then I started talking to him. And I was like, well, I'm looking for ice climbing partners, and he's like, yeah, actually I am too, and I was like ok, so we set up a time to go, and at the end of it I just kind of told him, I was like, well, you're going to be my mentor now... I specifically remember there was this one Sunday morning, where we started at like 5:30, and we did this crazy, ridiculous approach to this multi-pitch ice climb. And right at the base of it, we like, got into this ice cave and were just catching out breath, and he passed me a flask of whiskey, and the sun was rising, and I was like trying to talk to him about my boy drama and he was just like, okay. It was just the perfect picture of our partnership because the only thing we shared was like our love of place, and our love of what we were getting to do. And I was like this, you know, young 20

something like, super smitten with this guy in town, and he was just like, I don't care, it's 6:00 a.m. and he just passed me the whiskey.

For M Dizzy, finding a mentor didn't mean finding someone who cared about her "boy drama," but someone who was invested in her growth, understood when whiskey was called for, and shared her love of place and practice. Like Adam, M Dizzy initially struggled to find a mentor because of what she described as her mindset (the nervousness), which at times she linked back to the way people perceive her in relation to her gender. While she did eventually find what she was looking for, like Adam, she had to be more assertive – "you're going to be my mentor now" – than many folks. That is not to say that every white man has an easy time finding a mentor, but that the significance of race and gender creates additional barriers for folks of color and non-masculine identifying folks.

While this has a lot to do with social capital, the cultural capital of knowing how to navigate spaces, understanding unique discourse and slang, and drawing on similar cultural narratives can all be important factors for not only how folks get hooked, but how they continue to engage in their own practice as well. Sam mentioned that most of her mentors have been patient friends, and followed up that she "*owes a lot of beers [in exchange for their knowledge].*" While alternative currencies like beers and favors can be helpful, the economic barriers gear and knowledge was identified by all participants. Notably, however, educators and professionals (especially in the climbing field) noted that once they were hired they had significantly more access to gear. Alanna (White, Cis Female, Educator), who works for an international outdoor education school and is an

avid rock climber, talked about having a weird relationship with snow, which often meant she had a lull in her recreation during winter seasons, often opting to lead trips in the southern hemisphere during those months. “*Skiing is very expensive,*” she noted – a sentiment echoed by most participants – “*and most of my energy and time is put into rock climbing... but I just took a new job at the [company] branch in [the intermountain west] ... and I definitely partially took this job because it’s going to mean free access to gear... and easier access to people who can teach me.*”

The initial hurdles and investments to get to a position to have that kind of access can be less profound for folks who either started at a young age, found a mentor, or had the economic capital to afford “*expensive educational programs.*” Sam mentioned that because of her peer group she can often borrow gear for a new activity, to try it out, before investing in her own (often used from one of those friends.) Poppy on the other hand, who made her distaste for the elitism of gear and privileged knowledge very clear, spoke about the way that employees at REI regularly tried to sell her gear she didn’t need.

I went to REI and was like, I just wanted some hiking shoes, ideally ones I could also run in too... I don’t like running in cities... I was like, again, I don’t really backpack, I just fucking love hiking, and they were like, oh, well if you are going to [this particular place] you definitely will... and sold me these really clunky hiking boots that I realized I couldn’t use as like running shoes... I’ve returned them since I got back.

Poppy would go on to voice other examples like this, and talked about the difficulty of returning the shoes too. After our conversation she texted me,

Long story short – hearing all about REI’s forever return policy from white friends, yada yada, even when something’s super fucked up and past warranty.

Then going to REI to exchange it and getting treated very suspiciously and told I can't return it etc. etc. I felt super uncomfortable and shitty and was doing the mental gymnastics of if it's cus I look like a scrub (coming from my job) or like I don't belong in the scene. Just to try at a second REI and they let me return it... Just confirming thoughts I had. I kept thinking if I had been wearing a Patagonia jacket and Lulu Lemon leggings on or some shit OR if I were white, would the interaction go differently?

The significance of the mental gymnastics is not only a psychological burden, but is one way that exclusion is enacted through seemingly small-scale moments that often result in the internalization of questions of belongingness. Her observation that her appearance, both in clothing and skin color, had signaled an apparent outsider status, is crucial to the politics and performance of belonging. Poppy shared that had she not already been confident in her love for “getting outdoors,” experiences like this would have surely turned her off to getting started.

The stories participants shared about getting started and getting hooked, speaks to the profound sense of self that outdoor recreation (in its myriad of practices) carries for folks. At the same time, the barriers to getting started in the form of social capital (family, friends, and mentors) and cultural capital (knowledge of how to behave, and understanding the cultural narratives of who belongs) are more profoundly felt by those that do not fit the dominant recreator mold – white, able-bodied men. In thinking about power and exclusion, it is vital for recreators in more privileged positions to think about how we contribute to barriers to access, both in who we choose to recreate with and in thinking about what narrow cultural narratives we reproduce from positions of power and authority.

Diverse Conceptualizations: Making Sense of Space and Practice

A key part of the of the cultural narratives we engage, resist, and reproduce has to do with the language and rhetoric we use to talk about what we do and where we do it. To get a sense of how folks conceptualized space and practice I asked them to define *nature*, *wilderness*, *front country versus back country*, and *outdoor recreation*; qualifying that while these words have standardized definitions, they are not necessarily universal, and they often are used differently. The conversations that followed highlighted the prevalence of the cultural narratives of external nature, sublime, pristine, escapist wilderness, rugged or adventure recreation, and spatial distinctions of urbanness (often coded as development) and access to resources between front country and backcountry. However, it also highlighted resistance and non-conformity to these concepts, where folks would identify how they perceived a word was commonly used, and then challenge that idea.

Often times conversations about nature evoked conversations about what is “natural.” Terry (White, Gender Queer, Educator) talked about nature in relation to “wild,” which they distinguished from the problematic notion of untamed and the discourse of liberal self-hood, saying that nature “*is the process of coming into being in spite of interference.*” For Terry, nature seemed to fundamentally embody resistance, using the example of weeds in overgrown lots in the city, not only through a sort of reclamation, but in a “*you can’t stop me, kind of way.*” They said, “*Because even though, you know, there’s a human hand there that has tried to contain it, it’s still growing up*

despite that, and it's still like taking back that area." Terry also spoke explicitly about the colonial and feminizing ways that nature is talked about, and how, for them, the feminization of nature was almost ironic in the way that the nature is thought to be feminized (and racialized) – or othered – as a means of control or containment, because that very attempt to control and other is part of the undoing and exposing of power, or the manifestation of the internal contradictions of settler-colonialism, patriarchy, and white-supremacy. They explained this is the “*sacred aspect of femininity*” that they make a conscious effort to keep with them.

For other folks, the process of nature – or nature as a process – was not explicitly about resistance, but about adaptation, which carries a lot of similarities. Jeff (White, Cis Male, Professional) defined nature as the adaptive capacities of beings, speaking to how birds and rats adapt to live in cities. Dash (White, Cis Male, Professional) gave a similar definition, where he initially started to describe nature in relation to native species and plants, and then he paused and complicated that for himself;

A good example is the Bosque Del Apache. So, they have tamarisk all over the river, and this endangered warbler adapted to using the tamarisk. So, because it's natural habitat wasn't there it adapted, so now they want to remove the tamarisk so they can put native trees back in, but now they got this warbler... how do you deal with that? It's nature, it's natural, but it's not.

That tension and question of “can something ‘become’ natural” is at the heart of the ambiguity that the contradiction of an external nature creates.

Similarly, discussions about definitions and conceptualizations of wilderness were often a source of internal tension for folks. While many participants, especially educators

and professionals, cited the Wilderness Protection Act's definition (displaying a bit of cultural capital), most disagreed with it particularly along ontological lines – that no such thing exists. For some, while the definition didn't quite fit reality as they perceived it, it was more a matter of semantics. Dash, for example, discussed the difference between “*capital W federally designated Wilderness and wilderness*” or “*the spirit versus the letter of the law,*” specifically evidencing the absence of wheels and gears as part of the legal definition, and the questioning if bringing a phone or camera, which have gears in the lenses, threatens wilderness. It does not, he concluded, but that ATVs and motorized vehicles certainly did.

For some folks, particularly professionals, wilderness was a place only in the sense that it is designated as such, and defined as federally managed and regulated land. While some participants talked about wilderness as beyond the control of humans, Jay, Alanna, and Princess Banana Hammock explained it was explicitly defined by human control, or at least assumed control in the form of management and regulation. For Jay, that didn't mean there was a need to do away with protections for ecosystems, if anything protections were worth expanding, but that wilderness as uncontrolled by humans, was simply not true.

For several educators, this was not the first time they had pondered this. Alanna's initial response was “*Oh god... honestly you're digging at one of my deep dark philosophical dilemmas,*” and Charlie responded

Wow yeah, I've spent whole like, years of college trying to define wilderness or like talking about it. I feel like traditional wilderness at least as I would have thought of it a couple of years ago, you know, and growing up there would be

like, like no cars and roads. The sense of being out there, you know, and definitely super escapist. So yeah, I think traditional ideas of wilderness are very escapist and are very, honestly, again pretty arbitrary. And like, built off the false notions of there never having been, yeah, like pristine, unaltered by humans, which doesn't exist. You get like, thinking about those ideas of wilderness revolve around like humans and nature being separate. I think that idea of wilderness rests on that binary, and I've been trying to complicate that for myself, yeah though, not entirely effectively.

Charlie's process of complicating this definition names several key pieces that problematize wilderness and ground it in whiteness: escapism, pristine or untrammelled nature, and external nature – the very things of which the myth of the frontier is made. Yet Charlie followed with another important observation: that such a position was very privileged. Specifically, the privilege to sit and think about the significance of wilderness in a college classroom.

The absence of people, or the very least the perceptive absence of evidence of people, was a big part of how many people made sense of the term. That cultural narrative did come up in relation to knowledge or what is known, at least momentarily. Poppy explained, *“I mean when you say wilderness, the first image, or like word, that comes to mind is, like uncharted. But like fuck that, right? For me wilderness just feels more like a brand, like Nature™.”* As I stumbled my own way through thinking about what “wilderness” means and how we got here, Poppy's definition influenced my thinking that the packaging of nature in the form of wilderness – as the standard against which we measure all other nature – seems to make wilderness, like whiteness, something to be possessed and experientially consumed, as well as a status of increased legal protection.

Expressions of the transcendentalist nature and wilderness did appear a few times as well. Several participants talked about the “*cathedral*” and “*temple of nature*” which demanded the same practices of respect and honor as a church. One participant noted “*you’re there to commune, you’re there to be positive and to mainly like leave whatever happened outside of nature outside of nature, like it’s kind of like you leave it outside of the door of the church when you’re in the temple kind of thing.*” Talking about the spiritual connection to wilderness can be complicated, as made clear in the consequences of the transcendentalist movement, yet I am not fully ready to abandon the significance of the spiritual feeling so many participants talked about in relation to wilderness as a place absent the signs of modern civilization. That spiritual connection certainly draws on the problematic cultural narratives through which our national identity was ‘forged,’ but it also speaks to the ways that different facets of modern civilization are inherently soul and spirit crushing. The distinction is not that being in relation to other people is inherently soul crushing, as Teddy Roosevelt and other conservationists would argue, but that the ways we are in relation to one another – hyper competitive, racialized, gendered, and classed hierarchies – certainly are. As humans, we often are seeking ways to repair the soul crushing effects of how we live in society – and often that is framed as being “in the outdoors.”

As I discussed front country and back country with folks, I noticed that the practice of defining back country often involved referencing back to a sense of wilderness, less the legal designations. I had incorporated this question after renewing my Wilderness First Responder Certification, and on the first day that there was a distinction

made between urban and wilderness medicine, used synonymously with front country and back country medicine. While my Urban/Wilderness binary paradigm alarms started going off in my head, I reflected on the functional parts of the distinction, which had to do with the range and distance of access to modern health care. Wilderness medicine then is defined more by its improvisatory practice – that you won't have easy access to institutional medical care. I appreciated the ambiguous definition of where one began and another ended, there was not a magic line on a map – like there is for wilderness – that indicates you've entered back country.

Most participants, and all of the educators and professionals, cited some form of these functional definitions of front country/back country. M Dizzy (White, Cis Female, Educator) talked about back country as necessitating extra preparedness, Princess Banana Hammock (Latinx, Cis Male, Professional) talked about having to be more self (or immediate group) reliant, and Adam (Asian, Cis Male, Recreator) described back country in relation to “strenuous nature.” The key themes that emerged were 1) distance from roads and cars, 2) a sense of un-development, and 3) by population markers. Many participants engaged in the binary discourse, defining the front country in relation to what the back country is not. At the same time, no participant spoke to a firm line where one suddenly entered the back country, and Adam, Jay, Terry, Ted, and Princess Banana Hammock described it more as a feeling. That feeling looked different in each conversation, for some it was an awareness of increased insecurity (soothed by knowing one had prepared enough), and for others it was a sense of groundedness, and connectedness. As one participant explained, *“it's like that moment when you lose*

yourself, not like geographically lost, but maybe like the ego is lost, that's when you are in the back country."

The most common reference point for folks was distance from the road or vehicles. Some definitions included the trailhead, and for others it was a few miles from the trail head. Yet, the significance of mechanical transportation was an important marker throughout. Dash spoke to the competitive discourse of back country distance in a back-country hunting organization he is a part of. Dash explained, for him, he was in the back country if he couldn't see the road, but that in the organization's magazine other members submit photos of what was harvested and how far from the road they were.

"Some of these guys are like 20 miles from the road... I'm not gonna walk 20 miles and shoot a bull elk, fuck that, I'm gonna stay, hopefully, where I can drag it down, but that doesn't mean I'm not in the back-country."

Another piece of common definitions was relative to perceptions of development. For some folks, development included trails, excluding most recreational spaces from what is considered back-country, while a few other folks said an old log cabin or seeing a homesteader might not disqualify something from back country, but certainly highlighted the grey area. At the other end, Ted mentioned that it was more a matter of infrastructure than development, *"you can still have bathrooms and picnic tables... but the bathrooms aren't connected to a sewer line."* However, the most common discourse about development included *"access to medical care."* Terry and Alanna made sure to complicate this as well, saying that not only do some rural areas meet the definition of back country – where improvisatory medical assistance would be required – but that even

some urban and city areas meet this standard. For them, that did not mean that venturing into the city carried the same problematic exploration of the wilderness – or Grandmaster Flash’s “Jungle” – but as Terry (White, Gender Queer, Educator) explained,

when you intentionally defund medical services in poor communities and communities of color, and like intentionally avoid like, making sure people have the assistance they need, you need more people with first aid skills that rely on using what you have...

This observation highlights a really important distinction in the ways that forms of knowledge are standardized and functionalized. NOLS advocates that their wilderness medical training is not just limited to the back country, but because of the inherently white (and corporate) connotations of wilderness, naming it such makes it both inaccessible and exclusive to many.

Continually, it was interesting to see discussions about population size as an indicator of back country, since this is the way that urban areas are operationalized – Census definitions continually shift, but the measurement has to do population size in relation to geographic spread. Thus, for a handful of participants the binary opposition of urban/wilderness was more explicitly evident in discussions about front-country and back-country, than it was in conceptions of wilderness.

As I indicated above, I also asked people to provide their definition of “outdoor recreation.” I was surprised to see there was a fairly uniform conception of outdoor recreation that was much more accessible than the narrow standards of a “real recreator” expressed in Senda-Cook’s (2012) research. Most participants acknowledged that a discourse of adventure, exploration, and even ruggedness, dominated what they expected

most people thought of when discussing outdoor recreation. Yet all but one participant defined outdoor recreation as leisure activities outdoors. For lots of folks “outdoors” was a literal interpretation of outside of doors. Dash mentioned “*sitting on your porch playing guitar, that can be outdoor recreation.*” Recreation was generally defined as activities outside of work; both Dash and Princess Banana Hammock (Cis Male, Professionals) made a point to emphasize that they did not consider their work to generally constitute outdoor recreation. While that may seem given in the definition of recreation, none of the educators made this distinction between their work and play.

Princess Banana Hammock did mention that his conceptualization of outdoor recreation did carry some expectations of adventure, but he made sure to qualify that he didn’t think about adventure in the same way that he often sees it represented in outdoor media. For him, adventure entailed a sense of difference from normalcy. Even something as seemingly mundane as walking his dog where he could see “*tadpoles in the pond nearby,*” carried a sense of outdoor recreation because it was 1) fun, and 2) “*different from what you might expect.*” In a similar discussion Poppy mentioned that for her, outdoor recreation was actually a very problematic way to think about being outside. While she spoke to the ways that the activities and practices she engages in meet the conceptual criteria of what many may think of outdoor recreation, she made her distaste for that framing clear.

Outdoor recreation? That’s some REI (Recreation Equipment Inc.), EMS (Eastern Mountain Sports) bullshit. Like that is exactly your Patagonia, North Face... It makes like, just yeah, I’m like shut up, like it’s not like wilderness, it’s like we’re gonna go explore nature/wilderness, but that like for me [my practice] feels more

free flowing like you could do whatever, and outdoor recreation is like gear, that's just gear. To me it says magazines and money.

Jay on the other hand, was the only participant to specify that outdoor recreation meant, for him, action sports or activities. Jay explained “*walking in the park, for me, isn't really outdoor recreation. It usually starts with a long drive, like you almost need a car.*” He did mention however, that fishing – his current favorite practice – was outdoor recreation, but wasn't necessarily an action sport, explaining that outdoor recreation “*to put it simply, is playing on the landscape.*” Adam echoed that sentiment saying that outdoor recreation had to do with activities and sports for a particular outdoor space. However, for him this could include walking in a park. M Dizzy as well said for her, outdoor recreation included “*anyway you interact with the landscape*” and offered gardening and riding your bike to the store as examples. The connection between practice and place, highlights the significance of the influence of imaginative geographies as the symbolic architecture and framing of space, on notions embodied practice. While dominant discourses about outdoor recreation and park planning have traditionally narrowed the kinds of practices acceptable in outdoor or natural spaces, most participants challenged those limited standards.

The conversations surrounding conceptions of *nature, wilderness, outdoor recreation, and front-country and back-country*, spoke to the diversity of interpretations of concepts with generally narrow definitions. I often explained to participants my own difficulty of thinking about these terms and ideas, how I had continually unquestioned their standardization, and like Charlie, had been trying to complicate my own

engagement with their significance, perhaps not entirely effectively. However, through these conversations, it became clear that folks who may be using the same words, are often times speaking different languages and different cultural narratives. In spaces and activities where risk, safety, and danger are in the forefront of many people's minds, speaking the same language(s) can be essential in navigating who to trust, not only in who people choose to recreate with, but in how they interact with and perceive others in these spaces and practices.

Trust and Risk: Navigating Space, People, and Practice

I had expected discussions of risk to arise during the part of the interview centered on “conflict management,” but the discourse of risk and safety actually emerged earlier in the interviews surrounding questions about the presence and absence of other people, as well as preferences for who folks engage in their given practices with. Sam was the first to draw my attention to this, explaining that her gender identity, as a cis-gendered woman, made her think explicitly about safety. My own privilege, in the form of my masculinity, obscured my initial understanding, and I asked if she was talking about being more mindful of consequences of her actions to avoid injury. She patiently responded

No, I mean, like safety from other strangers... I typically recreate more with women. I, you know, we think about where our campsites are, and who's around, and when we do decide to go out by ourselves, it's, you know, I'd say at least half of my friends and me like, take some sort of precaution, some sort of defense tool... I sometimes feel less safe in outdoor spaces than I otherwise would because of my gender and because of my presentation.

This wouldn't be an isolated example, Poppy and Alanna would go on to share that they were acutely aware of the presence or absence of strangers, and while Sam, Poppy, and Alanna all shared stories about making friends with people they didn't know on the trail, river, and beach, being in less densely populated areas heightened a sense of physical insecurity not reported by cis-male participants.

Interestingly, the same was not reported in relation to racial identity. While the men of color who participated in the research had not reported concerns of social safety and other recreators explicitly in relation to race – Stephen (Black, Cis Male, Recreator) mentioned the only time a Law Enforcement officer had put a gun in his face was while he was camping – this is not evidence of the absence of its influence. The intersections of white-supremacy and patriarchy can create additional barriers for men of color to talk about insecurity in this way (Collins 2009; Crenshaw 1993), especially disclosing such to a white, masculine researcher. At the same time, I do not wish to assume that this absence is inherently because of these intersections. It is also possible that because of the ways in which Blackness is racialized as ecologically threatening and more explicitly coded as urban, that Asian and Latinx bodies are less likely to experience immediate hostility – though still more likely than white bodies.

On the other hand, the discourse about trust in relation to competency and knowledge spoke to another barrier to access and inclusion. Here there is a push and pull of power and safety. Because of the heightened sense of risk in these spaces and activities (both very real and perceived), assessing someone's ability to hold the other end of the rope, or to maintain equipment and gear the group may be dependent on (e.g. keeping

gear dry and intact, food sealed and away from bears) can be a matter of life and death. To do away with trust is akin to forgoing your boundaries, and in not only outdoor recreation, but life as well, holding space for, and navigating your own boundaries is essential. Folks who do not meet the strict standards of masculinity or whiteness have very valid reasons for being distrustful of white folks and men (especially white men) that they meet on the trail. The violent rhyme schemes of patriarchy and white-supremacy, especially set against the symbolic architecture of “nature” and “wilderness,” highlights the mnemonic clues that trust can be a privilege. However, there is a need to think about trust in relation to power. It is valid to mistrust power, but when power mistrusts (or perceives a threat to power) the consequences are often violent and exclusive.

Many folks talked about seemingly reasonable factors to navigate trust when choosing who to recreate with, namely “competence in appropriate safety practices” – looking not only at technique, but use of proper equipment (i.e. wearing helmets and more expensive technologies) – and “*shared environmental ethic.*” Both of these factors have to do with speaking a similar language, or possessing similar cultural capital, which can be expensive and difficult to obtain. Standardization definitely lessens the rate of dangerous situations, and how we treat the spaces we are in (environmental respect) also illuminates how we treat other people in those spaces, directly or indirectly. However, while these factors serve an important functional purpose, and I’m not advocating for throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater, they also expose the ways that power excludes through othering different positions as untrustworthy.

Regarding competence of appropriate safety practices, I am less interested in being critical of narrow standards of safe practice – while participants had different examples of what this might look like, folks generally talked about focus and knowing your limits – and more interested in the ways that folks talked about safety in relation to gear, as well as how they performed trustworthiness themselves. Participants expressed a range of importance that they placed on gear in relation to safety. At one end, they expressed that lacking the right gear wasn't necessarily a disqualifying factor, especially because of the cost, and at the other end they used gear as a symbolic measurement how much someone had invested into their practice, which misrepresents class status as a form of knowledge. In both instances, gear was never the sole factor in discerning appropriate safety practices. For example, Adam talked about how climbing gear is expensive across the board, but more specialized gear for specialized kinds of climbing is even more expensive.

Buying climbing gear is insane, like just buying gear to do traditional climbing or trad climbing [same practice], being able to get those pieces of gear that you plug into the cracks of the wall, I think a rack, which is, I believe, is like anywhere from eight to 10 pieces of gear could cost you up to \$1,000 or more. And that's kind of something that I'm like geez, that's like a pretty big financial burden on someone who like, really can't afford those things, and that's something that I've wished that I wanted to get into outdoor activities earlier on when I was a kid.

Here, Adam speaks to both gear as a financial burden, as well as the relationship between, time, experience, and gear. Like Adam, many of my participants could not imagine spending \$1,000 on gear they did not have the specialized knowledge to use safely.

On the surface then, possessing such gear, which is more easily facilitated if you possess whiteness and masculinity, becomes a marker of specialized knowledge. Ted even mentioned that when he was starting out climbing, the owner of the local outdoors sports equipment store would not sell him and his friends a twist lock carabiner because they didn't seem to know how to get it off. This is not standard practice – neoliberal economics necessitates something along the lines of the “the customer is always right” – but the owner eventually demonstrated how to use the carabiner and the transaction went through. Ted would mention he wished bigger stores like REI would do this, but then also mentioned that he stopped shopping at that store after he heard the owner blame the towns economic problems “on the Blacks and Mexicans.”

At the same time, because of the financial weight of gear, and what one participant described as the dirt bag style of the outdoor ‘community,’ possessing gear that you don't know how to use can also be a sign of untrustworthiness, seen as frivolous and both economically and environmentally irresponsible. One participant mentioned seeing a group of what was described as “*wealthy lawyer types*” assembling a seemingly brand-new raft at a put in above a dangerous set of rapids, and struggling to get the oars into position and generally seeming confused despite a cocky and self-assured performance. The participant relayed to me “*I was just thinking, boy, I'm glad I'm not in that boat,*” and when I asked if they said anything to the group, the participant scoffed and rhetorically asked “*like it would have done anything?*” The way the participant described the scene was full of coded language of whiteness and masculinity, namely the observation of the self-assurance despite not fully grasping the severity of the water they

were about to embark on, as well as an explicit identification of wealth and seeming entitlement. Defensiveness of capacity came up a lot in relation to conflict management and policing behavior, and is a hallmark tactic of whiteness and masculinity in maintaining power and authority. At the same time, I wondered about the first responders and other recreators who may be put in a dangerous situation if a rescue was necessary, but as I'll discuss later, the politics of "speaking up" is a complicated matter.

The relationship between confidence and competence was a big theme when I asked some participants how they performed trustworthiness. Because of the permitting regulations for lots of rivers and trails, as well as the labor of putting together and organizing a trip, there is a level of competition for spots on these highly prized trips. While most permitting systems are structured like lotteries, which proclaims equitable distribution of opportunity (though having done this myself, applying for permits you may not get months in the future requires a lot of flexibility in terms of job commitments), the access to even be considered on someone else's trip requires a degree of social capital (i.e. hearing about an opening through a mutual friend). At that point, the cultural capital of knowing how to perform the right relationship of confidence and competence then facilitates greater access.

Many participants talked about relevant experience, and typically qualified the importance of not overstating your experience when demonstrating trustworthiness. Dash, for example explained, "*nobody wants to bring along a cocky asshole,*" which he explained was someone who was more interested in proving their superior competence. The relationship between humility and confidence is important outside of outdoor

practices, but when we think about who is “*allowed*” to be, or excused for being, a cocky asshole we come back to the problematic notions of merit, which in our society particularly, is shaped by whiteness and masculinity. Because dominant norms reflect the cultural practices of white, middle class men, the over-confidence of white men is less likely to be seen as misplaced, because it is almost expected. The significance of entitlement is important here, because much in the way that M Dizzy (White, Cis Female, Educator) spoke about being nervous about being perceived as wasting the time of “more experienced” male climbers, the gendered and racialized internalization of “I’m not deserving” can be a profound technology of exclusion.

The second factor in relation to the discourse of trust, which doesn’t seem immediately tied to safety, was that of similar environmental ethos. While most participants acknowledged that a lot of environmental ethics are largely subjective – though many talked about scientific knowledge as the basis for their ethics – there was a pattern of a desire and preference to recreate with folks with similar views. In their occupational roles, educator and professionals certainly noted they didn’t have much choice in that matter, but that their positions did allow them to influence the views of those they taught or met on the trail. However, in off the clock recreational practices, most participants discussed “*respecting the landscape, (environment and space)*” as a factor for who they preferred to recreate with. In many ways, this reflected already existing social groups and networks, and given the prevalence of LNT curriculums this was generally not an obstacle or a notable issue for many. There was a prevailing sense throughout the interviews and discussions that participants recognized the seemingly

indirect ways that interactions with the landscape affected their safety and security more broadly than holding the other end of the rope. I was left with the sense that disrespecting the environment (whatever that may look like for each participant, but most often invoked through a discourse of LNT) was a marker of untrustworthiness, and if someone was willing to jeopardize safety on a grand environmental level, that was likely someone they didn't want to hold the other end of the rope.

"You Are Doing that Wrong": The Politics of Policing Behavior

While the interrelated factors of gear, safe practice, and environmental knowledge informed how participants negotiated perceptions of trustworthiness, the consequences of exclusion here had more to do with who participants choose to recreate with. At the same time, because outdoor practices predominantly take place on public land, there is often little say about who someone is sharing the space with. When I asked participants about their preferences regarding the presence or absence of other people, participants overwhelmingly identified their preference included the absence of other people (at least outside their group). There were different reasons for this of course. Several folks cited social safety reasons, other folks said their reason for being outside was to get away from other people, and others said they worried about over-crowding effects on ecological integrity. However, every participant emphasized that everyone had the right to be in these spaces, wanted more people to engage in outdoor practices (even if not in their favorite spot), and said they could always go to other spots that are less popular or crowded. Dash, who spent his career championing public lands, turned public into a

three-syllable word in opposition to what he called “*litigious and territorial*” recreators, “*sorry, but it’s Pu-Ba-Lic land!*” “*Actually, I’m not sorry,*” he amended.

The tensions between the desire to generally not have to share space with other people or groups, and the importance of public space, often creates a shadowed competition of entitlement, deservingness, and belongingness to space. The factors of negotiating trustworthiness – gear, safety, and environmental ethics – were also the most prominent factors in relation to policing behavior. When I asked participants what kinds of information they would feel the need to tell someone who was about to recreate for the first time, most identified either safety (e.g. bring water and sunscreen, wear a helmet, be aware that you are further from medical care) or environmental ethics such as Leave No Trace, trash, or “destructive” practices. Similarly, when I asked participants about their pet peeves, and what kinds of behaviors they felt the need to speak up about, trash and safety were the most common, though educators (Alanna, Terry, Sam and M Dizzy) said exclusivity, especially “expert exclusivity” was infuriating. M Dizzy explained expert exclusivity looked like “*here we’ll set you up on this easy route and we are going way over here to do this harder route,*” or “*you know this bike trail is really hard, you probably shouldn’t come with.*” M Dizzy continued to explain “*generally speaking, it is not that cumbersome to adjust your plans to accommodate someone who is excited, and if you agreed to climbing with someone, don’t just abandon them to go somewhere else, like come on.*”

It is worth noting that many participants said they either could not think of an example of when they told someone they were doing something wrong, or that they

“*weren’t very confrontational*” and wouldn’t likely speak up about anything. Adversely, when I asked participants if they had ever been told by someone that they were doing something wrong, the most common themes were again safety and environmental ethics, but several participants spoke about gear and style. Charlie (White, Cis Male, Educator) distinguished between style and fashion, style having more to do with “*how you carry yourself*” and giving the example of being told he was holding his skis wrong, “*you know dumb things like that.*” Even more, several folks said the examples that stuck out the most were not necessarily about explicitly being told they were behaving improperly, but seemingly small comments, or “*passive aggressive*” statements that either drew their attention to the fact that they were breaking a norm they were unaware of (or didn’t care about), or made them feel unnecessarily inadequate.

Asking participants what kinds of information they thought first time recreators should have again highlighted the importance of being perceived as safe and environmentally conscious. For participants whose preferred, or most common, practices included higher levels of perceived and real risk (rock climbers, mountain bikers, white water boaters) the first thing emphasized was safety. “*Tell someone where you’re going,*” “*wear your helmet,*” “*don’t be afraid to ask questions, it could save your life,*” “*bring water, water, water, water, oh and also snacks!*” and “*know your limits,*” were prominent safety lessons. Adam (Asian, Cis Male, Recreator) went as far as to say that he preferred to be with them, “*you know it’s just easier if I’m there, there is no way to fully prepare someone unless you’re with them, and even then, you know, it takes time and practice.*”

Every participant, regardless of role, also spoke about environmental ethics in some way. The most prominent was LNT, though no participant listed the seven principles, perhaps because they assumed it was common sense, or perhaps the seven principles aren't all memorized. With that said, discussions around LNT predominantly took place through the discourse of trash, trail cutting or staying on the trail, and the more familiar motto of LNT "take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints, you know, that jazz" Charlie recounted.

Poppy (Black, Cis Female, Recreator) mentioned that while seeing trash on the trail "*definitely bums me out, it doesn't like threaten the hike, right? I can pick it up and keep on going.*" For others trash certainly threatened the experience, Dash (White, Cis Male, Professional) and Calvin (White, Cis Male, Recreator) emphasized their inability to comprehend how people can make the decision to bring beer cans into a space, but not bring them back out. Dash said, "*they can carry 12 full beers out there, but they can't bring back 12 empties? You know it's like... I get it, it's part of the experience, but pick up your fucking cans.*" Several participants though, acknowledged they hold that standard regardless of place, as Charlie said, "*but I mean trash indoors, like just leaving your wrapper on the ground, that is just a pretty unacceptable practice in my book.*" Jay, Ted, and Sam echoed this sentiment.

Another common theme in discussion of LNT was trail cutting, or, as Charlie said, "*you know, cutting the switchbacks, taking that shortcut.*" However, a handful of participants mentioned this was something that they had been guilty of as well. This was particularly interesting in relation to trash, as no participant openly offered that they had

left trash somewhere, but were willing to share other “faux pas” in which they had engaged. One participant described when they were younger “*you know I was more interested in speed, like getting down as quick as I could,*” and another said, “*I mean I used to get frustrated if I was behind, like a slower group, and instead of asking them if I could get by, I’d just cut a switchback, I definitely got called out a few times.*”

For the most part, other than some participants admitting they hadn’t always engaged in the best LNT practices, the discussions highlighted a general agreement about the appropriateness of LNT. Several participants mentioned that, for them, LNT does not start and stop at the trailhead – the trail is not more privileged than the sidewalk – but both Poppy and Alanna pushed back on what was perceived as LNT dogma. Poppy said LNT was important, but was privileged, “*someone has to teach you that, so anger isn’t helpful, right?*” Alanna went further and said, as an educator, she had been complicating that for herself.

I think LNT is really good, but I have a lot of problems with LNT, um and that’s been mostly in the context of [my job] and the folks I interact with in [the outdoor education] community. I think LNT is amazing for what it’s made for, which is for like weekend users or like day outdoor recreators, you know... it was created because the Parks Service was like, Yo, [outdoor educators] we need some simple rules...and I think, like personally, as a user... I spent like 65 of the 80 days of the summer in the field, I live in the back country, so I should be treating it with like 10 times the respect... it’s like you know, stamped with like the LNT experience like stay on the trail, you know, but with [my job] half the time we’re moving off trail, where there are no trails, and so I think there needs to be more conversations and more, you know, it’s ok to go off trail. And I think it comes back to this idea of like oh, humans destroy nature. It’s like no, um, let’s think about our steps, let’s be more like, let’s not run through this space, like let’s be more intentional. I’m trying to like, let’s choose what we’re stepping on and make sure we’re not stepping on plants because we’re not on trail... it’s like a band aid that works totally great, but it sometimes doesn’t allow people to maybe dive deeper into their relationship with this space.

Those who highlighted that LNT is a practice that should be employed everywhere spoke to the narrow privileging of space, and Alanna's assessment of the ways that it disrupts being more deeply connected to space, make clear that while the low impact practices that LNT promotes are generally good, the principles and standards are very limiting, not universally understood, and can be employed for policing behavior in order to make the wilderness less populated.

When I began asking this question of what first time recreators should know, I emphasized behavioral norms, and offered an example of trail etiquette. Several participants indicated that was not the most essential topic they would feel the need to explain, and several participants who were not educators or professionals asked what that was. Poppy said, *"I don't really know what that is, it that like, yeah I don't really know what that would be, like again I don't think I've been taught trail etiquette, like what is that?"* I responded, *"it's like people going uphill have the right away, if you are coming down hill you step to the side to let them pass, the idea is that, folks, who you know are going uphill are trying to keep momentum."* Poppy laughed, *"that's silly, I mean I often want a break when I'm going uphill! ... that's funny though, I mean just do that awkward hallway shuffle thing, like you go no you go, don't make a rule out of it or people will be pissed if I don't know what that is."* Jay (Asian, Cis Male, Professional) further explained, *"it's not intuitive at all, and generally doesn't make sense, I mean I get it's best practice, but it starts as a rule of thumb, and then people can be, I don't know, sticklers about it."*

Poppy, as well as Alanna and Terry, talked about how “etiquette” is often very limiting. Alanna echoed wanting to take a break on the uphill, and even not wanting to stop and go on the downhill “*that can be rough on your knees.*” Charlie mentioned that some of these

You know, little etiquette things that you learn as a kid, and just kind of accept, you know, because your teacher, your dad, your, someone in authority, says it and you’re like ok – you know, at least once you learned not to ask why about everything – and ya you just take it at face value, and it’s not until you go like explain it to someone else, or have to like defend it, that you realize how odd and arbitrary, like ‘etiquette’ can be.

The process of unquestioning and then coming to a point of realizing “a bit of absurdity,” as Jay put it, has certainly contextualized this work for me. Poppy and Terry both spoke about the privilege of having such cultural capital and knowledge, and that often times it feels like informal or unspoken rules, which are often taught as “rule of thumb,” are tightly policed, or used a marker of entitlement and belongingness.

Again, the tension between increasing access and wanting solitude, adds another layer of competition and, to a certain extent, incentivizes policing other people’s behavior. For recreators whose practice is focused on interactions with wildlife (hunters, fisher folk, or birders) the absence of other people can be important for fulfilling their practice – what much of the outdoor recreation literature calls “experiential attainment.” At the same time, recreators who engage in unsafe practices or environmental degradation are seen as endangering the ability of other recreators to continue using spaces. Medical evacuations can close trails or recreation sites to get the injured party out safely, and over-crowding issues can lead to more permitting and quota regulations

making access more competitive. So, while recreators, educators, and professionals have an incentive to hold other users accountable for practices that contribute to a sense of “*the tragedy of the commons*,” the experiences of many participants show that all too often holding someone accountable does not happen in practice, but that demonstrating superior knowledge and authority, and staking claim to space, which are embodiments of whiteness and toxic masculinity, certainly does.

When I asked participants if they had ever been told that they were doing something or behaving wrong, there were certainly examples of being held accountable (which many appreciated), but there were also numerous examples where participants felt berated, mocked, put down, or that they didn’t belong. While for all of the participants these instances were not enough to make them discontinue engaging in outdoor practices, several mentioned had they not already been sure of their passions and the significance of their practices on their identity, some of these examples would have likely deterred them from continuing. Conversations about “being told you were doing something or behaving wrong” spoke to three different factors that contribute to exclusion: 1) the manner in which they were “educated” about their behavior, 2) subtle comments that drew their attention to being different, and 3) narrow standards that they simply didn’t agree with.

During my conversation with Adam (Asian, Cis Male, Recreator), he discussed an experience when he was starting to climb outside, still without a mentor, and broke a safety norm he was not aware of. While he said in hindsight he is glad to have learned about the significance of the error, the manner in which he was berated was infuriating, and informs how he approaches folks climbing outside for similar safety concerns. He

demonstrated as much, educating me about the practice, while recounting the confrontation:

So, when you're climbing outside, there's either non-placed gear on the wall, basically you're placing gear on the wall yourself, or fixed gear, which means there's gear already fixed to the wall, now, when you're climbing up, you're placing your own gear as you go, and once you get to the anchors, or to the very end of the route, they'll have fixed gear for you to come down on. Now since that gear is already in place, inherently, it's for everyone to use. It's shared equipment. Now something that is highly debated is once you have climbed the entire route and your rope is up on that gear [the fixed, shared gear] is to keep climbing on that gear versus putting up your own gear [in place of the shared anchors] and ... Generally, 100% of the time, you should climb on your own gear [once you get it up with the help of the shared gear], because that [shared] gear if you keep climbing on it, it wears down and it can be dangerous for other climbers or the need [for park managers] to switch out the gear... Now, that is what this person was trying to explain to me, but instead of that that person just got mad, and was like "why are you climbing on the gear like put up your own gear" and I was like a new climber and not really sure what that person meant. Like "I don't know what you mean, like I finished the route I put the rope up, like why is this a big deal?" And the guy was like "no, you're supposed to put on your own gear." And I was like "but why it's already up there?" And we ended up getting into an argument because I didn't understand what the guy was talking about, and the guy was just upset because I was using gear that everyone uses.

Here, Adam reflected that while this was important information to learn, he was thrown off by the angry manner in which he was being "*educated*," especially concerning what he observed was an "unspoken rule," or something "more socially acceptable. He continued:

Technically, you're not supposed to set up your rope on that gear to keep climbing on, but when you're done you use that gear to take off the gear you placed on the way up, but otherwise, you're just supposed to climb on your own gear, and that is kind of like an unspoken rule in climbing. Where technically, yes you can use the gear on the wall, but it's definitely a lot more socially acceptable, or like kind of like the expected behavior to use your own gear... and if he would have just explained that to me in that way, it would have been a lot easier for me to just accept and understand right? Like, "oh, you're right, I had no idea, that's my fault, like I won't do it again." But since this person was obviously upset

because they maybe they thought like, well obviously they care about like the area and the gear there... But it was the way that he presented himself and he came at it in, I think, the wrong way, and that's kind of shaped how I explain these things, like I just explained it to you, is generally how I would explain it to other people out there. "Hey, I saw that your rope is on the fixed anchors. Generally, when you climb, you attach your own gear onto the anchors and climb off of that just so it doesn't add wear to the fixed gear. The reason we do that is it reduces the amount of wear and tear on the wall, and also like if someone needs to immediately clip into that it's not worn down and it's a lot safer like that. So, generally, people should climb on their own gear." Like that's how I would explain it.

Adam's experience certainly shaped the way he approaches safety concerns, and his patience and empathy with the climber yelling at him speaks to the ways other recreators (especially men) can be very defensive and aggressive in the pursuit of protecting spaces and practices they care about. Yet while Adam reflected this was actually really important information to have, and something he lets other climbers know about, Terry (White, Gender Queer, Educator) explained that, in their experience, safety has at times been a code for style. They explained,

I feel like when people get into their head that, like there is a certain way to do something, then, and see it done differently... if I say something differently... they a lot of times, go, "oh it's really cool that you're trying to do that differently, but blah blah blah, probably just keep it the standardized way for clarity or for like ease or whatever." And I try to like, you know do things outside of the box a lot of the time, and that makes people uncomfortable sometimes.

We laughed about "people and their scripts," but Terry is speaking about the narrow standards of whiteness that are used to police "thinking outside the box." Terry also explained that often times their gender identity plays a big role in navigating these spaces and situations. They said, "*you know it's a very male dominated industry and I find myself, you know trying to adopt these more typical male leadership characteristics when I'm stepping into like a leadership role, and trying to, work to like, keep out the toxic*

masculinity from that.” Terry continued to explain that “because of my gender identity, I’m kind of like occupying the like in-between spaces, like between different expectations of my gender or different things that people assume... like if I’m alone I feel like rangers are always like “oh, no this poor little girl, how can I help her?” and I’m like actually I got it bro, like this is my job.” Terry recalled a specific example of being told that their style of instructing was wrong, explaining to me:

So, actually a couple of days ago, I was teaching a belaying class at the climbing gym, and since I had just started working there I’m still technically getting checked off on the things we have to do... and obviously this is kind of what I do for a living, I have my instructing style already, and I’m good at it, and my students always do great... but this is funny because I was doing a class and being shadowed by one of our supervisors and he’s watching the class without saying anything the whole time. And then at the end he gave me a bunch of feedback about it, and almost every single one of the feedbacks was about the way I was doing it, like sequencing that I use, like the order, or apparently, I didn’t stand in the right spot, or I wasn’t facing the right way. And it’s funny because all the people in my class passed, they were able to do what the needed to be doing, all the safety checks and stuff, but he still gave me this whole feedback session, all this stuff I could be doing differently [not even company policy] and a lot of it was just like, yeah, you know instructing style. Like, it’s totally fine if you have a way doing it, but like, I’m not really gonna necessarily change, like what works for me just because it’s like the way you’ve been seen it done before. In fact, I actually, like gave him some feedback. I do not think he was expecting that! And he was slightly taken aback by it, because I think he was expecting that, like, he was the expert in this area, and I was like yeah, part of the reason I was hired, was because I’m an expert at this already... like that is like what threw me off with rock climbing especially, because it’s like you were saying earlier about there is actual real risk and danger, and people do really need to understand what they’re getting into and be able to be safe, but at the same time, like it’s, it’s just so elitist, like how people safeguard knowledge, like you have to pay just to get the basic knowledge to be able to like be on the same page as everyone, and like, I’ve found my, you know, in the outdoor industry, there’s so much like jargon and language that never gets explained, and people have to try to like pick up on it or act like they get it or learn, you know, be that person asking the question in front of everyone, and that’s not comfortable either... so I’ve been trying to work on like, making my language accessible and really not using a standardized language

and terms for things unless I actually say the whole term, what it means, and what I mean by it.

The tension that Terry voices between the exclusivity of proper practice (safe guarding knowledge) and the expectation of conformity to narrow standards of proper practice, is part of the increasingly apparent technologies of exclusion. As Terry voices, their gender identity presents another set of obstacles about what being an expert looks like, which also highlights how deviations from whiteness and masculinity in a space that is dominated by white men, makes it increasingly likely that expertise will be called into question.

Gender was a profound factor in the politics of policing behavior, M Dizzy (White, Cis Female, Educator) mentioned that she once asked a male friend at the climbing gym what the hardest route was that he had climbed,

And he just gave me this scoff, and was like [M Dizzy] that is like asking a woman her age or her weight. Like you don't ask people that, and I was like, oh, I didn't know that, why do you not do that? Like I'm just curious how good you are, and he's like, "no, you don't do that." And he never answered the question and I was just like ok, I guess that's not something you do here.

Here the explanation M Dizzy never received shows the safeguarding of social norms, which continually seems to be a tactic of determining outsiders, those who simply don't get it, or question why, don't belong. Even more, relating it back the normalcy of asking a woman her age or weight reinforces expectations about women's beauty, and is very much part of toxic masculinity, and the patriarchy.

While these examples reflect more explicit and aggressive behavioral policing strategies, other participants mentioned that subtler passive aggressive comments had

similar impacts. Alanna (White, Cis Female, Educator) for example, as a trip leader, often carries more gear than her students, who often times have been groups of teenage boys, and regularly hears hikers passing by commenting “*oh the girls carrying more weight than the boys huh?*” to which she responds, “yeah I’m the leader of the group.” She continued to explain then having to navigate that dynamic with her students,

... like on day two [of a three week course], I was suddenly Wonder Woman according to all my male students, and my first reaction was like anger and like frustration, and I was like no, I’m not wonder woman, I’m just a woman and like, this is how I live my life, and I felt like that name was coming from them having not, never conceptualizing women as like strong people that like exist in this space in this role, and, but then like taking step back and was like wait... it’s really cool that I’m able to show them that women can be like this, I’m not an outlier, and it kind of morphed into something I was proud of.

Alanna’s reclaiming of the narrative about women in the outdoors was really meaningful to her, and it also speaks to the additional layers of power, authority, and expertise that are woven through the practices of those who do not meet the standards of whiteness or masculinity (or both), not only in the outdoors, but in society as a whole.

Poppy similarly explained that she didn’t recall a time she had been explicitly policed in the outdoors, “*I don’t think anyone has been that stupid,*” she said, but said that most of the time its “*dumb broey REI kind of things.*” She talked about the irritation she felt rise when people would ask how long it took her to complete a hike, “*like I’m taking my time and enjoying the flowers dude,*” – she compared it to international backpackers at hostels competing around who had the most country stamps – which speaks explicitly to the expectations of rugged individualism and competition in outdoor practices. Poppy also made sure to circle back to gear and the comments about her

perceptive over or under preparedness. Someone mentioned she wouldn't "*be able to run in those hiking boots,*" "*ugh, you think I don't know that?*" she had responded. Or the comments about the size of her backpack "*oh you brought that much stuff?*" to which she responded, "*Good for you minimalist dude.*"

Again, gear is continually used as a marker of belongingness, and the rough minimal style of outdoor practice is regularly referenced as *the* authentic outdoor practice. Charlie mentioned that he perceived climbers to use these physical markers of belongingness, "*you know you see access fund T-Shirts, Black Diamond hats... brands, logos, swollen veiny forearms... a lot of people try hard to broadcast it.*" The politics of belonging are increasing bound in the politics of policing, of who is policed and who polices. When participants gave examples of being policed, if they did identify the persons gender or race, it was always white men. The distinction between policing and holding behavior accountable is not about intention, but what it communicates about belongingness, power, and authority. Educating someone that they do not belong is a part of policing, and seeing, naming, and speaking out against behavior that contributes to the discourse that whiteness and masculinity are markers of belongingness, power, and authority, is part of holding each other accountable. Intention and manner are certainly important, but do not dictate the distinction between policing and accountability. As Poppy explained a comment that really got under her skin, as her and a friend were dancing their way across a bridge, came calmly and with a smile "*oh, we must've heard you from a mile away...*"

“Everything Has Its Time and Place I Suppose”: Noise, Music, and Hip-Hop

My recognition in 2018 that I had unquestioningly accepted the alienation of two practices that framed the way I understood myself (Hip-Hop and Outdoor Recreation), the consequences such absence of questioning has in the lives of others, and the sense the personal urgency it fostered, sent me hoping to find a nice, clean, well-fitting answer as to why these practices were so alienated. Two years later such a hope remains unrealized because the nature of whiteness and racism is intentionally complicated, and in some twisted analogy of evolution, white supremacy engages in rhymes and obscurities as a means of survival. At the same time, the first words spoken in my first interview, by Jeff (White, Cis Male, Professional), clued me into the crux of what I am asking.

As I shuffled on the recorder Jeff was asking what the ‘fun’ part of the interview was that I was eluding to the day before. I chuckled a bit and replied, “*where music belongs in all this,*” “*well everything has its place and time right?*” he responded. In the moment, I had brushed off the response as a bit of a non-answer, *clearly that’s why I’m asking the questions* I thought and jumped into the interview planning to circle back to that later in the interview. But what would continually speak to me as I continued my discussion with Jeff and others, was that the politics of time and place does not provide clear rules. The significance of power and authority to decide and police appropriate time and place was at the heart of what I was asking, and power and authority are not easy factors to quantify, but the ways that participants negotiate and navigate time and place voiced the lingering significance of race, gender, class, and noise. The themes that

participants used to negotiate the time and place where music belongs in outdoor recreation had to do with 1) activity and safety, 2) volume and impact, and 3) the absence of other people or distance from development.

The expectations of silence and the politics of noise compose one of the more complicated areas where power and authority operate to determine time and place. While many participants noted that there was no true silence, and engaged discussions about the more arbitrary demarcations of what kinds of noises belong, all of my participants identified times when “*finding quiet*” was their explicit concern. Quietness is a valid way to be in relation to nature and one another; noise is often how we explicitly take up space by imprinting ourselves onto the soundscape, and practicing taking less space (especially for those of us that dominate space) is a great practice. However, conceptions that quietness is the *only way* to be in nature is part of the narrow standards of whiteness.

Many folks learn expectations of silence when they begin to engage in outdoor recreation, both through observation of others’ practices and the cultural narratives about outdoor space and practice, as well as, as was the case for my students, being explicitly told. For certain practices that depend on clear communication for safety (i.e. climbing) the potential distractions of music are intolerable for some. At the same time, the notion of music and noise as distractions speaks to assumptions about what it means to “*be in the moment, in the stillness.*” Many participants talked about needing “quiet” (a particular kind of quiet) to be in the moment, especially if their practice sought engagement with wildlife. At the same time, Poppy offered an example of being in the moment regardless of the sounds, saying “*I try to make a conscious effort to notice all sounds around... the*

micro sounds like birds and wind... but in a place where there is construction going on, and it's like, well you could get annoyed about that or just accept that as part of the background sound or like that's just one of the sounds that comes in and out and that's what it is."

Safety, of course, looks differently depending on the perception of risk, but as I discussed in relation to trust, participants talked about safety as an ethics of caring: caring for the people you share the space with (technical knowledge), and caring for the space you are in (environmental knowledge). Most participants were unwilling to say others shouldn't listen to music, but employed safety as a reason that, should another recreator want to listen to music, they should do so with headphones. However, for some activities like mountain biking, a few participants mentioned that headphones were actually more dangerous than portable speakers, because of the need for other bikers to communicate if they are passing. It was in these conversations that participants talked about how headphones can actually limit communication more than speakers, and Dash related it to people "*shutting the world out.*" Here there is a tension between safety concerns, and repetitions of liberal individualism, where anthrophony can affect the parameters of risk both by taking up collective space, as well as by limiting the capacity of awareness for individual recreators.

Individualized practice is not inherently problematic. Several participants talked about activities and spaces where they really enjoyed having headphones in. Both Sam (White, Cis Female, Educator) and Poppy (Black, Cis Female, Recreator) talked about the benefits of music while trail running. Sam spoke about how it distracts her from

hearing her breathe, which reminds her how tired she is, and for Poppy combining music and running was really therapeutic and gave her a chance to work through things in life. “*Recently, I’ve been listening to a lot of female Hip-Hop artists... and I went through a bad break-up, and I have this playlist called “men disappoint me.”*” Poppy explained that running let her mind wander a bit more, and having personally meaningful music helped guide her wandering mind; it was a personal practice, not something she wished to project to other runners.

Related to themes of safety and activity participants also talked about the significance of volume and impact. For some, the issue was not simply that there is music, but that the volume of the music, whether in your ears or projected through speakers, is what was at the core of their safety concerns, as well as their concerns for the impact on the ecosystem. Jay (Asian, Cis Male, Professional) mentioned, while he likes the occasional podcast while he is fishing, his practices generally involve a desire to see wildlife, something he said noise in general greatly diminishes. There is certainly truth to this, as noise and music are employed as a means to not interact with or surprise potentially dangerous wildlife, like bears. One online forum I encountered while doing preliminary research engaged a discussion about the benefits of speakers as an alternative to calling out “*hey bear*” every few minutes, which I found interesting, but most of the comments disagreed, often under the pretense that music doesn’t belong in nature. Jeff, however, mentioned that he actually uses Pink Floyd to lure in fish in his boat. He joked there is likely little scientific basis to this, but said “*you see that mini surround there, if there’s no clients? It’s in the bottom of the boat and it’s rocking away... the acoustics in*

that aluminum boat are awesome... and the fish seem to love Floyd, I mean, they just come right to the bottom of the boat here, right where I want em.”

Engaging the dynamics between safety and activity, and volume and impact, several participants talked about the acceptability of music in relation to the number of other people as well as distance from development. The relationship however was not linear, and reflected an inverted bell curve. In Parks or at the trailhead, music and anthrophony was seen as more acceptable, and as recreators moved further down the trail or approach, and the number of people diminished, risks are perceived to be higher and not wanting to impede on other users lessened the acceptability of music.

However, there was a boundary where, despite being further away from explicit evidence of human impact, music and anthrophony became acceptable again for some. This boundary, while ambiguous, seemed to be very similar to the ways that participants designated back country. The logic was, getting further away from others lessened the likelihood that music would threaten the experience of others who did not want music. Some participants, who preferred no music or perceptively obstructive anthrophony, offered this, along with headphones, as an alternative. As one participant said:

I mean, like I don't want to say there should be absolutely, like no music, I mean I really don't want to hear it, especially like, if I need to concentrate on, you know, but there is a certain amount of respect of other people, and I've definitely felt disrespect by people being all loud and obnoxious, and I'm just like, you can go deeper, like further from here so that, you know, you can do you, and I can do me.

For this participant, their practice was tied to a particular site (the climbing crag), so them moving to get away from noise was not seen as an option, and while the “you do you, and I do me” rhetoric is part of liberal-selfhood, this sentiment did violate my initial

assumption that the further removed from symbols of development and urbanness, the less acceptable music would be.

However, while five participants spoke about an imaginative geography further removed from symbols of humans, where music could be appropriate again, two participants mentioned that the conceptual criteria of nature did in fact exclude music. In fact, one participant said they empathized with the men that had policed my students, saying: *“I definitely wouldn’t have said anything about it, I mean that’s the fucked part of that situation, like that seems like a total power trip, but I when I’ve been in like similar situations I’ve definitely thought to myself, like can’t you just, you know, not [play music].”* To a certain extent I actually appreciated the candidness of this response, because of the way I relayed the personal origins of my research question, challenging my assumptions could have been very difficult, and this participant also made an important note about the role of power in policing behavior. They were not alone in this either, several participants talked about being “non-confrontational” and *“hoping they [people playing music] will just move along.”* At the same time, in relation to feeling unwelcome, the body language, subtle comments, or “perceived coldness” were at times more communicative of unwelcomeness than explicit instances of policing behavior.

The relationship between making music (and art in general) with inspiration from nature was particularly interesting. Twelve of the participants were actively engaged in some artistic medium as another form of leisure, and four participants used that art as a form of subsistence. Two participants were Hip-Hop artists as well. All of those participants talked about taking inspiration from nature, but several made the point that

their art doesn't remain, or necessarily belong, on nature. Alanna (White, Cis Female, Educator) talked about how much she loved painting changing landscapes; how the light she used as a reference in the morning was completely different in the afternoon, and the way that affected her work wasn't a nuisance, but was rather profound in the way she was thinking about change. She mentioned she had recently painted mural on a solar hut for a friend, which was certainly in more of a back-country setting, but said she wouldn't paint a mural on the side of a mountain, likening it to placing a flag – *“that's not my space to claim like that.”*

Calvin (White, Cis Male, Recreator) similarly, talked about his inspiration from nature when producing Hip-Hop beats. He mentioned as a producer or instrumentalist his music is more textural and non-verbal, and though he writes poetry he doesn't talk about nature, rather his approach to music is an attempt to communicate a feeling or a state of mind.

Mainly, I just want like, my newest record for instance... my whole process for mixing and mastering it was testing it in my care speakers driving up and down the waterfront... you know there's this expansive water, the leaves are colorful... it makes you feel very kind of contemplative. And I kind of wanted my newest project to make me feel like how the waterfront makes me feel... you know, like that care free, sun on my skin type feeling. I feel like a soul sample or a gospel sample chopped up... On a cooler autumn day, like this kind of gray clouds might feel more like a jazz piano or something like that with the upright bass in the background, you know it's like the sound track to my visual environment.

Calvin would go on to say, for him though, Hip-Hop didn't quite click with the way he enjoys *“unplugging”* from the stress of the city. He mentioned the technological dependency of Hip-Hop, was part of that limitation. *“I usually turn off my phone if I'm in the park so I don't subconsciously slip into just staring at my screen when I could be*

taking in the space around me.” He did say that he is still thinking about Hip-Hop when he is in natural spaces, and if he’s listening to music (which he prefers not to) he’s listening to jazz or funk or looking for a sound to incorporate on his next project. Hip-Hop though, he prefers to appreciate in other spaces, where “*being loud and noisy is more acceptable.*”

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

Setting out on this research, I would like to have concluded that music and Hip-Hop belong in nature, but my findings are not that simple. Because of the organization of our society and the values of hierarchal status, competition, and individual freedom, unplugging from imagery and symbols that remind us of our often uncomfortable and conflict driven existence is a valid practice. However, when we reproduce narrow standards of acceptable or appropriate practice, especially in relation to the role of whiteness and masculinity in setting those narrow standards, we engage in the rhyme-schemes of white-supremacy and patriarchy, where the frontier is remixed into dominant outdoor practice. Returning to the primary research question of how the creation, maintenance, and enforcement of social norms in outdoor recreation settings operate as social technologies of exclusion, my reading of previous research and discussions with participants presents a complicated relationship.

First, the active presence of history in our sense of what is appropriate (social norms), draws on the cultural narratives of an external nature, a sublime wilderness, and a rugged frontier. The present history is often forgotten, naturalized, and taken for granted, and takes the form of conventions or predetermined grammars for doing things (Perry 2018). Dominant outdoor practice draws heavily upon the glorification of our most cherished cultural origin myth – westward expansion and the “winning” of the frontier – detached from the brutal racialized, gendered, and class violence, exploitation, and domination that confirmed superiority of white, property owning men, in the minds of

white, property owning men. This is evidenced by the discourses of risk, rugged practice, adventure and exploring. Outka's (2008) argument that natural experiences have not only been defined by, but also defined whiteness, seems particularly profound here.

Remembering that dominant outdoor recreation and the white-wilderness are mutually constructed and constituted means recognizing the ways that the symbolic architecture of space guides practice.

Second, power engages in rhyme-schemes as a means of performing progress, but also a means of obscuring the role of a violent history in informing contemporary practice. The discourse of safety and environmental ethics illuminates the ways in which whiteness attempts to hide in plain sight. Safety and environmental respect are very important, that I do not wish to dispute, but the subjective interpretations of what constitutes safe or risky practices, and the way that safety often becomes synonymous with style, is problematic. Additionally, the privileging of wilderness as the environment that deserves our greatest protections and the exclusion of the urban from what counts as the environment, speaks to the ways that historical legacies of exclusion are maintained despite their performative absence. The socialization of the significance of race and nature, while largely unquestioned by those who feel as though we are not part of the problem, sets a context that operates as a social mnemonic to remind us of who belongs and who doesn't if we take the violence of history for granted.

Third, the role of power and authority in policing the boundaries of belonging and welcoming, reinforces the naturalized cultural narratives, from which contemporary standards of practice emerged. These standards have been diligently maintained for their

productive capacities in maintaining racialized, gendered, and class hierarchies, the exclusivity and importance of wild space, and the behaviors that are seen as acceptable, inappropriate, or noisy. We can talk about trust, risk, safety, responsibility and the ecological threats to our practices, but we must do so in relation to power or we risk slipping back into the comfortable and seductive cadence of whiteness. Those of us who benefit from power need not intend to reproduce it, because we have comfortable scripts and conventions to rely on to assert our “earned” status, authority, and knowledge about what is, and is not, “normal.” The jealously guarded resources and property of whiteness and masculinity mean that there are less social, economic, or cultural barriers for white, middle-class, men to participate in outdoor recreation, and the enforcement of norms created and maintained to explicitly benefit this group, is inherently a technology of exclusion.

Turning then to the secondary question of this research, of how the conceptual exclusion of music and Hip-Hop help illuminate these social technologies, I conclude the following:

- 1) Silence and quiet are valid ways to be in nature, but they are not the only way to be in nature.
- 2) Solitude and introspective practices are important for the way we are in relation to ourselves, but they should not be weaponized in relation to others under the pretense of liberal-self hood.
- 3) Safety and risk are important, but music and anthrophony do not inherently jeopardize safe practice.

- 4) Considering impact on humans and non-human species is part of sharing space and being a part of a complex web of relations, but music and Hip-Hop don't necessarily negatively impact other humans and non-humans, just the dominant recreators (white, middle class men).
- 5) Volume is important, but divergence from narrow standards is more likely to be considered "loud."
- 6) The city and the wilderness are different geographic spaces, but they are not antithetical or mutually exclusive, and our ecological ethics must reflect caring for both geographies.

The conceptual exclusion of Hip-Hop speaks to the cultural narratives, and the active presence of history, inform what we think of as appropriate. Outdoor recreation, as it is dominantly understood, is the product of white flight and escapism, performing a sense of superiority imagined on the stage of the frontier, and the privileging of the wild over the urban. I do not mean to say outdoor recreation should be abandoned because of this history, but if this history is not actively and consciously engaged by professionals, educators, and recreators then this history will continue to speak through the silence. Ignoring or minimizing history allow the rhyme schemes of white-supremacy and patriarchy to dominate our collective imagination.

In practice, this means undoing the economic, social, and cultural barriers to outdoor practice; it means rethinking the ways that conceptions of nature, wilderness, front country and backcountry, and outdoor recreation are grounded in whiteness. It means uncomfortably questioning how we navigate trust in relation to power and

privilege. It means engaging the cultural scripts that make us feel validated in policing the behavior of others (and speaking up when we hear those scripts employed); and it means there are many ways to “appreciate nature.” For professionals and educators, there needs to be more critical engagement with the euro-centric cultural narratives that are seen as conventional and taken for granted. For all of us, and especially those of us who benefit from violently accumulated status and power, there needs to be continued recognition that if we feel good, pure, and clean, something is terribly wrong, we are messier than that.

I am left with a continued sense that whiteness is that which is preserved in wilderness (Roberts 2009). I again feel it important to make clear that the process of imagining and reifying wilderness draws upon cultural narratives of colonialism and domination, so that bodies that benefit from whiteness and masculinity are seen as belonging, and racialized and gendered others are seen as not belonging. Because of the prevailing colorblindness in America social, economic, and legal systems, many recreators may not actively intend to maintain exclusion, but the rhymes of whiteness set against the symbolic and textural architecture (the beat) of wilderness, inform how we perceive appropriate practice and belongingness. Hip-Hop and practices coded as urban do not meet the conceptual criteria of outdoor practice, and bodies and cadences that disrupt the percussion of whiteness are seen as “noisy.” I again return to Poppy’s observation that wilderness represents a branded form of nature – Nature TM – a commodified property, like whiteness, that grants special privileges of legal protection, and operates as an idealized marker against which difference is measured. Naturalizing

the conventions – the predetermined grammars for doing things (Perry 2018) – of whiteness and wilderness means that white recreators need not be actively racist to maintain and enforce exclusion, they need only be complacent in its seductive rhymes. I did not encounter much colorblind language in the transcripts of interviews, and aside from one participant who said they didn't understand white privilege coming from a working-class background, I was surprised with how comfortable most white participants were with talking about their whiteness. When I asked participants how important their racial identity was to their recreation, seven of nine white participants said some version of “probably more important than I think.”

Ultimately, this research represents a surface level attempt to better understand the ways that people are made to feel that they don't belong in outdoor recreation settings. In the future, I believe studies explicitly focused on the tactics of policing behavior in outdoor recreation will be foundational for continuing to think about the histories we actively and passively embody. Larger qualitative research that encompass more positionalities and experiences will be essential for making public spaces more public. Researchers should continually understand normal in relation to power. Finally, personally, I would like to see more literature continuing the work of Rosenthal (2006) and Mexal (2012), in thinking about Hip-Hop as valid ecological knowledge. I think it important not to approach Hip-Hop as a monolith, and caution from appropriating lessons removed from context, yet the frames of space, place, and resistance in Hip-Hop may continually help disrupt the comfortable and seductive cadence of whiteness.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Background Information:

1. I'd like to start with you telling me a little bit about yourself - where you're from, some of your interests, how do you spend your free time, what are you passionate about?
2. Can you tell me a little bit about where you grew up? What did your neighborhood look like? Who did you hang out with? Was outdoor recreation a common activity in the area, or amongst your friends?
3. How important is nature/recreation to the way you see yourself?
 - a. How do you identify racially? How important is this identity in your recreation?
 - b. How do you identify your gender? How important is this identity in your recreation?
4. What is your highest level of education? -If college, what did you study?
5. What is your occupation?
6. How old are you? (If not already mentioned)
7. Can you remember when you first started getting into outdoor recreation? What can you tell me about that first experience? (Good/Bad. Who were you with? If too young to remember what stands out as a formative moment? Impactful? Why? Push for details)
 - a. How common were outdoor activities amongst your family and friends.
8. How would you describe yourself as a recreationist?
 - a. How meaningful are the ways that you recreate towards your identity or the way that you see yourself? (If clarification is needed/not fully answered above)
9. What are the most common activities you engage in? What is the biggest motivation for engaging in these activities?
 - a. Who do you usually do them with? (Alone, Family, Friends, Clients) Who do you prefer to do them with?
 - b. Where do you engage in them? How important is the presence or absence of other people to your experience (Better not to see a lot of people? Better with lots of people?)
10. Are there connections for you between the types of recreation you engage in and environmental concern/awareness?
11. What do you see as the benefits to yourself from engaging in outdoor recreation? Why is it important to you?
12. What are some limitations to your use, and how do you navigate those limitations? (economic, time, labor, ability, safety)
13. Do you listen to music when you are engaged in outdoor activities?
 - a. What do you listen to? (Favorite artists?) How do you listen? (Earbuds/speakers)

14. How important is the presence or absence of music to your experience?

Consideration of structures and norms:

15. How would you define “wilderness spaces,” “outdoor recreation,” “nature,” “Front country vs. Backcountry” (Explain)

16. What are some rules or norms (implicit or explicit) that you would feel the need to tell someone who is engaging in outdoor recreation for the first time? (Trail/River etiquette? What is appropriate behavior?)

a. What do you consider appropriate behavior? (push for concrete examples)
Do you have a pet peeve you commonly see recreationists doing?

17. What do you consider rude behavior?

18. How important are notions/expectations of privacy - when picking a campsite, when stopping for lunch, (when hunting or fishing?)

19. What makes you feel comfortable in these spaces?

20. Have you ever been told by others that you are doing something/behaving “wrong?”

21. Have you ever told someone else that they are doing something/behaving “wrong?”

a. How do you negotiate confrontation? In what circumstances do you feel you would confront someone doing something wrong? Are there times you wanted to speak up about something and didn’t? (Why/why not)

22. How do you approach conflict and disagreement in outdoor settings? Does this differ from how you approach conflict and disagreement generally?

23. How do you think about civility/social contracts amongst outdoor recreators?

24. Can you think of an experience where you had to manage conflict between yourself, group members, strangers? (Disagreements/arguments about appropriate use? Safety? Labor distribution?)

a. How did the conflict(s) resolve, or not? What tools/strategies were engaged to mediate the conflict (Citing official rules? Referencing normal behavior? Themes of safety?)

25. How do you perceive law enforcement in these spaces? (Useful? Helpful? Ineffective? Performative? Depends on the individual?)

a. Can you think of a positive encounter with an outdoor law enforcement officer (i.e. Park Ranger, Forest Service Agent, Game Warden)? What made it positive?

b. Can you think of a negative encounter with an outdoor law enforcement officer (i.e. Park Ranger, Forest Service Agent, Game Warden)? What made it negative?

Concluding thoughts/Closing the interview

26. Is there anything you would like to add, or make sure is included in this interview?

27. Is there anything you would like to clarify or explain further?

28. Do you have any questions for me?

29. Thank you for your participation, if necessary, would you be ok if I followed up with you further at a later date? When the research is completed, would you like a copy of the final project or to be notified if I am presenting my findings near you?

Appendix B: Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in an interview as an outdoor recreationist, educator, or law enforcement officer. The research is being conducted to better understand the creation, maintenance, and enforcement of social norms in Outdoor Recreation settings. This research is being conducted by Leonard Henderson, a Graduate Student at Humboldt State University in the Department of Sociology working towards the completion of Master's Degree. The interview will take approximately 30-80 minutes, and will be recorded for transcription.

Your participation in this project is voluntary and without risk. You have the right not to participate at all, ask to skip questions, and to leave the study at any time. Should you wish to discontinue participation during the interview you may maintain the right to privacy regarding previously answered questions. There is no monetary compensation for participation, however your contribution may be beneficial to your own understandings of norms in outdoor recreation settings.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. Measures to ensure your confidentiality include storage of audio files and transcriptions in a password protected computer file, and use of a pseudonym in reference to your interview answers or direct quotes in the final work and subsequent presentations.

The data obtained will be maintained in a safe location and will be destroyed after a period of five years after the study is completed. This consent form will be maintained in a safe location and will be destroyed after a period of five years, as well, after the study is completed.

If you have any questions about this research at any time, please call or email me at (970) 404-2728, leonard.henderson@humboldt.edu, or my Committee Chair Jennifer Eichstedt at jennifer.eichstedt@humboldt.edu. If you have any concerns with this study or questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at irb@humboldt.edu or (707) 826-5165.

Please sign below indicating that you understand the above, consent to voluntarily participate, and that you are at least 18 years of age. You may, and are encouraged to, request a copy of your own to maintain for future reference.

(Participant Signature)

Date

Appendix C: Leave No Trace Principles

- 1 Plan ahead and Prepare
- 2 Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- 3 Dispose of waste properly
- 4 Leave what you find
- 5 Minimize campfire impacts
- 6 Respect wildlife
- 7 Be considerate of other visitors