

ALMOST NOWHERE:
PROBLEMATIZING THE EXCLUSIVITY AND COLONIALITY OF AMERICAN
WILDERNESS AND THRU-HIKING

by
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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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American wilderness is constructed as a space free from human contact. We know objectively this cannot be true: humans have relationships with landscapes and cultural systems of meaning and significance for the outdoors. It is through investigating the origins of American public lands and the reverence frequently practiced for the outdoors in American culture that we can come to identify the systems of exclusion that police the outdoors. Looking specifically at the example of thru-hiking and the identity categories of race, gender, and class, it becomes clear the intersections at which the privileged few gain access to these pristine and profound places while others do not. Moreover, by exploring these systems one can deny the universalized and dominant narrative of the outdoors, instead recognizing the diversity of experiences and realities of human engagement with landscape. Ultimately, this work suggests that by being more representative, accessible, and inclusive public lands, and the agencies which manage them can be more equitable to the public they serve.

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This dissertation is for all the beautiful souls working toward equity on public lands by pushing boundaries, demanding change, working through privilege, and refusing to be told no. All outdoor experiences are unique and valid.

“The trail climbs higher and the wind grow stronger. I stumble forward, one foot at a time. I feel angry at the trail, at myself, at the universe, at everything. I’m dehydrated and hungry, but there’s nowhere to stop and rest. The only thing to do is keep moving.

“Time disappears, and it is just me and the mountain, and the wind. I have always been in the windstorm, I think, as I fight my way forward. And I will always be in this windstorm. Up ahead, on a ridge, is a single tree. Someday, I think, I am going to be reincarnated as that tree. As punishment for every choice I’ve ever made.

“Or as a reward.”

Carrot Quinn, *Thru-Hiking Will Break Your Heart* (2016: 5)

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

“For each of these environmentalist icons, the meaning of nature and wilderness was constrained, even produced, by an idea of civilization” (Purdy: 2018).

“The long distance hiking community is not a particularly welcoming and special safe space for anyone who is not white, male, able-bodied, straight, cis, and competitive. But those dudes will tell you that it is, and they don’t want to talk about why it might not feel that way for everyone” (Vanessa: 2018).

Deep in the woods, far from society, and in the stillness of the wild lies a dangerous beast. Filled with entitlement and yearning for solitude, trail bros take up massive amounts of undeveloped space, performing an identity propagated by the “heroes” of public lands, John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, Henry David Thoreau among others. These trail bros defend their space rabidly, deny the validity of the variation in experience or story. These men assert themselves through shows of dominance both in the space and in the virtual social spheres in the online world. Broadly, trail bros are those who choose to enact a performance of American identity that is deeply connected to American public lands, asserting characteristics such as self-reliance, rugged individualism, and tenacity. In this work I will the practice of American thru-hiking, hiking long distance trails from one terminus to the other.

Broadly, backpacking is a microcosm of outdoor experience, but a profoundly popular and elitist branch of recreation. Predominantly a white, male, and upper-middle class practice, American wilderness backpacking is uniquely different from the type of backpacking done in other places, such as that of tourists in foreign countries (i.e., the trope of the American college graduate backpacking in Europe before settling into an adult life). Wilderness backpacking is an unregulated sport, one that is highly competitive

despite the lack of rankings or trophies. Wilderness backpacking is also a very isolating, rugged, strenuous activity that, at times, requires the knowledge and expertise of a professional. In this research I focus primarily on thru-hiking, a particular type of backpacking, in which an individual or small group hikes from one terminus of a long trail to the other. This requires weeks, though more often months, of time dedicated to hiking all day, every day. Most thru-hikers will carry very little as they are hiking long days over rugged terrain. This practice is presented by many individuals as free and available to all. Thru trails are public lands. However, these individuals are of a particular identity, typically white and male, and in a position to take many months off work, or to claim the title of professional hiker. These privileges are not universal.

Moreover, a critical clarification, I use the term thru-hike rather than long distance hiking because thru-hiking is a term that is guarded and policed. A thru-hike requires one to begin at one terminus and hike continuously on that trail without taking re-routes. If you do not hike from one terminus of a trail to the other, on only the trail, without breaks you have not “thru-hiked.” This is a lesson that many learn the hard way when they are verbally attacked, bullied in online communities, or dismissed as not a REAL “thru-hiker.” Long distance hiking is a more inclusive term for these hikes, but the thru-hiking community is, in particular, elitist, inaccessible, and exclusive. I will take a closer look at how these trail bros came to be by tracing the origins of American public lands and the cultural systems which have allowed them to proliferate.

My research begins with the colonization of North America. As a newly formed nation, the United States forged a national identity by engaging with the unique and breathtaking landscapes of North America. Influenced by cultural ideals such as Christian notions of purity, progress, and development, the colonization of the North American landscapes caused an erasure of other cultural ideas, and values. Rugged individualism and the pioneer spirit emerged out of Manifest Destiny. The frontier was explored and colonized by white settlers with cheap pre-emptive claims, and later, free homesteads while non-

white bodies were removed from ancestral lands to reservations, displaced, and denied land claims. The fear of losing the open frontier led to the creation of federally protected lands, what we recognize today as public lands through agencies like the National Park Service, and the United States Forest Service.

Moreover, the managing of these spaces, which are protected from development and society, manifests recreation culture. What's funny is these lands are managed to feel unmanaged. There is a system by which decisions are made on how to regulate landscape and access to lands so that it feels "wild" and untouched. But those decisions are rooted in a cultural system of meaning, one that emphasizes exclusion.

There is a lot to say about the great outdoors. Much of our culture is constructed in opposition to it, our identities as Americans enmeshed with it, our media overwhelmed with the images of and headlines declaring the exploitation of it. American heritage is tangled together with issues of coloniality, white supremacy, patriarchy, and Christianity. The outdoors emerges from those foundational aspects of this nation-state.

Public lands are a unique reality, a liminal place that is not entirely free from politics or society but presented as such. A space seemingly reminiscent of a land before the complications of modern society, it is also steeped in the dynamic realities of our political existence. The American wilderness is a contradiction, a place presented as free and available for all Americans to reunite with the larger ecosystem (Wilson 1984), to share in their heritage (Woods 2017), and connect to their families, friends, communities, and themselves; and yet, public lands are some of the most exclusive spaces visited by an elite groups of people benefiting from centuries of powerful politics that ensure those in power stay in power.

I think the best way to understand something is to experience it. As subjective creatures we often cannot perceive someone else's reality without context that relates to our own.

As a cultural anthropologist and a folklorist, I believe in the powerfully human dimension of storytelling.

It is for this reason that I will center this work around stories, both my own and other's to better situate the realities of our experiences. To begin, I want to pinpoint the toxicity of the exclusive thru-hiking culture that this work will explore, tracing through time the systems that exist today to better situate our current reality within our larger context of American settler colonialism, heritage, and public lands.

The outdoors is a political space. Wild spaces have been racialized (Finney 2014, Outka 2008, Lipsitz 2007), sexed and gendered (Bederman 1996), elevated as a place accessible only to the privileged able-bodied (Ray 2013) and financially capable for recreation, while those who depend on the land for survival are regulated and removed (Kosek 2006). But our understanding of the outdoors is itself an amorphous concept. The outdoors is known by many names, nature, the wild, wilderness, the woods, each of which carry a cultural expectation of the absence of humanity. These spaces were constructed in a system of power, politics of race, gender, sex, class, ability, access, among many other aspects of identity and therefore, privilege. In this work I collect personal narratives that speak to a lived cultural geography of American public lands, connecting lived realities to systems of power through the analysis of history and culture. I will engage with the politics associated with human identity and public lands access. I seek to demonstrate the ways that the outdoors is a colonized space and recreation a practice of colonization with a case study of thru-hiking on the west coast.

In an article called "Why I Got Off the Pacific Crest Trail After 454 Instead of Walking All the Way to Canada" (2018) Vanessa explains her experience on a trail that is both extremely popular, and well promoted as a positive and exciting adventure. I think Vanessa's experience provides some necessary context from which we can begin to understand the politics of American wilderness. Vanessa describes:

“This is how it goes: I’m huffing and puffing my way up a steep incline. We’re gaining almost 3,000 feet of elevation in just 4 miles, the next water source is (probably, hopefully) one mile away, and my pack weighs 30 pounds, heavy with food I’ve packed out of town. I’ve hiked a couple of miles so far and plan to hike ten more before I set up camp to go to sleep. Other hikers keep passing me; some have smaller packs, some have larger packs. I stop to take a sip from my water bottle and a tall man approaches me, bounding up the trail effortlessly. He pauses to take a break too. ‘What day did you start hiking?’ he asks me. Everyone always asks this question. What it really means: how fast or how slow are you traveling? Did I start before you and now we’re in the same place? Am I better than you are? Maybe he’ll ask some other questions, seemingly innocuous but designed to make one feel less than. ‘How many miles are you doing today?’ ‘What time did you wake up?’ ‘Are you walking all the way to Canada or are you just a section hiker?’ These questions are baked into long distance hiking culture. No one questions why they’re asked or what they mean. Folks just wanna know, so they can put themselves on a roster and decide where they belong when it comes to being a ‘successful’ hiker.

“Sometimes it goes like this: I stop at a water source and I ask a man I’ve been leapfrogging with all day if he can scoot over so I can also have a place to sit in the shade. There isn’t a lot of shade, but enough that I can sit too. He rolls his eyes and I, stupidly, make a joke about feminism and equality on the trail. He immediately snaps that the pay gap isn’t real (what?) and then goes on a rant about feminists ruining everything. We somehow veer into the murky waters of capitalism vs. socialism and then he proudly tells me he’s glad he’s no longer at his desk job because a guy like him doesn’t belong behind a desk. ‘I should be out here, raping and pillaging the land!’ I open and close my mouth, but nothing comes out. By now several other folks have shown up—men and women—and they all hear his fucked-up announcement, but no one challenges him.

“It can be like this, too: A sweet athletic blonde woman takes a liking to me and slows down her pace so we can hike together for a few hours. She admits she knows the trail is a boys club, but she’s used to it because she teaches snowboarding in the winter and that’s a boys club, too. She tells me she kinda likes being in the club, so she makes herself one of the boys. ‘It’s dumb how competitive everyone is about mileage,’ she says, and I’m about to agree but then she continues, ‘I mean really, we should be most impressed with people

like you! It's amazing that you're out here doing this!' I think she thinks she is being nice so I don't say, 'Wow, thanks for thinking it is so amazing that a fat slow lesbian could be hiking this trail with you and all these dumb bros!' It's hot and I'm tired and fuck, I liked this woman, so I just say, 'Thank you'" (2018).

Vanessa is not alone. Many individuals have written about experiences such as this on personal blogs or social media websites. Early in my research I spoke with Ceili, who told me about being constantly ridiculed on the trail about the shoes she was wearing. She laughed when she told the story, "Like why are all these bros so concerned about what shoes I was deciding to wear, they're my feet!" I too have experiences similar to these of social policing, the experience of others enforcing expectations of behavior, appearance, and the ability one has to take up space in particular places. And, I've chatted with many who have shared similar sentiments.

In this work I aim to illuminate the systematic means of exclusion in the outdoor hiking community. I chose the hiking community in particular as I believe it to be on the most accessible recreation activities, it requires the smallest amount of "gear" (one could technically hike barefoot), and yet demonstrates so clearly a sense of elitism and exclusivity. The outdoors is often perceived by privileged white culture as a space free from social expectations or realities (Cronon 1996, Nash 1967). This is a place constructed in opposition to society, where people can seemingly exist without the pervasive social expectations and categorization of culture and society. Though, the reality is that there is no space that is not governed by cultural expectations. Human beings cannot escape the constant negotiation of identity in all spaces, at all times. Likely, this assumption by recreationalists that the outdoors is free from socially pervasive categories is linked to their "unmarked," and therefore extremely privileged aspects of identity.

Positionality

I think it's important to situate myself in this work, to be transparent to the readers, and to those who so graciously shared their stories. I am a cis-gendered, heteronormative, able-bodied white woman. I am a first-generation college student with two advanced degrees. I am the great-great-granddaughter of Eastern European immigrants. I am the daughter of a single mother. I grew up unconcerned where my next meal would come from, with shelves of books, and a yard to play in. I also helped my mother count change to take a bus to work, watched her complete technical school, and lived in my grandmother's house. I was lucky enough to benefit from the accumulated capital of the generations of my family that came before me, so that despite my mother's poverty, I was not impoverished. I was raised in a neighborhood with very little crime, in a school district with high test scores, and with tap water that was free of chemicals. I spent summers camping with my family in state parks, traveling to beautiful places, and learning about wild places in the context of recreation.

I am extremely privileged. Moreover, I will speak frequently throughout this work about privilege, drawing attention to the particular identities that have the most privilege. I am not attacking any group of people, nor am I blaming them. I do not believe that white, cis-gendered, able bodied men are to blame for the centuries of oppression of non-white, non-male, individuals. Instead, I believe that we must acknowledge the ways in which the intersections (Crenshaw 1991) of our identity allow for more room to resist, to challenge expectations, and realities, and demand change. I will assert that those with the most ability, through social, political, and economic capital, should utilize it to dismantle systems of oppression. I will illuminate the ways history has been biased toward protecting the systems of exclusion and subjugation. I am not blaming any person or group for the situation we are in. I am demanding a shift in the ways we perceive our realities to be objective truth and calling for a re-evaluation of our subjectivities. It is no one person's fault. I do though call all who have the privilege to be heard and seen to not

be complacent in these systems, but instead to engage in ways that are inclusive and accepting.

All people move through the world with a unique perspective. Donna Haraway (1988) describes this as sight. Our individual perspectives are our unique truth, what Foucault (1989) called the “truth effect”, this is what we see and understand, this is what we know. But an individual is just that, one person. One cannot be an all knowing, all seeing being. We have a single sight. Truth is only understood through collective sight, what we can all see and identify as the same is truth. But our experiences, that is difficult to unify.

This is why storytelling is so important. First and foremost, my methodology is rooted in storytelling. While the dominant narrative has been written and rewritten in various accounts of history, personal experience, and popular culture, what is missing is the counter-narrative. The personal experiences of those whose identities and therefore, perspectives differ from the normative and dominant ways have been nearly silenced. In this work I center the stories of others, as well as my first-hand experience to highlight the ways the dominant narrative is dominant, not universal.

Context and Definitions

In this work I will be engaging with concept of American identity. It is important to recognize that while I may use the term “American identity,” that I acknowledge there is not a singular or static identity that encompasses the nation. I recognize that much like wild spaces, American identity is two things simultaneously: what we expect it to be, a static culturally constructed ideology, and a lived reality, diverse and in constant negotiation. Further, American identity cannot be characterized as a whole in any human. No person is a singular identity, rather we are many things all at once, in constant negotiation with our surroundings. I will be exploring the hegemonic identity tropes that

have come to be associated with “American identity” such as the pioneer, the rugged individualist, the tenacious explorer, etc. These identities manifest in modern society despite being rooted in our colonial origins. Settler Colonial origins of American-ness have become American ways of being. Entrepreneurs, tech developers, innovative scientists and otherwise self-made individuals are described as pioneers in their field. These accomplishments, unrelated to the Frontier Myth or American settler colonialism are framed in the same cultural language. In this way, I will assert that the performance of these identities, and the perpetuation of these ideas through popular culture have reinforced them as seemingly innate parts of “American identity.”

There is the assumed, and culturally constructed, static image of the rugged American. Then there is the multifaceted, diverse and dynamic reality. There is no singular American culture, rather we are a nation of mostly immigrants, bringing with us ideas and practices of other cultures, investing in the false belief that we are actually entirely unified in a singular national identity (Anderson 1991). American identity is a relic of the colonial imposition of European perspectives, a rebellion against European prosecution of religious pluralism, and a push back against high class society that concentrated wealth in land, simultaneously restricting others collection of capital. American identity is both a singular static idea, one that is tied to an ideology or dominant narrative, and a real lived experience which defies the ability to unify an experience, perspective, or culture.

The lived realities of Americans today are not singular. The diversity of cultures living in the United States cannot be unified to an experience. In the same way, relationships with the natural world cannot be universalized (Ybara 2016, Spence 1999, Ruffin 2010, Ray 2013, Outka 2008). In this work I share personal narratives of experiences, some that many align with the dominant story, others that challenge this, revealing diversity in belief and practice. I hope to illuminate the ways identity politics effect lived realities. I highlight the ways the performance of “American identity” is problematic and furthers the exclusivity of outdoor spaces. I challenge the potential of a forced assimilation to

American ideals and practices as they are rooted in, and perpetuate, colonialism. Instead, I assert validating the spectrum of experiences that exist in the outdoors to make public lands equitable and truly public.

Moreover, I engage with aspects of the hegemonic trope of America identity such as rugged individualism, pioneer and/or frontiersmen, explorers, etc. and universalized aspects of identity such as American exceptionalism, settler colonialist ideology, and Christian colonization. I define rugged individualism to refer to the emphasis on self-reliance, individualistic motivation, competition, and personal liberty associated with the expansion and development of North America. Rugged individualism emerges out of Manifest Destiny, the 19th century doctrine that expansion throughout North America was justified by settler superiority and thus, inevitable. Moreover, the tropes of frontiersmen and pioneer follow the same logic, connected directly to the expansion and exploration of the West. These tropes are linked with the same tenets of rugged individualism but are rooted in particular to the exploration of the West.

By American exceptionalism I will be referring to the belief, widely held by Americans, that America's dedication to democracy and personal freedom ensure the nation is supreme to all others. The origins of American exceptionalism can be traced to the American Revolution in which it was believed that the newly formed nation would be uniquely superior due to the investment in ensuring liberty, individualism, democracy, laissez-faire economics, and meritocracy.

Settler colonialism is the process by which settlers invade lands, displacing or removing indigenous peoples to claim the lands and resources. Throughout this work I will be engaging with the American example of settler colonialism. It is critical to acknowledge that settler colonialism is not a static process. The settler colonialism that established the thirteen colonies does not look the same as the settler colonialism that exists today. Settler colonialism is a malleable process by which systems of power justify and

institutionalize processes of exploitation. Through time settler colonialism has adapted to the needs of the state. While settlers have colonized North America for hundreds of years, the means of colonization and consequences of such have changed through time. North America remains colonized today. Moreover, throughout this work I will be referencing the dominant narrative which is greatly influenced by the subjective and contested history of the United States.

I will be speaking of both wilderness (note the lowercase ‘w’) and Wilderness, connoted by the capital W, the federal designation articulated in the Wilderness Act of 1964. I will make clear which (W/w)ilderness I am referring to by utilizing parenthesis when necessary. (W)ilderness is defined by federal law in the Wilderness Act of 1964:

“(c) A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized 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. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.”

(W)ilderness is utilized colloquially to speak of wild spaces, potentially those federally designated as such, but generally to mean a place far from urban centers or towns and without signs of human activity. For context, I define recreation as a leisure activity outdoors. It is not singular but instead varies from something as simple as sitting at a picnic bench to something as extreme as climbing a sheer rock face.

As I previously mentioned, backpacking is a microcosm of outdoor experience, but a profoundly popular and elitist branch of recreation. Predominantly a white, male, and

upper-middle class practice, American wilderness backpacking is uniquely different from the type of backpacking done in other places, such as that of tourists in foreign countries (i.e. the trope of the American college graduate backpacking in Europe before settling into an adult life). Wilderness backpacking is an unregulated sport, one that is highly competitive (despite the lack of rankings or trophies). Wilderness backpacking is also a very isolating, rugged, strenuous activity that, at times, requires the knowledge and expertise of a professional. Long distance hiking had grown in popularity.

In this research I focus primarily on thru-hiking, a particular type of backpacking, in which an individual or small group hikes from one terminus of a long trail, typically 200+ miles (though the three most prominent in the United States are 2,000+), to the other. This requires weeks, though more often months, of time dedicated to hiking all day, every day.

It is important to acknowledge that while thru-hiking is a form of long-distance hiking, not all long-distance hiking is thru-hiking. Long-distance hiking is a term used to be inclusive of all wilderness backpacking that covers long distances. There are distinctions such as thru-hiking being from one terminus to the other of a long-distance hike in a single trip and near constant movement along the trail with few breaks. Thru-hiking is a more elitist and exclusionary term to identify a particular, and competitive form of recreation.

Most thru-hikers will carry very little as they are hiking long days over rugged terrain. This practice is presented by many individuals as free and available to all. Thru trails are public lands. However, these individuals are of a particular identity, typically white and male, and in a position to take many months off work, or to claim the title of professional hiker. These privileges are not universal.

Christianity in American Foundations

American identity, politics, and landscapes are heavily influenced by Christian ideas of progress and purity. Christianity was brought to North America with European colonizers in the 16th and 17th century. Spanish, French and British colonists brought Roman Catholicism to their settlements, New Spain, New France, and Maryland respectively.

The Spanish were the first Europeans to establish a settlement in North America, St. Augustine, Florida in 1565. They brought with them their Catholic faith. Spanish missionaries spread Roman Catholicism through Florida, and into Georgia and the Carolinas (Burnett 1986). The mission system extended to the lands now known as Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California by the mid-1700s. French territories also brought Catholicism to forts in Detroit, St. Louis, Mobile, Biloxi, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans (Norman 2017).

English settlement was in response to the Protestant Reformation, beginning in 1517. Seeking refuge from religious persecution, English Protestants established settlements that would become the thirteen colonies. By 1618 the Colony of Virginia has established the Church of England. England sent 22 Anglican clergymen by 1624. Churches began popping up throughout the settlement.

In 1620 Pilgrims has settled at the Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts. By 1629 Puritans, a much larger groups than the Pilgrims had established the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The Puritans were English Protestants who had desired reform in the Church of England, primarily a purification of what they perceived to be unacceptable aspects of Roman Catholicism in the New World.

By 1630, 20,000 Puritans had emigrated to America to obtain religious freedom. It is with the religious underpinnings of Puritans' devoutly religious practice that ensured social and political unification and power. They believed the new land would serve as a new opportunity to redeem the mistakes of the Church of England.

One must look no further than the Salem Witch Trials of the late 17th century in colonial Massachusetts to understand that Puritans were not tolerant of other religions. While Puritans had not come to America with the intention of establishing a theocracy, they did believe their religious convictions were of the utmost importance. Puritans engaged in a social covenant in which the people of society were bound to one another. Leaders were chosen because they were qualified, but also were believed to have received authority from God. The people were able to overthrow the leader should they believe they were evil, a central tenet in our later understanding of Democracy.

Puritans believed they were chosen by God to redeem the world. They were in a national covenant with God and would obey his will (Bremer 1995). They understood that if they were doing as they should they would be blessed, if not they would fail. Because of this understanding they believed it to be the government's responsibility to ensure moral standards were met and that religious worship was established and maintained (Bremer 1995). A state religion was established, taxes were used to support the Church even if taxpayers did were religious dissenters.

In Connecticut church attendance was mandatory and those who failed to attend were fined. Puritans believed the state was obligated to protect society from heresy and was empowered to use punishment to enforce this (Bremer 1995). Banishment and execution were also accepted forms of punishment (Bremer 1995).

Puritans were at the core of English settlement in America. It was Puritan colonies from which the nation emerged. Of course, religious pluralism continued to expand religious

ideologies, but one cannot deny the Christian origins of the nation. By the time of the American Revolution most individuals were of a Christian faith, ensuring that the development of the nation by the end of the world was informed by the Christian worldview of the men chosen to lead the nation-state.

Furthermore, Christian ideals are ingrained in much of our worldview. The construction of the nation-state is steeped with Christian ideologies. The development of the nation emerges out of colonization, motivated by religious persecution. Expansion was due to a belief in superiority. Racism, sexism, and elitism continued through justification protected by political systems constructed by the people informed by their Protestant worldview.

This was further exploited in tenets of American ideology such as Manifest Destiny. Americans united in a belief that it was the will of God for the nation to expand from sea to shining sea. Settlers invested in expansion with a belief in superiority both as Christians and as white people.

This is furthered in the deployment of heteronormative sexuality. Michel Foucault famously traces the history and deployment of sexuality in which he utilizes what he calls an archaeology of knowledge to trace the origins to Christianity and the power dynamics of confession. His work articulates a deployment of repression, what has today become a system of sex and sexuality. Purity is another aspect of Christian ideology that has infiltrated many of our cultural ideas.

Christianity is at the core of colonialism, race, and patriarchy. These principles were thrust into a system of government that would ensure a hierarchy. This system has ensured the exclusion, oppression, and subjugation of people of color, women, queer folks, among many other underserved communities for hundreds of years.

America the Beautiful

The unique quality of the American landscape has been a critical aspect of the founding of this nation. The colonial history of the United States is rooted in the Christian ideals of purity, progress, and white supremacy (Dunbar-Ortiz 2015, Hixson 2013, Madley 2016). In order to fully understand the wilderness culture of today we must sieve through these ideologies to find what lies hidden in the politics of the dominant narrative (Slotkin 1973, Raskin 2014).

Wilderness culture, outdoor culture, and recreation culture are dependent on ecological/environmental privilege, having access to an environment free of toxins and threats (Park and Pellow 2011). Moreover, the politics associated with crafting this particular ideology have proliferated through “American identity,” one of white manliness, aggression, and conquest. Moreover, as Gail Bederman (1996) explains, masculinity and manliness are separate concepts, masculinity can be associated with anyone, but manliness is about purity and moral supremacy, a notion that is deeply entwined in American identity, but rooted in Christian ideology. Thus, the goal of this project is to examine the origins of the outdoors as a place, who contributed to its construction, the means why which is it regulated, and in what ways that altered who now has access to it.

American history is dependent on the ideas of settler colonialism rooted in white supremacy and male dominance emerging from a Christian worldview. Without proper recognition of these oppressive systems we cannot fully see the oppression, exploitation, exclusion, and erasure of the culture and peoples of minority groups and underserved communities in the United States. This is not to blame white men, or call for an exclusion of them, rather to acknowledge where power lies, who has privilege, and in what ways that privilege can be extended to all people.

Moreover, work done by religious studies and environmental studies scholars, cultural geographers, and anthropologists (Mitchell 2016, Ray 2013, Finney 2014, Kosek 2006) points to the exclusionary practices of recreation and land management. We must acknowledge the systems that regulate these lands, as well as the broader cultural systems of understanding that create and maintain inequities. I question how the politics of public space are lost or overlooked in the ways we perceive landscapes in American culture.

I am interested in the roots of current perceptions both about who should be recreating, but also how. What are people expected to experience in spaces we have determined are wild? Why are the perceptions of backpacking so focused on freedom, self-exploration, connection? What processes of enculturation have crafted this experience?

Broadly my project is looking at the intersections of American wilderness, recreation culture, and experience. To narrow my focus, I identify the categories of race, class, and gender to examine in what ways exclusion has led to the dominant recreation culture. I examine, in particular thru-hiking. I included data from across the country, though my field work has been primarily concentrated on the West coast and my research will emphasize the west. I've chosen to look at the west for two reasons, primarily my own location, being in the West makes accessing and experiencing recreation here easier, but also the West is a focus of the development of American outdoors. The West was a land of wilderness and exploration. Much of our understandings of landscape come from the geography of the west, public land management began in the West, and still many recreationalists travel to the west in pursuit of adventure.

This project is grounded in an exploration of space and place. How does the construction of space and development of place alter our expectation and experience? How have the politics of identity shaped the spaces we exist in, how are they negotiated and how does expectation and experience become shaped by this? I utilize Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) , Edward

Soja (1989), Setha Low (2007; 2006; 2005), and Keith Basso (1996) primarily to engage in these ideas across chapters focusing on race, gender, and class.

My research questions are as follows: (1) In what ways has the dominant narrative of American outdoors and recreation been biased to a particular perspective? (2) In what ways have identity politics infiltrated wilderness which is perceived to be untouched by people? (3) How has the outdoors as a space been imbued with the expectations associated with place? (4) Are people conscious of the ways recreation reinforces problematic and exclusive practices rooted in Christian ideology? (5) Is recreation an inherently colonial practice?

Methods

Utilizing a folkloric lens, I find that centering this work on stories rather than history and dominant renderings of the origins of this nation and the development of national identity, that the collective voice of those unheard can be uplifted and contradict what is accepted to be a universal experience. As explained by Gary Okihiro, “the collective voice of the people once silenced has a right to be heard. Oral history is not only a tool or method for recovering history; it is also a theory of history which maintains that the common folk and the dispossessed have a history and that this history must be written” (1981: 27).

Moreover, I utilized online platforms to target communities that in most instances are not easily accessible in my area of fieldwork. In aiming to understand those who are excluded, it is difficult to pinpoint where to find those who want to be in a space they do not have access to or are not comfortable in. For that reason, using online platforms and social groups was an absolute necessity in gaining access to, and building trust with, groups that aim to elevate counter-narratives, diminish or eliminate boundaries, and shift the paradigm of outdoor culture.

To ensure the most humanistic and empathetic engagement, this research was conducted primarily qualitative data consisting of in depth semi-structured, unstructured, and informal interviews with key individuals in the outdoor community, both from underrepresented/underserved communities, and those of the dominant outdoor populations.

Interviewees were predominantly selected in a snowball sample using social media and other groups to target specific hikers. Though, I also reached out to individuals who have been identified by these groups as leaders and/or role models. This will also include individuals who conduct interpretive activities or fulfill a leadership role in outdoor communities.

Interviews were flexible. Some are semi-structured, others unstructured or conversational in order to provide flexibility for the interviewee to guide the answers where they see fit, illuminating what they see to be the most important in their own perspective and ensuring their comfort and control of what they share. Interviews were between 20 minutes to 2 hours in length. Most interviewees were interviewed only once, though a handful were interviewed up to four times. In those cases, the first interview was the most structured, and the following interviews were more conversational, and in effect, more story-based.

I have collected basic demographic data on most interviewees, I asked that they share only what they feel comfortable. I also asked them how I should refer to them in the work, thus you may see some inconsistency in reference to individuals, some will be named, other identified by a trail name, some simply a participant or interviewee. In interviews I ask how frequently they do things outside, what is the difference between nature and wilderness (if there is one), how they started going to the outdoors, what does it mean to them, do they go alone, do they feel their race, gender, or any other aspect of their identity has a positive or negative effect on their experiences, and what their most

memorable positive and negative experiences outside are. I believe interviews to be the most critical aspect of data collect for this project as it lets people share their experience in their words.

I pair interview data with survey data. My survey has been run through a Google Form. I have utilized social media to disperse the survey in hiking and outdoor groups including groups specific to underrepresented/underserved groups. The survey collects demographic information and asks questions related to origins of outdoor experience and perspectives, but also personal experiences of the outdoors. These questions follow the same format as interview questions though are sometimes modified to fit a survey format (i.e., sliding scale or short answer boxes rather than long answers given in interviews). I have collected 681 responses over three years. I have three separate surveys, one for 2016, one for 2017, and one for 2018. These surveys have only slight differences with the majority of questions remaining the same. Questions that were added, removed, or reworked were done so in response to refining my research questions and objectives.

My survey has also been shared by John Ladd who runs the popular and annual John Muir Trail Hikers Survey. His survey asks questions predominantly about logistics, though he includes questions about experience in relation to planning and gear rather than more culturally rooted experiences. My survey is offered in a link at the end of his survey for those who wish to complete it. He has kindly shared past years data on the demographics of survey respondents which has provided me with a longer and more in-depth perspective of the history of usage on the John Muir Trail, a 211-mile trail in the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range in California. Much of the John Muir Trail overlaps with the much longer Pacific Crest Trail. Both the John Muir Trail, and the Pacific Crest Trail remain the dominant locations of my case studies.

I coupled this data with my fieldwork completed during the summer of 2017. I hiked 180 miles of the 211-mile John Muir Trail to complete participant observation. I have also

logged thousands of hours hiking both in and out of Oregon along with visitations to over 20 national parks in the West on 45 occasions.

I will include my reflections and experience as the Youth Engagement Strategy Program Manager for the Willamette National Forest as I will be working directly to engage with both the agency and community organizations to find areas of success and improvement in working toward equity, diversity, and inclusion in the work of Region 6 of the United States Forest Service. I work closely with both community partners and agency employees. I conduct interviews to learn about issues of access and resources for youth engagement while focusing on diversity and equity in the forest's practices. I will utilize my experiences as a Forest Service employee to gain a better understanding of the internal workings of a federal agency, while also gaining insights to how community partners view and engage with the Forest Service. My position intentionally focuses on issues of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Broadly, this allows me to spend 40 hours a week immersed in outdoor culture from both a visitor and an agency perspective. I am actively working with people who are experiencing the woods for the first time, some who are fostering a stewardship ethic, and others looking to gain employment. Community partners are traditionally organizations who serve underrepresented and underserved communities. Community partners are providing feedback on resources and other roadblocks that make their organizations hesitant or unable to engage with public lands.

I find it critical to be as reflexive (Behar 1993) and reflective as possible in both my writing and analysis. I will be including my experience in the form of vignettes throughout the work. I find that situating my work in reflections of my experience as a subjective human rather than an objective researcher is more honest, it helps to reveal the actuality of my position both in and out of the research. I am both a candidate for inclusion in this research as a hiker and the outside source of analysis as a researcher (Magliocco 2014). I recognize that I have privileges of which I am not aware and will

listen to those who have had experiences different from mine. No person is one thing, but many things at once, in constant negotiation with surroundings and situations. In the same way that no hiker is simply white, or female, middle class, or able-bodied, I too am not one thing (Crenshaw 1991). I have and will continue to reflect on my position in this work.

Finally, I will be utilizing literature, more informal writing such as blogs, and social media posts, social media groups, popular advertisements and other forms of digital engagement and cultural texts as part of my data set. It is critical to engage with both popular literature and writing such as that of John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and others, as well as the writing of people who remain unpublished, who have provided their experiences in other culturally significant ways. These works will be utilized in the same way as interview data. This work has also been used in the process of revising interview questions, and to situate my own understanding of the current climate in outdoor culture. Moreover, this allows for contributions of experiences in individual's own words.

Chapter Overviews

In the second chapter I will lay out the foundation of the American public land system. I will investigate the means by which settler colonialism expanded the development and colonization of North America by white, Christian European settlers.

While the broad theoretical lens I will use is space and place, the theoretical underpinnings, the ways in I will engage with space and place are more specific to identity. In the third chapter I engage with race and cultural trauma. I identify the ways race has been constructed and utilized as a justification for exclusion with critical race theory. I draw on Lipsitz' (2007) racialization of space, and spatialization of race and

utilize revisionist histories that demonstrate the exclusion and removal of peoples both from lands and from the dominant narrative of history to show how race has been a justification of exclusion. I also engage the work of Ron Eyerman (2001) and Carolyn Finney (2016) on cultural trauma and the embodiment of race to explain the act of self-exclusion from outdoor spaces.

In the fourth chapter I engage gender through an exploration of manliness. Here, I connect race, gender, sex, sexuality, and ability through manliness in American landscape. Utilizing the work of Gail Bederman (1996), I engage the notion of manliness, rooted to Christian ideals of superiority. I connect manliness to the sex gender system as articulated by Foucault (1988) and Butler (1990) and to ableism as explained by Sarah Jaquette Ray (2013). Ultimately, this analysis of gender is to build on the framework constructed in my exploration of race to articulate a particular identity as the most valuable and therefore privileged in the socially constructed space.

White manly men are the pinnacle of the outdoor hierarchy. The men who built the cultural idea of the wild, who shared their perspective, are the same voices that are echoed in the land management systems we know today shaping our expectations and in turn our experiences through their normalized, but biased perspective. The normalization of a singular perspective has minimized the diversity of experience and lived realities outdoors. The dominant narrative, one that is presented as universal is essentialized and minimizing the systematic exclusion and inequalities felt by individuals who are not of the same identity as those who have shaped our politics.

In the fifth chapter I connect race and gender to class to demonstrate how cultural and economic capital has acted as a means of exclusion from the outdoors. This part of the analysis will connect more directly with modern practices of recreation, though can also be traced through time. Colonialism created land as capital. Land was stolen and this process justified by the creation of a political system which ensures that those in power

remain in power. The wild is a place restricted to those who were powerful enough to claim lands, to recreate, and to dominate.

Access to resources comes with power and privilege. The ability to access both natural resources found in environment, and recreational resources, such as vehicles, gear, and expendable time, reinforces the exclusivity of environmental access and assures environmental privilege. For some, the outdoors is a means of subsistence, for others it is a space of escape, a privilege that is not a necessity.

In chapter six, the culmination of these chapters exposes the trail bro culture exemplified in the story presented by Vanessa on why she left the Pacific Crest Trail. I link the colonizing of North America, development of a political system, and the system of public lands to settler colonialism and patriarchy, justifying the exclusion of many. Representation of a single perspective, one that is privileged, has shaped the expectations of experience of the outdoors. People then must adapt to a system that is not representative of them, an experience that they may not have access to, in order to fit the expectation of the outdoors.

The experience of the outdoors has been greatly influenced by writers such as the Transcendentalists, John Muir, poets like Whitman and Frost, and even contemporary writers such as Jon Krakauer. The perception that the outdoors is an escape to find oneself is common in popular culture and the dominant narrative. It is for this reason that I find the thru-hiking experience to be similar to pilgrimage. I will be engaging with non-traditional, non-religious, and secular pilgrimage theory, articulated by Peter Jan Margry (2008) to analyze thru-hiking as nature pilgrimage. In my prior research (Cox 2015) many individuals identify thru-hiking as a means of self-discovery and transformation though do not recognize a religious association. For this reason, I focus on non-religiously motivated pilgrimage theory rather than religiously motivated pilgrimage in the final chapter.

Recent Pew surveys on religion have found that 22.8% of Americans identify as a religious none. Nones include those who identify as agnostic, atheist, spiritual but not religious, don't have a religious identity, or don't know. This number is higher on the West coast, closer to 30%.

So, while many are describing their thru-hike experience as non-religious, they are describing experiences that are rooted in descriptions by white male Christian writers like John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt. They are also enacting an experience that is based on Christian narratives of the outdoors, such as the Garden of Eden trope. In chapter six motivations and experiences are shared that demonstrate the ways lived realities are influenced by a cultural understanding of space and performance of national identity and heritage. Through this I articulate recreation as a colonial practice, enacting the same systems of power on landscape that have ensure that the political structure justifying and protecting white male supremacy.

Finally, in the conclusion I share some of my work as the Youth Engagement Strategy Program Manager for the Willamette National Forest, an internship I held for a year. I speak to the work I conducted, motivated by and tasked toward, equity and inclusion on public lands.

I believe in speaking clearly and directly to the systems that ensure exclusion, oppression, and suffering we are better equipped to dismantle them. In a wonderful blog post Carrot Quinn explains it beautifully:

“The outdoor community is a white supremacist community. What I mean by this is that land management agencies, outdoor organizations and outdoor media all predominately center and uplift the narratives of white outdoorspeople—one narrative being that ‘wilderness’ is an apolitical space. This narrative serves white people (myself included), by scrubbing away the history of genocide and colonization on which this country was founded, the

environmental racism that means communities of color bear the brunt of pollution and ill advised resource extraction... ‘Wilderness’ as imagined by white outdoorspeople in the US does not in fact exist. This ‘wilderness’ is just an illusion, created for the comfort and recreation of white people (like myself). A land of make believe. A place to play pretend. ‘I go to the wilderness to get away from politics,’ says the hiker as he walks on stolen land where thousands of indigenous [people] were murdered, and steps over the bones of immigrants who died there fleeing situations in central america that we facilitated. The white supremacist nature of the outdoors community makes it a very safe place for... white supremacists. Disenfranchised white men, most of them, their blood boiling with rage because their place in culture is shifting from being centered in every single aspect to having to share that platform with others... It’s time for people in the outdoors community (myself included) to name this by name. If you’re white, staying silent doesn’t mean you’re neutral. It means you’re complicit. Because whether or not you agree with white supremacy, if you’re white, you benefit from it. So you have everything to gain for allowing it to continue unchecked.”

This work aims to engage with these systems of exclusion and oppression to better understand the connections between political institutions and cultures, that for some feel natural, but work actively to exclude others, maybe even most people. By tracing the origins of American public lands, we can better understand the co-construction of public lands in a settler colonial state and American heritage and identity. Without recognition and understanding of these powerful systems we cannot properly acknowledge width and depth of our privileges or create the space to take action toward dismantle the many barriers that exclude and harm.

CHAPTER II: SETTLING THE STAGE

“This is truly a moment for thinking differently about how we engage in these spaces. This is a moment to experience the emergence of something new. Our [Public Lands], as part of this moment, remind us who we are and who we might become.”

-Carolyn Finney

The colonization of North America set the stage for the development of the American public lands system. Through the process of contact, settlement development, and the institution of a legal system, landscape was forever changed. This chapter will overview the development of the American public lands system from the time of initial colonization to the development of the modern agencies that remain responsible for the management of federal public lands. Keep in mind throughout this chapter and the following, the history presented has been universalized, is subjective, and therefore is contested.

The colonization of North America began as early as 1513, when Ponce de León made contact with present day Florida. In 1521 he attempted, and failed, to settle there. By 1540, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado had traveling from Mexico to Kansas. Also in 1540, the Spanish made it to the Grand Canyon, a place they largely ignored for the next 200 years. By 1542 the West coast had been reached by Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo.

In 1585 the first attempt at a permanent North American colony by the English was established at Roanoke Island in present day North Carolina. Queen Elizabeth I granted Sir Walter Raleigh a charter to colonize North America. He needed to establish a colony or lose his charter. She explicitly states he was “discover, search, find out, and view such remote heathen and barbarous Lands, Countries, and territories ... to have, hold, occupy,

and enjoy” (Carney n.d.). This marks the beginning of legally imposed exploitation of North America by the English.

On July 22, 1587 John White landed on Roanoke with 120 men, women, and children. The colony did not last, due to a lack of supplies and poor relations with native peoples many left within the first year with Sir Francis Drake. When John White was returning to England to request government assistance with the colony he left behind a small group. He intended to return promptly but was prevented by the Anglo-Spanish War. He did not return until 1590 when all were gone.

But the foundations of this nation began when English settlers developed the colony of Jamestown in modern day Virginia in 1607. This has been described by William Kelso as “where the British Empire began” (Shapiro n.d.). The colony was established by the Virginia Company of London as James Fort on May 5, 1607. It is considered a permanent colony after a brief abandonment in 1610. Located in the country of Tsenacommacah ruled by the Powhatan Confederacy and locally, the Paspahegh tribe. They were initially friendly with colonists, providing them with crucial provisions and much needed help with agriculture as they were not skilled in this area. But within three years there was a total annihilation of the Paspahegh people in warfare with colonists.

The colonists suffered in what came to be known as the “starving time” during 1609–1610. A severe drought made it difficult to grow food. 80% of the population was lost. Many deserted to join the local tribes as a means of survival. And by 1619 the first documented Africans were brought to Jamestown. 50 men, women, and children were brought on a Portuguese slave ship, initially as indentured servants, though soon they became slaves. Slavery was formalized in 1640 and Virginia was fully entrenched by 1660.

The foundations of what would become the United States were being slated, colonization by white Western Europeans, dependence and exploitation of indigenous populations, and finally, a slave dependent economy. While Jamestown was far from a success, this initial experiment with colonization in North America would be replicated, with more success.

Plymouth was founded in 1620. It was surveyed and named by John Smith. The colonial venture lasted much longer than predecessors Jamestown and Roanoke. Plymouth functioned from 1620 to 1691 and at its height covered most of southeastern Massachusetts. The colony ultimately merged with the Massachusetts Bay Colony and others in 1691 to form the Province of Massachusetts. Jamestown established the first permanent English settlement in New England and developed a strong culture. It is worth noting, and crucial as we continue to explore the origins of this nation's approach to land, that the colony was formed by Puritan separatists, known originally as the Brownist Emigration, later known as Pilgrims. They were led by William Bradford. Their social and legal systems were very closely tied to their religious beliefs and English traditions. This will become critically important when, in a later chapter, I will explore the development of American cultural systems.

This launched the beginning of what would prove to be a successful political campaign to claim land, expand territories, and espouse an ideology that would one day develop into the dominant narrative of the founding of the United States of America.

Plymouth is often the beginning of the story; this is the point many students pinpoint the origins of the United States. The relationship with indigenous peoples is often described as friendly, typically they welcome them, though eventually that relationship deteriorates. There is little information on the struggles of these peoples to save their land, culture, and people. There is little information on how or what colonists did. Often the realities of violence inflicted by colonists is generalized and simplified if not removed from the narrative. There is little to no acknowledgement of the concept of race. Legal documents

and journals of colonists make clear that the native peoples of North America were nothing more than savages or barbarians. Despite their political organization, ecological knowledge, and cultural practices, European settlers intended to see their plans of colonization come to fruition.

The dominant narrative ignores the origins of indigenous peoples. Without acknowledging the length of time these lands were occupied by others, colonists can describe North America as a free land awaiting development, ripe for Manifest Destiny to spread progress and development. Though, the story is more complex, as most are. There are many factors at play here. I will argue that the beginnings of land management are colonization. We remain in a colonized state, organized by a government thrust upon an indigenous population, developed by foreigners. The concept of ownership and capital were once foreign but were naturalized by the process of colonization. But, as colonist arrived land became a commodity, to be claimed, developed, and owned. The cultural shift meant land lost the right to be anything but owned and managed.

It is critical that we recognize the system of land use in the United States, both while still colonial settlements and after the American Revolution, was influenced by English law precedents. While there was no national land use system in England, they had developed strong property rights that were enforced by the courts through common law precedent (Nolon 2006). Under English common law, “private land ownership was sacred” (Nolon 2006). It was referred to by William Blackstone in 1782 as “that sole and despotic dominion which one man claims over the external things of the world, in total exclusion of the right of any other individual in the universe” (Nolon 2006).

There was power in land ownership and soon trespassing laws were also brought to common law courts. Individuals were given power and possession of space, with rights to exclude others from use. As the initial efforts to colonize North America began, much of Europe developed dense urban spaces. It began to get crowded and people were excited

by the prospect of the massive amounts of land in North America that had yet to be “claimed.” While many indigenous peoples had developed a cultural knowledge of territory and property rights, European contact dramatically altered the ways land was understood, mainly as property. Property rights evolved as a direct response to European contact and colonization (Morriss 2007).

The development of property rights was diverse in Europe. Initially, most property was part of a feudal tradition dependent on a grant from the monarch. This means the individuals held their land in service and honor of the lord. Feudalism was brought to England by William the Conqueror who redistributed English estates starting in 1066 (Morriss 2007). In this agreement the king could reclaim his property if the tenant failed to fulfill the expectations of obligation set by the ruler, committed treason, or died (Morriss 2007). There was not an established mode of transferring land through familial lines.

This transitioned to a more liberated mode in which property was seen as independent of the monarch and the state (Morriss 2007). The English and Spanish, among others, began to see property as a natural right (Morriss 2007). This was supported by well-respected thinkers such as Hugo Grotius, Samuel Pufendorf, and most famously, John Locke (Morriss 2007). This is an integral part in understanding the land rights and property ownership established in North America. Many Puritans, the dominant group of first wave colonists, believed, “land was held not of the king but as a gift of God alone” (Morriss 2007). Thus, English colonist brought with them natural-rights heritages and common-law principles for land as property (Morriss 2007).

Though, after William the Conqueror had introduced land law, it evolved further to include transactions. What originally could not be transferred as it was held “of” the king could now be transferred through generations and eventually be sold, making land a commodity. This was well grounded in the natural law philosophy and had been

established through common law (Morriss 2007). Soon land became the key form of wealth.

In the colonies of Jamestown and Plymouth the colonist initially attempted to hold common property, meaning the land was held and managed collectively. Each colonist received an equal share of production regardless of contribution. This has been tied to the origins of private ownership in that 104 of these colonists died of starvation and disease in their first year. As new colonist arrived, Governor Thomas Dale shifted the communal lands to individual tracts. Here, the productivity of individuals rose sevenfold, soon the communal land was all converted to privatized tracts (Morriss 2007).

Privatization was linked to productivity. Plymouth had a similar result. Colonial leader William Bradford noted that the change from communal land to privatized land, “made all hands very industrious, so much more corn was planted than otherwise would have been” (Morris). Thus, natural-rights theories, English legal doctrines, and their hands-on experience and experimentation combined to create a strong sense of private property rights which they believed would ensure their survival and success in their new colonial experiment (Morriss 2007).

Over the next 80 years many colonies would be founded and named crown colonies. The Connecticut Colony (1636) was chartered in 1662 and the colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations (1636) became a crown colony in 1663. The Province of New Hampshire (1620) was named a crown colony in 1679. Province of Massachusetts Bay (1620) was a crowned colony as of 1692. The middle colonies followed including the Province of New York (1664) becoming a crown colony in 1686, followed by the Province of New Jersey (1664) in 1702, Province of Pennsylvania established in 1681 and Delaware Colony in 1664. The Southern Colonies included the Providence of Maryland (1632) Colony and Dominion of Virginia (1607) which became as crowned colony 1624, the Province of Carolina (1663) which was divided to North Carolina and

South Carolina in 1712 and crowned colonies in 1729, as well as the Province of Georgia (1732) which became a crowned colony in 1752.

The colonists continued to assert claims to land through both the fact of settlement and contracts negotiated with Native peoples. Though, through the rule of discovery colonists who found a “new” land would quickly determine the best means of acquiring the territory, either by contract or conquest.

A series of Ordinances, the first in 1774 would begin to lay the system by which the rest of the soon to be country would be colonized. The Land Ordinance of 1784, penned by Thomas Jefferson, called for Congress to begin separating land to the west of the Appalachian Mountains, north of the Ohio River, and east of the Mississippi into 10 states. Though, there was no mechanism to do this. Thus, the Land Ordinance of 1785, signed by the United States Congress of Confederation on May 20, 1785, created a standardized system by which settlers could purchase land in unsettled areas. This, paired with the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, laid the foundation for the Homestead Act of 1862.

The Northwest Ordinance, also known as the Land Ordinance of 1787, created the first organized territory in the newly independent United States. It is one of the most influential acts of the Confederation of Congress as it created a precedent by which the federal government could expand westward, admitting new states. It also provided a precedent in regard to public domain lands. The territory was hard fought, initially acquired by Great Britain from France in the Seven Years War before being claiming by the United States post Revolutionary War and Treaty of Paris in 1783. The region was strongly desired by colonists as they wanted to expand.

It is important to note that the Naturalization Act of 1790 assured naturalization to all immigrants who were free white persons of good character. This explicitly excludes American Indians, indentured servants, slaves, free Blacks and Asian peoples.

Thus, while expansion remained a constant infatuation for colonists, it was only specific individuals who could benefit from the plethora of “unclaimed” land that came with the expansion of the nation. With the acquisition of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 there was a need to explore the new lands for scientific inquiry, but more importantly to lay claim and sovereignty over the land and all opportunities of commerce.

In 1804 Captain Meriwether Lewis and his friend, Second Lieutenant William Clark were tasked with laying claim to the land in the West before the Brits. On their two-year tour of the undeveloped west they relied heavily on help from Native populations. They drew 140 maps while out and provided a strong overview of the area and discovered many natural resources that were, at the time, unknown to European settlers.

Lewis and Clark were the first white Americans to cross the Continental Divide and produce official descriptions of many areas later treasured such as Yellowstone and much of the Pacific Northwest. While the Louisiana Purchase did not encompass the Pacific Northwest, their journey including mapping and proclamations of sovereignty with medals and flags were the first steps in the process of claiming these lands using the Doctrine of Discovery.

Exploration of lands continued, and the Donation Lands Act allowed settlers to claim land in the Oregon Territory, consisting of modern-day Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and parts of Wyoming. Settlers could claim 320 acres as an individual, or 640 as a married couple, with each individual claiming 320 acres in their name. These claims were entirely free until 1855 when they became \$1.25 per acre.

Meanwhile, the Jeffersonian romanticization of the yeoman farmer continued through the 1850s. Yeoman farmers were non-slave holding, small land-owning family farmers. This gave life to the push for the Homestead Act, providing a process by which public lands

moved West and US citizens were granted access to laying claim to property. The three-step process was simple, (1) file an application, (2) improve the land, (3) file a deed of title. The individuals were required to settle and farm the land for a minimum of five years. This was perceived to be a liberal and inclusive policy, offering land to any citizen who had not taken arms against the United States. Freed slaves and women were allowed to claim land, so long as they were 21 years old or the head of household, the same requirements of white men. Though, as I will expand on in later chapters, this was not as inclusive as presented. Carolyn Finney (2014) marks the Homestead Act as a moment in which relationships to land in the form of wilderness or outdoor experiences change.

The history of the legality of land imposed by European, and specifically, English settlers carries with it a particular structure and perspective. It is with this understanding of the Doctrine of Discovery and Manifest Destiny that the entitlement to land was born. And from this that we structured our public lands.

Yosemite Grant to the Yosemite Valley Supreme Court Case

The Yosemite Valley has been inhabited for nearly 3,000 years, with evidence that humans may have been visiting for as long as 8,000 years. The Anwahnechee people of the Yosemite Valley, and the Mono and Paiute peoples of the surrounding areas were greatly affected by the influx of European settlement during the California Gold Rush. Competition for land and resources grew hostile and affected the population of the area.

In 1851 the first white men entered Yosemite. United States Major Jim Savage led the Mariposa Battalion into the west end of the Yosemite Valley to suppress Native American/Anwahnechee resistance. The men of the Mariposa Battalion were stunned by the natural beauty of the landscape. Dr Lafayette Bunnell is credited with naming Yosemite based on his interviews with Anwahnechee Chief Tenaya. Soon, the letters and

publications of the Mariposa Battalion brought attention to the stunningly beautiful place. As interest in visitation and tourism grew Chief Tenaya and the Anwahnechee were captured and their village burned. The Anwahnechee people were relocated to a reservation outside Fresno, California.

In 1855 entrepreneur James Mason Hutchings and an artist by the name of Thomas Ayres were accompanied by two others for one of the first tours of the area, James C. Lamon had been the first to lead a tourist party prior to Hutchings and Ayers visit. Upon returning, Hutchings published an article in the Mariposa Gazette, and the San Francisco Daily California Chronicle. He later published the same article in the inaugural issue of his own, California Magazine. He hoped “to portray [Yosemite’s] beautiful scenery and curiosities; to speak of its mineral and agricultural products; to tell of its wonderful resources and commercial advantages; and to give utterance to the inner life and experiences of its people” (Runte, 1869).

Ayres’ work from his time in Yosemite was distributed nationally and exhibited in New York City. The publicity from his artwork from 1855 to 1860 led to an increase in tourism to Yosemite. Both Hutchings and Lamon became advocates for the area’s settlement, they were the first white settlers in the Yosemite Valley (Uhte 1951: 58–9).

In 1857 Galen Clark discovered both Wawona, a Native American camp and a grove of Giant Sequoia. He soon built a road and some small humble lodges. Clark’s discovery and other exploration, paired with the growing number of commercial developments by homesteaders, led to his intense desire to protect the land. Clark partnered with Senator John Conness to advocate for the protection of Yosemite.

A park bill was assembled with the assistance of the General Land Office in the Interior Department and was passed through Congress. On June 30, 1864 President Lincoln signed the Yosemite Grant Act which set aside 39,000 acres from development (Spence

1999). This was the first instance of the United States federal government setting aside land for preservation and public use. The Yosemite Grant set precedent for the protection of Yellowstone, and the creation of the National Park Service (Spence 1999).

The bill set Clark as the first Guardian of the park but did not provide him, or commissioners, the authority to remove homesteaders. Thus began a long and tumultuous process of determining the rights of homesteaders in land that was granted to be protected in what became known as the Yosemite Case. It was publicly seen as an issue of personal greed versus preservation. Broadly, it became a question of how wealth would be distributed in the West and the power of government to assert land claims.

Homesteading laws were intended to distribute small plots for settlement and cultivation. Under the Homestead Act the land was free, though the settlers must claim, settle, cultivate, and improve the land. Hutchings and Lamon, having been the earliest settlers of Yosemite, saw Yosemite as public domain, and therefore open to settlement. They felt that they had followed the legal process for making a preemptive claim. Lamon claimed in 1859 and recorded his claim of 160 acres on May 17, 1861. He built a cabin and planted an apple orchard.

Hastings purchased a claim from another, earlier, settler. He had hoped to settle in 1861 but was forced to turn back in a vicious storm. In 1863 he purchased a claim of 160 acres from George and John Hite. The land, at the time, included a primitive hotel. On April 20, 1864 he brought his family to the Yosemite Valley, made improvements to the hotel, built a cabin for his wife and children, and planted crops.

At the time, Hutchings and Lamon had done all but the final step to legally acquire the homestead, the land had yet to be surveyed by the United States government, and therefore, the men had not paid for their claim. On June 30, 1864, just a few months after Hutchings moved to Yosemite, Lincoln signed the Yosemite Act. The state now had the

rights to the land, to be held “inalienable forever” to guarantee the area be preserved for the public. Soon the tension between preservation and tourism became palpable. Hutchings felt he was not appreciated for bring the Yosemite Valley to the general public’s attention. He had seen the potential for tourism and purchased the hotel in 1863. Though, it was clear to advocates that settlers and tourism were the biggest risks to preservation.

The conversation went national. On February 14, 1870, the New York Times predicted that California entrepreneurs would spoil the beauty and serenity of Yosemite, “the exquisite [Bridalveil Falls] will have a bowling alley at the foot of it; the solemn ‘El Capitan’ will look down upon faro tables; the ‘Cathedral Rock’ will be passed up with advertisements of ‘Angelica bitters;’ and the glorious Yosemite fall will run the wheels of a woolen factory. We shall have rowdy liquor shops and gambling saloons, the slovenly Chinese hovels, scattered about those scenes of unequaled poverty and loveliness...” (“The Yosemite Valley” 1870).

Park advocates believed Yosemite should not be privately owned as it raised moral and legal concerns because people had already claimed preemptive claims (Runte 1869). Advocates for preservation stressed that Congress’ goal was to preserve the land, they called Hutchings and Lamon squatters. They claimed that the preemptive claim was not legal because the Yosemite Valley had yet to be surveyed by the United States government and thus was not eligible for settlement (Runte 1869). Some went as far as the accuse Hutchings and Lamon of attempting to monopolize the profits that would likely come from tourism in the area.

But even with many advocates painting Hutchings and Lamon as shady, profit hungry characters, many Californians thought they should be allowed to keep their claims. California’s believed state land should be distributed in small amounts to homesteaders and settlers. Because much of the land was inherited from Mexico, there were many large

sales of Mexican land grants or railroad grants. This monopolized ownership to a rich few. Many believed it was important that the land be as accessible as possible to settlers, “they maintained that, rather than being set aside as a playground for the rich and powerful, the valley should remain open to settlement” (San Francisco Evening Bulletin 1870). For this reason, the public believed to benefit the most people, allowing for the most access to homesteaders that it remain in public domain, claimable for settlement in small parcels (Robinson 1948; Gates 1991).

With support, the men reportedly denied a 10-year concessions deal and instead pushed toward state legislature hoping for a full claim. On January 24, 1868 the California Assembly voted to grant both Hutchings and Lamon 160 acres each of the Yosemite Valley. This looked as though it would be nullified when Governor Haight vetoed the bill on February 4, 1868. Though, one week later the state assembly overrode the Governor's veto to grant the 160-acre claims (New York Times 1868).

However, while the State Assembly granted the rights to Hutchings and Lamon, the state was granted the land and had promised in the Yosemite Grant to hold the land ‘inalienable forever.’ Thus, they could only grant the land to Hutchings and Lamon with United States Congressional approval. Hutchings prepared a petition to Congress in December of 1867 urging the confirmation of his and Lamon’s claim. Congressman George Julian pressed Congress in June 1868 and July 1870. Congress considered the land grant; it passed the House of Representatives but failed in the Senate (Runte 1869: 24). The ownership transferred failed. The land claims were not granted.

It was reported that Lamon settled with the state by accepting \$10,000. But Hutchings refused to leave. The California legal proceedings escalated to the United States Supreme Court in the Yosemite Valley Case (Hutchings v. Low 1872). The case began when the park commissioners filed a suit to have Hutchings removed. Though, the California district judge found that removing Hutchings would cause great hardship and injury and

rejected the commissioners' petition. The judge found legally, "when a preemption enters upon the unsurveyed public lands, under the sanction of a public law, and makes improvements and becomes a bona fide settler, he acquires such rights as the Government cannot divest or take from him," (Low v. Hutchings, 1871: 634–635).

The park commissioners appealed to the California Supreme Court who disagreed with the underlying assumption that Hutchings was a bona fide settler. The court found that because Hutchings and other settlers were attempting to claim land that had not been surveyed, his settling did not establish ownership. Because the land had not been surveyed it was not open to preemption (Low v. Hutchings, 1871: 634–635). They were little more the squatters and Congress had the right to sell or transfer the land to someone else, in this case the state of California for preservation.

There was confusion in this process due to the passing of the Homestead Act in 1862. Between 1853 and 1862 preemption laws allowed for open settlement on unsurveyed lands. This was before Hutchings made his claim to the 160 acres in the Yosemite Valley. Thus, when Congress passed the Homestead Act in 1862 unsurveyed land was no longer available for claim. So, while the Homestead Act made land free, it also limited the lands that were available to claim. There was an assumption that the new Homestead Act was invalidating previous preemption laws, though did not explicitly state this. Because there was nothing explicitly stated about how the Homestead Act affected the preemption laws, some continued to make land claims under the assumption that the old preemption laws were still in effect (Gates 1968: 244–247).

So, while framed by preservationist as a greedy squatter who wanted to monopolize a natural beauty, Hutchings defense in the Supreme Court case was actually framed as an issue of class and labor. In the appeal to the Supreme Court, George Julian, a member of Hutchings legal team, maintained that he had a valid claim to the land, and that land reform should allow for the free or cheap land for all men, of all classes. The most ardent

land reform activists looked beyond the claim to land in the west, resource allocation and the ideals of free labor (Riddleberger and Julian 1966: 76–78). Julian was concerned with natural rights, explaining, “In laying the foundations of empire in the yet unpeopled regions of the great West, Congress should give its sanction to the natural right of the landless citizen of the country to a home upon its soil” (31).

Julian made the claim that while Hutchings had settled on unsurveyed land, that his investment of settlement, improvement, and cultivation was enough of a good faith investment. He would have paid the price had the government completed the survey. He believed there is no justice an individual investing physical labor only to have the title revoked, the labor and improvements taken, and the land given to another (Yosemite Valley Case 1872).

Julian had presented this case to the Supreme Court before, in *Frisbie v. Whitney* (1869) in which the court ruled that until the preemptor had satisfied all part of the process, including the survey and fee, that he had no legal or equitable right to the land (*Frisbie v. Whitney* 1869). The Supreme Court upheld the precedent established in *Frisbie v. Whitney* on January 6, 1873, that the settler had not satisfied the conditions of the law and therefore had no rights to the land. The preemptor, prior to purchasing the land was given only the preference over others to purchase the land when and if the government chose to sell it (Yosemite Valley Case 1872).

While Hutchings lost his case, this was not a win for those in favor of preservation either. As soon as the case closed the park commissioners began to allow concessions for hotels, inns, stagecoach lines, toll roads, and all things necessary to have a booming place of tourism (Blodgett 1990). This case had a critical impact on the land reform movement. This precedent was continually enforced in that a settler must comply with all requirements of a land claim to obtain public land as a private claim. The federal government had the power to limit the ability of an individual to fulfill the requirements

to a land claim, the final survey step was dependent on them, no individual could complete the process without federal compliance.

To the benefit of the settlers, the Court found that settlement did create a preference or right of first claim if and when the government chose to sell the land (*Lamb v. Davenport* 1873). This perspective on land claim is representative of the ways legality has shaped our relationships with land. Even today, regulations on what can and, more importantly, cannot be done on public lands alters our experiences of these places. What was originally a territory viewed by European colonizers as a land of limitless opportunity, acres of “unclaimed” capital, had finally reached a point at which the government was intervening. In the eyes of the Federal government, lands needed management.

Yellowstone and the Beginnings of the National Park System

In 1871 Ferdinand Vandever Hayden led an expedition to Yellowstone. When he stumbled upon the multicolored geologic hot springs, stunning plethora of flora and fauna, and the unique landscape he felt an immense need to protect the space. Like many others, he advocated for preservation of what he believed was a natural wonder. Yellowstone was, and is, an incredibly unique landscape with many natural resources, stunning beauty, and, most importantly to Hayden, boundless opportunity for tourism. He had seen what happened to other natural wonders, such as Niagara Falls, describing them as being carnivalesque. Hayden wanted to avoid the commercialization of what he viewed as a “beautiful specimen” (TIME 2018: 20)

In March of 1872, President Grant signed the Yellowstone Act creating the first National Park. This is monumental. Most believe this to be the moment that the National Park Service we know today began, but it was another 44 years before there was an agency to oversee the first National Park. In fact, Yellowstone received no funding until 1878. It was visited only twice in its first five years and was cared for by an unpaid volunteer,

Nathaniel P. Langford. In 1886 it was transferred to the Department of the Interior where it received a minimal amount of funding.

Meanwhile, in 1876 Congress created the Office of the Special Agent in the United States Department of Agriculture to assess the quality and conditions of forest in the United States. This agency was headed by Franklin B. Hough. In 1881 the department expanded to the Office of the Division of Forestry.

The federal government was paying close attention to conserving natural land and resources. In 1891 Congress provided the opportunity for the President to expand forest reserves when they passed the Forest Reserve Act. This provided the President the ability to increase public land in the West. These responsibilities fell to the Department of the Interior despite the existence of the Office of the Division of Forestry existing in the Department of Agriculture.

Meanwhile, Theodore Roosevelt's Boone and Crockett Club, a conservation hunting organization, named to honor Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone, the pioneers known for hunting in the American frontier, was established in 1888. The club began as an idea proposed by Theodore Roosevelt during a dinner he hosted in his New York City home in late 1887. By 1888 the club had a president, Roosevelt, a secretary, and 22 members. It was this organization, and Roosevelt's profound interest in preserving lands and natural resources that motivated his creation of the National Forest Service, now known as the United States Forest Service in 1905. He named Gifford Pinchot as the first Chief Forester and the responsibilities of managing all "forest reserves" were transferred from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture.

In 1911 the Weeks Act was passed by Congress. A law that allowed the purchase of private lands for stream-flow protection. This also allowed these lands to be maintained as forests and provided the opportunity to expand the National Forest Service to the

eastern United States, as the forest reserves had only previously been possible in the frontier of the West.

Though, the creation of the first National Park, Yellowstone, and subsequently, the transfer of the second from state control, Yosemite, and the newly developed National Forest Service had created more confusion about land rights, and land use. Americans were suddenly fascinated with the outdoors. John Muir was beginning to publish his writings on natural spaces, motivating people to engage with landscapes, learn the wonders of the natural world, connect again with what he believed was a cathedral created for mankind.

The protection of Yosemite and Yellowstone made these places exciting. Though Muir touted an ideology of preservation and environmentalism. President Roosevelt and newly appointed Chief Forester Pinchot were very adamant that conservation was key. Remember, it was Clark who initially fought the homesteaders in Yosemite, and Hayden who was concerned about the exploitation of Yellowstone. The push to protect these lands to avoid commercialization and exploitation was strong with key players influencing the American people and Congress to make the protections a fundamental part of public lands.

But, as mentioned before, Yellowstone, and soon after Yosemite, were National Parks lacking a National Park Service. The organization that we know today, that protects these preserved places, did not yet exist. The funding for this type of system was not in place. As many have described it, this was an experiment, protecting the lands on paper was not enough. “The tensions between the urge to preserve the nation’s natural wonders and the urge to exploit them by consumer interest threatened to submerge the fledgling concept of a national park system before the idea could root, much less blossom,” (TIME 2018: 21).

The American population did not truly understand or appreciate the National Parks until Muir became a public figure. It was his writings and his founding of the Sierra Club in 1892 that drove the importance of environmentalism to the American public. Moreover, the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901 launched the voice of environmentalism into politics as Theodore Roosevelt became President.

Theodore Roosevelt and Explosion of Public Lands

On September 6, 1901 William McKinley, the 25th President of the United States was shot as he shook hands with members of the public at the Pan-American Exposition at the Temple of Music in Buffalo, New York. Leon Czolgosz shot the President in the abdomen twice. On September 14, McKinley died due to an infection of his wound and then Vice President, Theodore Roosevelt, was sworn in as the 26th President of the United States.

Roosevelt is remembered as a progressive President, pushing against selfish interests of corporations and corrupt politicians. He believed businessmen to be predatory, calling them “malefactors of great wealth” (TIME 2018: 22). He believed firmly in maintaining and utilizing resources, institutions, and laws for the greatest good of the general interest, this is echoed in the founding of the United States Forest Service and the first Chief Forester, appointed by Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot in the Forest Service motto, “For the Greatest Good.” In this way, Roosevelt is romanticized for being a charismatic and lovable President for the people, ensuring the country belongs to its people, and therefore should serve them first and foremost.

Roosevelt’s work in conservation laid groundwork at the federal level to protect and manage public lands. His touting of the frontier myth of progress and resiliency reinforces ideals of rugged and tenacious American individualism. He is remembered as a

Rough Rider, a President for the people, and most importantly in this context, the President who created and protected the most federal lands.

In his presidency alone, Roosevelt protected 230,000,000 acres of land. He established the United States Forest Service in 1905 and designated 150 National Forests. He designated five National Parks: Crater Lake, Oregon; Wind Cave, South Dakota; Mesa Verde, Colorado; and Platt, Oklahoma. He passed the Antiquities Act of 1906 which grants the President of the United States the ability to create National Monuments from Federal Lands to protect lands of natural, cultural, or scientific importance. The first National Monument, Devils Tower, was established on September 24, 1906 by Roosevelt.

Roosevelt also protect 51 bird reserves, and four game preserves. Roosevelt used executive orders to protect forest and wildlife lands frequently, by the end of his second term he had protected 150 million acres on executive orders alone.

He established 121 forest reserves in 31 states. Prior to Roosevelt no President had issued more than 253 executive orders. In all, Presidents prior to Roosevelt had issued 1262 executive orders. Roosevelt issued 1081 alone. Roosevelt was unapologetic about protecting these lands, but Congress grew tired and feared he was encroaching on too many lands. Charles Fulton, an Oregon Republican attached an amendment to an agricultural appropriations bill to keep Roosevelt from reserving any more lands. Though, Roosevelt chose to establish 21 more forest reserves prior to signing the bill and waited until the final moment to do so.

After Roosevelt's Presidency federal lands continued to grow in popularity with the American public. The work of Stephen Mather to lobby for an agency to manage the new National Parks and monuments succeeded in 1916 when President Woodrow Wilson established the National Park Service. In 1917, Mather was named the first director of the NPS, an agency within the Department of the Interior.

Tradition says that in his push for an agency to manage the National Parks, Mather wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane, believed to be a former classmate of Mather, noting the deterioration of many National Parks. He demanded they be better cared for. The story goes that Lane sent a letter back stating, “Dear Steve, If you don’t like the way the parks are being run, come on down to Washington and run them yourself.”

While humorous, many have provided evidence that the two did not know one another. Though, this story has continued to be told, speaking to the “boys’ club” perspective of the management of public lands. While Mather did not know Secretary Lane, he did know John Muir. He worked diligently on conservation, joined the Sierra Club in 1904, and by 1916 was named an Honorary Vice President of the Sierra Club. He had also joined the Boone and Crockett Club in 1915, making him well aware of issues of both conservation and preservation in environmentalism. He spent his time as Director of the NPS generating tourism. He had a newly established system of parks and wanted to create a National Park to Park Highway. He believed the more people they got to parks, the more buy-in people would have for protecting these beautiful places. When he began there were 14 National Parks and 19 National Monuments. By the end of his time as Director there were 20 National Parks and 32 National Monuments. His work with successor, Horace Albright, also brought National Parks to the east coast with the establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains and Shenandoah National Parks.

Mather suffered from a stroke in 1929 and was forced to step down as Director of the NPS. Though, his work brought forth many new visitors and established many new public lands.

The latter President Roosevelt, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, expanded the National Park Service across the nation in 1933 into 9 western states and the territory that

would become the state of Alaska. At its peak in 1935 the Civilian Conservation Corps, established as part of FDR's New Deal was operating 118 camps in National Parks. The young (17–28) unmarried men planted nearly 3 billion trees to help reforest the US, constructed trails, lodges and other recreational spaces in more than 800 parks nationwide. They also updated forest fighting methods and built a roadway for many Americans to reach these public lands (Civilian Conservation Corps n.d.).

And in post WWII years, as the population grew and people enjoyed the post war boom, many could afford the luxury of a vacation. And in 1956, the National Park Service launched Mission 66 which brought development of visitor centers, roads, and other aspects of parks that drew tourism. This means many Americans were choosing to head to the National Parks and this trend continues into the 1960s and 70s as environmentalism hits a peak. For example, Yosemite National Park (see Figure 1) has low visitation numbers in 1943 and 1944, 116,682 and 120,494 respectively (Stats Report Viewer, NPS: 2017). Though by 1946 visitation was more than 5 times the 1944 level, reaching 640,483. And in less than a decade after the end of WWII the visitation numbers hit the million mark with 1,008,000 visitors in 1954 (Stats Report Viewer, NPS: 2017).

This can also be seen in other parks, such as Yellowstone (see Figure 2). In 1943 Yellowstone had a total of 61,696 visitors (Stats Report Viewer, NPS: 2017). By 1946, post WWII the visitation numbers have jumped to 807,917. And this trend continues, following the buildup of environmentalism. In 1970, Yellowstone had a total of 2,297,300 visitors (Stats Report Viewer, NPS: 2017).

Though, even young parks such as Joshua Tree (see Figure 3), which was established in 1941 saw this effect. With 31,285 visitors in its first year, during WWII, the park saw a drastic decrease coincide with American involvement in the war (Stats Report Viewer, NPS: 2017). By 1944 the park had only 7,640 visitors (Stats Report Viewer, NPS: 2017). This means about 20 visitors a day compared to the nearly 90 a day in its first year. And

again, a trend toward visitation can be seen in post-war years. By 1947 the park saw nearly 60,000 people (59,157 total) (Stats Report Viewer, NPS: 2017). And like other parks, by 1970 the park had a profound increase in visitation with 643,000 visitors (Stats Report Viewer, NPS: 2017).

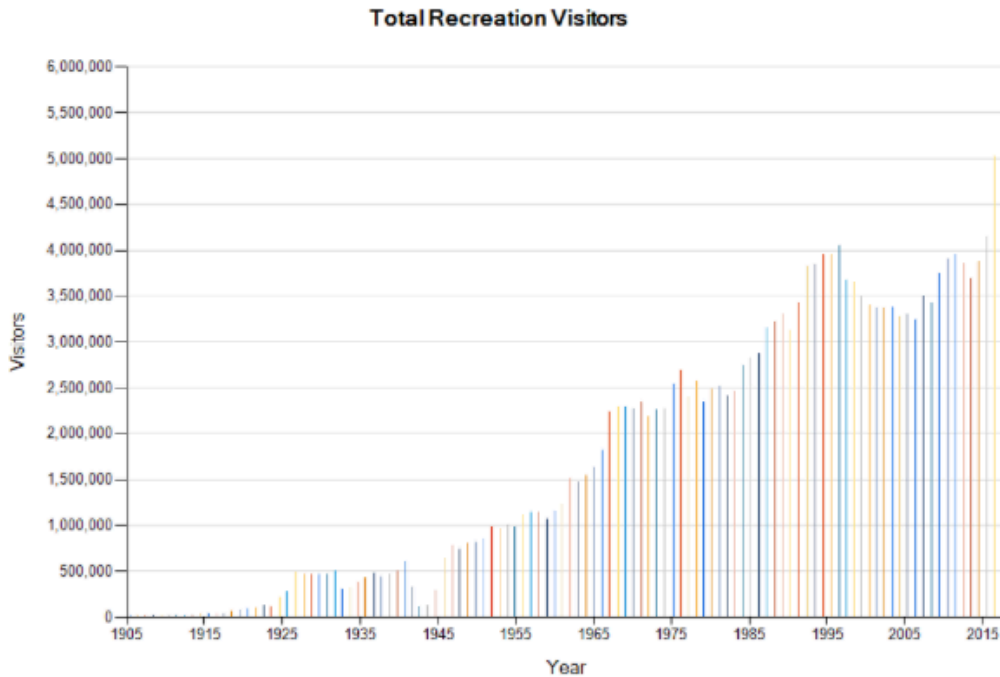


Figure 1: Yosemite Visitors (Stats Report Viewer, NPS: 2017)

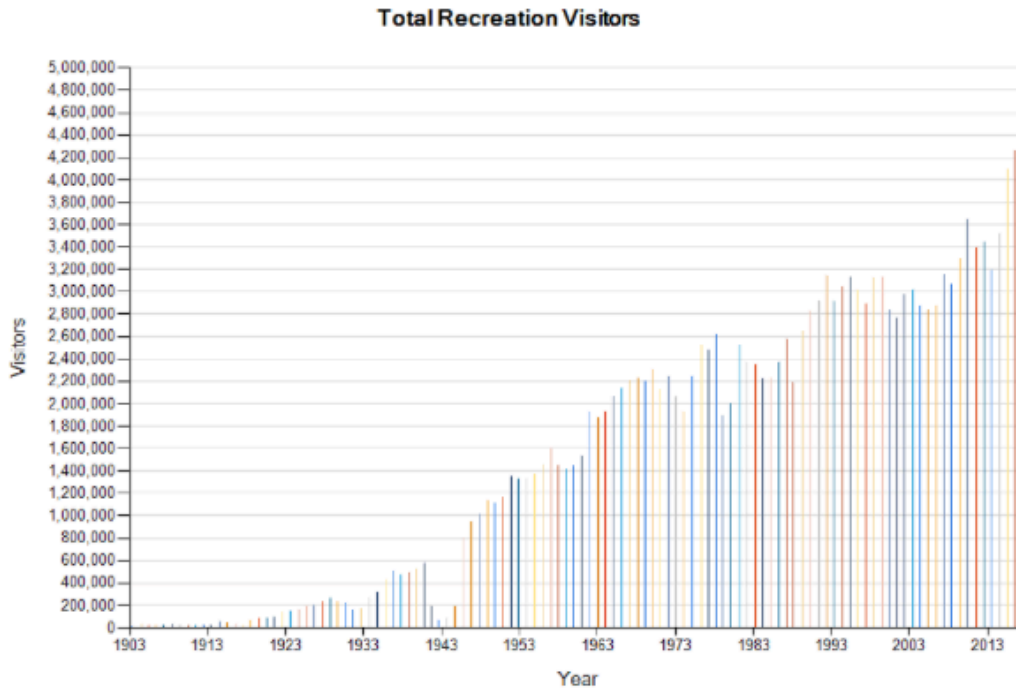


Figure 2: Yellowstone Visitors (Stats Report Viewer, NPS: 2017)

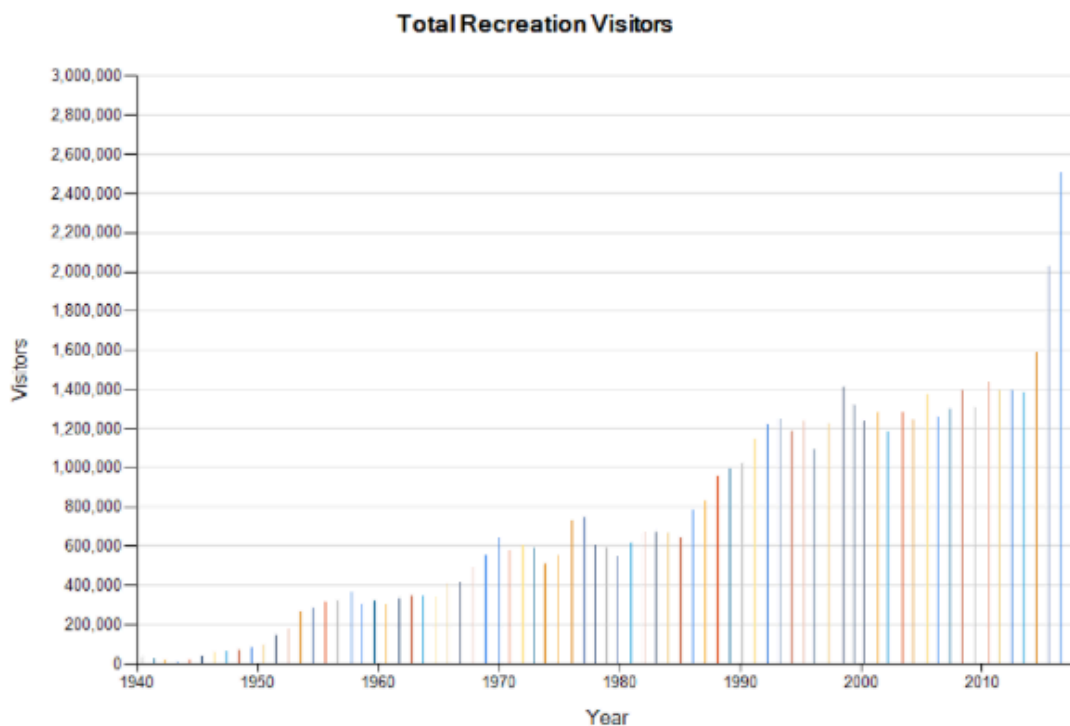


Figure 3: Joshua Tree Visitors (Stats Report Viewer, NPS: 2017)

These increases in park visitation remain today. In 2016, the centennial of the National Park Service saw the highest numbers ever in most parks. Arguably these trends speak to more than just popularity of parks, but access. In later chapters I will examine other possible factors in determining the trends in visitation.

Public lands a prominent aspect of many people’s view of recreation, but also of politics. These lands are politicized spaces, areas that grew from a political view of land that was carried over from European traditions, while simultaneously being intricately tied to the denial of European parenthood. Public lands were crafted through federal law and remain protected and managed by federal agencies today.

Public Lands Today

The average person does not easily understand the nuances of the public land system. There is strain and confusion over how lands are managed, by whom, and in what ways.

There are four organizations that manage public lands and natural resources: the National Park Service (NPS), the United States Forest Service (USFS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW). Each of these agencies operates with their own goals and objectives. Though, in terms of public lands and those who participate in outdoor pursuits, NPS, USFS, BLM are the most likely agencies individuals encounter.

The National Park Service, “preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world” (NPS “What We Do”).

The NPS emphasizes environmental and cultural preservation. That means the utmost protections for land and contributes much higher levels of interpretation for the public.

The United States Forest Service “is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grassland to meet the needs of present and future generations” (USFS “What We Believe”). You will notice that again there is a nod to the importance of conservation in the use of the word sustain. Moreover, there is also a clear nod to the means by which the USFS maintains its funding, productivity alludes to the fact that timber sales provide the majority to the budget for many forests. The USFS manages much more land than the NPS but remains less identifiable, less appreciated, and more often misunderstood.

The Bureau of Land Management's mission echoes the USFA, "It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations" (BLM "Facts"). The BLM focuses more prominently on the extraction and use of natural resources.

These three agencies manage the majority of public lands. The key here is recognizing that there is management of the lands that so many people perceive to be absent of people, society, culture, and politics. There are a plethora of laws and ordinances that restrict the ways people engage with these landscapes, the most prominent being the Wilderness Act of 1964 in which Wilderness (note the capital "W" as it distinguishes the federal definition from the colloquial term) is defined in contrast to man and society.

The Wilderness Act also regulates how people interact with lands that are distinguished as Wilderness. For example, you cannot enter Wilderness in groups larger than 12. You cannot shortcut trail switchbacks. You cannot build or maintain a fire within 100 feet of a water source. You cannot have any mechanized equipment, this includes bicycles. You cannot cache or store equipment for more than 48 hours. You cannot camp in any dispersed site for more than 14 consecutive days, once you have reached the 14 day mark you must leave and cannot return to that site for 30 days but cannot exceed 28 days of camping in that site in a calendar year.

Moreover, most Wilderness areas require a permit. This means that individuals have to go to a permitting station, often pay money, and maintain that permit on them during the course of the time they are in a Wilderness Area. These stipulations are logical from an environmental perspective, this protects spaces from being overused, abused, or destroyed. However, this also limits access in a variety of ways. People who are uncomfortable with uniformed federal employees, perhaps people who do not have identification or have tension with law enforcement, may not feel comfortable with the

permitting process. Those who are differently abled have less access to spaces that mechanized equipment is not allowed. The lands are regulated in ways that are often not perceived.

Wilderness is a place that most would associate with desolation, an absence of people. But to that end, a physical absence of people does not mean a philosophical or ideological absence. Wilderness is not absent of human intervention. These regulations on Wilderness, just one way the federally managed public lands are managed, encompass a large chunk of public space, a total of 109,511,038 acres, or 16% of federal lands (The Enduring Wilderness 2004). In some agencies Wilderness is less prevalent, for the BLM Wilderness is only 2% of the land they manage. Though for the USFS Wilderness encompasses 18%, Wilderness is nearly a quarter, 22% of USFW land, and more than half of the land, 56% of the NPS land is designated Wilderness (The Enduring Wilderness 2004).

TIME magazine explains, “when NPS was born, its mission was to preserve America’s most distinctive natural spaces. But beginning in 1933, the NPS began to protect the nation’s heritage as well” (TIME 2018: 4). It is this perspective of public land management, the belief that the nation has a single heritage, one that is presented by federal agencies perpetuates the mythical idea that this nation is one of white heritage, with a single identity that is homogenous and universal.

This is all to say that the development of land management emerges from a rush for European settlers to claim lands. As the Eastern states grow more crowded and competition increases, they move West for new opportunities and, with the Homestead Act, a chance to claim free land. The rush of pioneers heading west brought forth fears of a closing frontier. The development of land management through the creation of both the National Park Service and the United States Forest Service are rooted in issues of access. The fear was that resources would be overused, and individuals would monopolize

tourism. Though, as demonstrated in the Hutchings Supreme Court case, the labor of the working man did not override the federal government's ability to deny ownership. Moreover, the Hutchings case proves the power established in the protection of these lands, as symbols of American excellence, landscapes that European settlers had no hand in making or tending, but had no problem reveling in as symbols of their superiority.

Michel de Certeau (1988) describes the ways in which human geography is written through systems of power. De Certeau draws connections through religion and history to speak to the means of legitimizing power through colonization and subsequent persistent colonialism in North America. The dominant narrative becomes transformed to fact as it is presented as history, as separation is felt by the readers of history from the present and the past, despite the persistent presence of colonialism in North America. De Certeau explains, "the practice of history is an ambitious, progressive, also utopian practice that is linked to the endless institution of areas 'proper,' where a will to power can be inscribed in terms of reason" (1988: 6). The construction of American history through the lens of colonizer has created a story of progress.

Moreover, the work of Henri Lefebvre traces the origins of space to that of a pure mathematical conception, though he articulates that bias of space by explaining there is a "an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within the next: geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, national, continental, global. Not to mention nature's (physical) space, the space of (energy) flows, and so on," (1991: 8). His Marxian exploration of space, exploring modes of production to describe the production of space and spatialization demonstrates the complexities of social space in the social world. He argues that space is threefold: (1) the practices and perceptions, (2) representations and theories of space and (3) the spatial imaginary of time (1991). As is true of human identity, space is not a single thing, but multiple things at once, in constant negotiation with those who are experiencing it.

Therefore, the creation of public lands echoes the importance of landscape to American identity while simultaneously, but often silently speaking to the expected identity of a “good American,” a person who is pure of heart and mind, the individual who will fight tenaciously for what is right and good, but also, whose morals are dependent on Christian worldview of purity and progress, of whiteness and toxic male strength.

The dominant narrative has told many people, myself included, that this land is mine without requiring a reflection on how we got here. The goal of this work is to retell history with a more realistic multidimensional perspective to provide a more inclusive understanding of the dynamic and multifaceted reality of a static story. In the following chapters I will explore how the events I have laid out above speak to issues of race, gender, and class in relation to the outdoors. How have public lands been shaped by our ideas of American identity, and in what ways have we cultivated an exclusive space for the privileged few?

CHAPTER III: IT IS NOT AN ACCIDENT

“You can’t just say ‘diversify.’ You have to see what’s barring people from getting to the outdoors.” -Ambreen Tariq

“Conservation of that race which has given us the true spirit of Americanism is not a matter of either racial pride or racial prejudice; it is a matter of love of country.”

-Henry Fairfield Osborn (Purdy 2017)

“They went to the woods to escape aspects of humanity they created and preserved versions of the wild that promised to exclude the human qualities they despised.”

-Jedediah Purdy (2017)

In the following chapters I will explore various aspects of identity. I want to begin by addressing the inherent issues with separating aspects of identity. No part of identity is singular. The separations made through the following chapters are artificial. Identity is intersectional, and in constant negotiation (Crenshaw 1991).

In this chapter I will present ethnographic materials that speak to the diversity of experiences based on racial identity. I will build on arguments by Lipsitz (2007) on the ways race and space interact, as well as those made by Finney (2014) and Eyerman (2001) that explore the realities of cultural trauma. Race is a complex, negotiated, and fluid system used to justify various forms of power and oppression. For this reason, some artificial separations are articulated as a means of exploring dominant understandings of race. Race cannot be simplified to a handful of identities. Again, the intersections of both racial identity and other aspects of identity are real and ever-present.

Race and Public Lands

Our National Parks draw millions of visitors each year. A survey in 2011 found that 22 percent of visitors were minorities while minorities compose 37% of the American public (Nelson 2015). While some have defaulted to the position that public lands are public and people are seemingly not going to national parks and other public lands because they are not interested, the truth is much more complex and traumatic than that.

As explained in an article by Glenn Nelson for the New York Times, some fear these spaces. Michelle Perry, for example, a 58-year-old African American lives in view of the looming silhouette of Mount Rainier in Seattle. She knows she is within driving distance; she has access to transportation. Truly, the physical obstacles are not the main concern. Her reality becomes clear when she explains, “The mountains are beautiful to watch,” she pauses purposely, “from a distance” (Nelson 2015). She fears bears, wolves, cougars, but it is more than that. These lands are representative of a system that was built to purposely exclude people of color. It was not long ago that signs at the gate read “Whites Only.”

National Parks are marketed as “America’s Best Idea,” sold as a public space for all to access and enjoy. In 2017 alone, 330,882,751 people visited a National Park for the purpose of recreating (NPS “Annual Visitation” 2017). America’s public lands system has fostered an image of a land where people can escape to, be free of their social lives, expectations, and responsibilities. Though, these spaces were constructed in a system that is exclusive to a particular worldview. A space that is believed to be inclusive to all is actually a place that is terrifying to many.

I have been privileged enough to have never personally experienced racial discrimination or exclusion. It is only through the sharing of experiences by my friends, colleagues, and research participants that I have come to better understand the lived realities of people of color. One such example is a conversation I had with my friend, Alice.

Alice is a wonderful person, someone who works diligently on improving herself, and better understanding her place in the world. She's grown in the time I've known her, recognizing her own worth in a world that often tells her it should be less. It is with bravery that she resisted the tendency to believe the noise that reinforces a negative self-worth, and ironically, through that same dominant narrative that she learned to go outdoors to learn about herself.

Alice once told me a story about an experience she had on public land. I remember it in detail, how I felt as she told me, the ways it altered my perspective and has continued to be something I think about often. You see, around the time I began my work on public lands, Alice too began to publicly share her experiences outside. I watched as her social media became speckled with images from hikes, camping trips, and impromptu adventures. And, in that weird way that social media has altered how people interact, I felt myself connect with Alice and her experiences.

I had met Alice in an undergraduate Anthropology class, the very class that first connected me to studying public lands, the place I first engaged with space and place theory. We had spent time talking about the ways public spaces, for the class it was Zuma Beach, are transformed into privatized spaces through regulation and policing. Alice shared perspectives I hadn't considered. We talked about issues of access via public transportation, something I'd never had to think about. We walked the beach together as she mapped the usage and I shared with her my frustrations in having no luck finding any type of published history. It was in this class that I came to understand the ways that power is asserted over land, how public spaces are transformed to private areas restricted to, in this case the rich, but always those in power.

It was years before Alice and I would see each other again. As I said, social media played its strange game, connecting us from a distance in an artificial way. But we reconnected.

We chatted about her experiences as a self-identifying Chicana and a woman in the outdoors. And that's when she told me a story about hiking in a National Park in Washington.

Alice had been seizing opportunities to travel and see new places. She had made her way to Bryce Canyon National Park. The park is in southwestern Utah, a part of Colorado Plateau's grand staircase which also includes Zion National Park, and the Grand Canyon. The bottom layer of Bryce Canyon is the top layer at Zion NP, and the bottom layer at Zion is the top level at the Grand Canyon.

Prior to European settlement there is archeological evidence of Ancestral Puebloans in the area of at least 10,000 years (Jenks 1993). Though, Bryce Canyon is named for Ebenezer Bryce who was a homesteader in the 1870s (Kiver 1999). The majority of the area was settled by Mormon pioneers in the mid-1800s (Kiver 1999). The area was designed a National Monument by President Warren G. Harding in 1923 and later redesignated in 1928 to a National Park. The park is known for its hoodoos, tall pinnacles colored by the red and pink stratigraphy of the canyon, created by erosion.

Today the park welcomes many to hike, camp, stargaze, and in winter months, snowshoe. In 2017 2,571,684 people visited the park (NPS "Bryce Canyon" 2017). When Alice visited in 2016 2,365,110 people had visited. She told me the story of her experience while in the park.

She explained that as she walked on the trail, in lands that are reserved for the public by the federal government, that she turned and saw a clear symbol of her exclusion, a sign that she was not welcome and that signaled to her that she should not be there. The "kid" as she called him was wearing a Make America Great Again hat. The bright red undoubtedly stands out in the sandy colors of the park, but more so it triggers an instant acknowledgement of complacency, if not acceptance and support of racism, sexism,

xenophobia, and oppressive systems of hatred and oppression. She explained that instantly she felt uncomfortable, that she didn't belong and was not welcome. Something as simple as a hat, communicating so much about a place.

I remember distinctly sitting in my kitchen, with my headphones in chatting with Alice while I furiously typed notes. She had shared with me a few stories, insights that had been echoed by others about being a woman, about having a body that was not the ideal shape or size for recreating, but she was the first to mention anything like this. I had spoken to many women at this point, though many had been white. That's common when exploring the demographics of those who recreate, most are white. But that's not by accident.

And there's more to be said about experiences such as Alice's.



The outdoors is a space crafted to accept white people . Recreation is primarily a white activity (Finney 2014). And this is not by accident. Recreation is an activity crafted by and for the privileged. Fundamentally, white people have been those who have more capital, access, opportunity, and therefore, free time. Recreation is inherently biased to a more privileged group as it requires free time. While historically people of color have often had a more connected relationship with landscape, Indigenous populations of North America (Dunbar-Ortiz 2015), African slaves who worked on plantations (Finney 2014), the Chinese and Latinx/Hispanic immigrants who built the parks and trails that are used today have crafted intimate relationships with landscapes that are overlooked and unacknowledged in the retelling of history (Stern 2016). White men may have written the laws, dominant cultural values, and history of this nation, while in reality it was shaped, built, and tended by all people. Though their voices haven't been heard as frequently, or

as loudly as the politicians, writers, and settlers who've created and maintained our public land system.

The outdoors is perceived as a place that white people go (Finney 2014). Many believe some of the most popular recreational activities, hiking, camping, backpacking, for example, are white people things. The perception is that public lands, our outdoor spaces reserved by state and federal government from development, are for everyone. The United States Forest Service, for instance, uses the catchphrase "it's all yours." It's a means of branding and marketing, but also, frequently, a misconception. While public lands are intended to be for all Americans, many Americans do not feel welcomed or safe, while others simply do not have the means to access these often hard to reach places. Others avoid these areas because of deeply rooted cultural trauma which refers to traumatic fear which creates the need to narrate a new foundation through reinterpreting and re-righting the past to reconcile the past with present and future needs (Eyerman 2001, Finney 2014).

But this doesn't happen overnight, or in a bubble. The exclusion of non-white bodies from outdoor spaces is a consequence of colonialism, a process that is reinforced by hegemonic and systematic oppression (Dunbar-Ortiz 2015, Finney 2014, Kosek 2006). In this chapter I will investigate the cultural and political means by which white bodies came to dominate the narrative of landscape. I will explore the processes by which experience became narrowed to a single racial perspective and discuss some of the cultural trauma that remains a lived reality for many people of color.

Race and nature are both material and symbolic. As argued by Donald Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian, race and nature work together, "their recombinant mutations that so often haunt the cultural politics of identity and difference. Discourse of race and nature provide the resources to express truths, forge identities, and justify inequalities" (Moore et al. 2003: 1). They explain that race and nature relate in three

ways: work, terrain, and power. These three categories articulate the racialization of both bodies and geographic space. Fundamentally, we must recognize that nature and race, as categories constructed by culture, are rooted in power systems. These have subjective histories and are in constant negotiation in a system to justify power (Moore et al. 2003).

Fundamentally, the belief that nature precedes history, that nature is a truth perpetuates its dominant narrative. Nature has a history, as explained in Chapter II, that history in North America is based on Christian European perspectives. The Puritan colonists who brought with them a Western European understanding of the world were forming the culture of the United States through a religious lens.

Landscape was, to settlers, and is, capital. And, as will be explored and explained in this chapter, race and nature together are utilized as instruments of power (Moore et al. 2003: 8). Moore et al. suggest that power works on and through nature in overlapping ways though, ultimately, they argue nature is the ground on which all resistance of oppressive systems is fought (2003: 15). In this way, I will investigate the ways race has been related to the outdoors and recreation culture, concluding by sharing some of the resistance to the exclusion to these spaces by people of color.

Theoretical Groundwork

Race is a socially constructed system argued to have been founded in biological principles of difference which were nothing more than skin deep. These differences were utilized as a justification for dehumanizing, enslaving, and murdering entire peoples. This system emerged from the belief in white supremacy, that Western society was more advanced than any other culture, that simplicity was equivalent to stupidity.

Fundamentally, race was a system constructed as justification of colonization, a means of

creating a system from which those in power could engrain their beliefs to create structural inequality.

This is a critically important factor in understanding the construction of the outdoors as a concept. The history of race is not separate from the history of lands. Space is entwined with social reality, as argued by Edward Soja, social theory must recognize not only social being, but time and space as well, historical and geographical materialism in conversation with the social reality reconnecting history, geography and modernity (Soja 1989: 12).

The origins of race point back to the discipline of Anthropology, and the first social scientists who believed in the purity of the scientific method, so much so that they believe they had to find a pure and objective means of evaluating society. In this misguided attempt Anthropologists such as Edward Burnett Tylor (1958) and Lewis Henry Morgan (1996) strived to adapt the scientific method and theory of evolution to be applicable to society. Utilizing an organismic analogy and a model of linear evolution of society, social Darwinists touted an ideology that was adopted by Eugenicists and aligned with the belief that civilized white Christian men were the strongest most advanced of the human species.

As Michael Omi and Howard Winant explain, “Social science was shaped, not only by the European founding fathers, but also by the Social Darwinist currents of the period. As did virtually all the early figures, these men adhered to the unquestioned white supremacy of their time. Their work contributed, sometimes inadvertently but often by intention, to the racist hysteria of the late 19th and early 20th centuries” (2015: 5). This system provided justification for the oppression of individuals, “the concept of race, developing unevenly in the Americas from the arrival of Europeans in the Western hemisphere down to the present, has served as a fundamental organizing principle of the social system. Practices of distinguishing among human beings according to their corporeal

characteristics became linked to systems of control, exploitation, and resistance” (Omi and Winant 2015: 3).

Of course, experience is not singular. Discrimination, oppression, and exploitation became pervasive in all spheres of life. The construction of a system of legitimization meant that while race would be proven to be not at all a biological fact, but instead a social system with biological consequences (Gravlee 2009), race as a means of discrimination would remain. Structural racism ensures racial inequity.

And while race as a system of categorization has been denied as legitimate, we now must recognize that color blind approaches are just as flawed as accepting the system to begin with. You see, rather than race being a false system that we can deny, forget, and move forward, race is now a system with a lived consequence, a reality that is not based in biology but has become biology (Gravlee 2009). In this way, denying that people of color have any difference in their experience of the world is to deny that there has been a system created that ensure they are not treated equally.

For example, and in direct relation to this research, we must recognize that race has a spatial dimension. There are specific places that are acceptable or unacceptable for people to be depending on the color of their skin. People of color are expected to be in some places that white people are not. People of color are not expected to be in other places that are perfectly okay for white people to be in. In this way race is spatialized, and space racialized. As explained by G. Lipsitz, we exist in spatial imaginaries and lived experiences of race have a spatial dimension, different races are relegated to different spaces through regulation (2007). Opportunity is spatialized and racialized. What options we have are dependent on how we are perceived, in what ways our bodies are read, and in relation to our surroundings.

But why? Well, Lipsitz, explains, segregation creates more privileged and higher rewards (2007). Privilege recapitulates further privilege. For the outdoors, having a space that is separate and seemingly distance from society, provides the perception of more purity, serenity, and escape. By segregating wild spaces from urban ones, the rewards of wild spaces are much higher. Urban spaces are for everyone, the defining characteristic is a high capacity for human development unlike outdoor spaces that are culturally understood to be desolate and therefore access to them is limited and privileged. This is dependent on the spatial imaginary.

David Noble identifies a spatial imaginary at the core of European colonization, conquest, and the settlement of North America (Lipsitz 2007: 14, Noble 2002). He cites the belief that a “virtuous and timeless nature [is juxtaposed] with corrupt and time-bound human society... that free nations had to be composed of homogeneous populations with ties to the national landscape, ‘timeless spaces’ where citizens lived in complete harmony with one another,” (Lipsitz 2007: 14). In order to achieve the success of a harmonious society living in supreme moral virtue “impure” populations that challenged the homogeneity of the nation had to be removed.

Lipsitz explains, utilizing Noble’s framework that rather than sharing North America with native populations, “the moral geography of the colonists required conquest, genocide, and Indian removal to produce the sacred ground that the Europeans felt would recreate the biblical idea of a city on a hill. The creation of homogeneous polities living in free spaces required the exclusion of others deemed different, deficient, and non-normative” (Lipsitz 2007: 15).

Noble connects the redemptive nature of the American landscape as a refuge from the European corruption, providing the framework for the imagined community of the United States (Noble 2002). But it was the white spatial imaginary that led to the development of public lands and land ownership, which creates exclusivity and homogeneity (Lipsitz

2007; McKenzie 1994). The white spatial imaginary establishes contract law and deed restrictions as supreme authorities (Lipsitz 2007: 13). Thus, the exclusion of non-white bodies in and on landscape begins very early in the colonization of North America.

Indigenous populations are not a homogenous group. Some met colonists with hospitality, others were less formidable. Though, fundamentally, colonists removed peoples and exploited the landscapes utilized by native populations for their own benefit. Lands were appropriated, populations of people were lost both to disease and the process of forced removal. Land ownership was thrust upon a landscape that had previously only been known to as a cultural resource, but now, it was a natural resource.

Issues of spatialization emerged as different opinions, fostered by different cultures collided. And in North America, as well as many other colonized places, the native peoples were forced into systems of assimilation, violence, or both. The white spatial imaginary, the way European immigrants decided land should be engaged with and utilized was adopted across the continent in the process of Manifest Destiny.

Development mean progress, removal meant purity, and ultimately, the North American landscape would represent an Eden-like utopia (Spence 1999).

Indigeneity and Public Lands

The history presented to most Americans is dependent on a narrative of deficit. As explained by Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, settler colonialism has shaped our understanding and discussion of American history. She asserts that genocide and colonialism must be part of the discussion of American history as they privileged European settlers and immigrants, providing them with an opportunity for land ownership at the expense of indigenous populations of North America. Dunbar-Ortiz calls this the path of “greed and destruction” (1). The acquisition of lands was justified through the process of Manifest

Destiny and the cultivation, “Everything in US history is about the land — who oversaw and cultivated it first, fished its waters, maintained its wildlife; who invaded and stole it; how it became a commodity (‘real estate’) broken into pieces to be bought and sold on the market” (Dunbar-Ortiz 1). Both ownership and agricultural development was profit driven and articulates lands as a commodity.

Dunbar Ortiz calls for a rewriting of American history which takes into account the genocide, slavery, and land theft which have been manipulated and articulated to be heroic and celebratory. Moreover, this process of writing history remains profit driven, scholars and historians admire the romantic narrative of American individualism and conquest. Even in instances where individuals have spoken to the “melting pot” of American culture, there is victim blaming, pointing the finger at the populations of people for their own demise. She believes “writing US history... requires rethinking the consensual national narrative” (Dunbar-Ortiz 2), one that acknowledges the brutal reality of the settlement of North America.

This is further explored by Walter Hixson who supports Dunbar-Ortiz’s argument in his challenging of the dominant narrative of American history. He rightly insists that we more direct acknowledge the magnitude of American Indian removal and the impact of the violence of settler colonialism (2015). Hixson is critical of the ways history has seemingly created a more even ground in which the colonizer and colonized traded, allied, and negotiated; in some cases, assimilation is presented as the choice of the native peoples.

He argues that colonizers were dependent on the colonized to formulate their own oppositional identity, therefore colonial identities were not static, but constructed, unstable and in need of constant affirmation in order to articulate them as legitimate, “Without the colonized other, the European could not define his own identity through

manliness, whiteness, godliness, progress, and the civilizing mission vis-à-vis the colonial world” (10).

Because identity construction was biased by the relationship of colonizer to colonized it is also impossible to separate that identity construction from spatiality. As I have laid out in the previous chapter, and will continue to engage with in future chapters, the production of space is deeply ingrained in systems of knowledge and power (Foucault 1979).

Hixson explains, “Rather than being an empty void, space... is heavily laden with meaning. A culturally imagined and legally sanctioned relationship with the land creates the condition and contingencies of social relations—the facts on the ground” (2013: 6). The social reality is dependent on these relationships. He explains further, “In settler colonial societies, terms such as a ‘frontier,’ ‘Manifest Destiny,’ and ‘homeland’ assumed powerful symbolic meaning, creating emotional attachments. Legal claims such as the “Doctrine of Discovery” and ‘domestic dependent nations’ bolstered these cultural ties to colonial space, while sanctioning dispossession and removal policies” (2013: 6). As settlers begin to foster a connection through the practice and politics, native peoples begin to lose their social and cultural connections through a re-writing of history. Their identity becomes entirely dependent on the politics of land (Hixson 2013: 6). The denial of the extent of the consequences of the policies and practice of the United States government continues to perpetuate an inequitable lived reality.

While colonialism typically means a period of exploitation and an end in which they depart, in settler colonialism the colonizer remains permanently (Hixson 2013: 5). The public lands that exist today are not absent of the politics of the past.

The perception of public lands, and American culture in general, as a nation that is committed to democracy and diversity which ignores the colonial history that brought the

United States to its current standing. This fantasy that allows the United States to identify as a democracy, disavowing imperialism, is American exceptionalism. The monolithic image of “the West” and later “America,” has established a cultural memory that denies and obscures the realities of violence, erasure, and conquest (Hixson 2013: 12–15; Blackhawk 2006).

The ahistorical nature of our understanding of American history creates a short timeline, one that honors “progress” and ignores trauma and pain. The work of Ned Blackhawk speaks specifically to the essentialism of native history and the ahistoricism of American culture. This is echoed in the work of Benjamin Madley (2016) who utilizes a case study of California Indian Catastrophe and the definition of genocide outlined by the United Nations to explore the ways that societal, judicial, and political support aided genocide, but also the ways in which eyewitness testimony challenges that all attack on Native peoples were an act of genocide. While the acts of European settlers against indigenous peoples was horrendous, by using a blanket assumption of genocide in the attacks or changes to native lifeways, we are perpetuating the racist assumption, and essentialism that homogenizes native cultures.

Madley explains, and I agree, that while genocide affected many populations, cultural practices and identities, there was also many non-genocidal acts that contributed to the changes to native populations. The sweeping statement of universal genocide refuses the agency of native peoples, denies the diversity of cultures, languages, religions, governments, and relationships (Madley 2016). This is an example of the ways that native peoples are homogenized and perpetuated from the deficit-based model.

The deficit-based model ensures that native peoples are presented in negative ways. And, “deficit or disparity narrative often fail to trigger moral urgency among non-Native populations to address oppressive conditions” (Reclaiming Native Truth 2018). There is an emphasis on disparities, a perception of unfair access to resources (frequently

“government benefits” and casino money), and predominately a sense of otherness or inferiority (Reclaiming Native Truth 2018). The perception that natives were, at the time of colonization, uncivilized savages is perpetuated by the narrative that they are alcoholics, drug abusers, impoverished, and a problem to be solved (Reclaiming Native Truth 2018). In this way the colonizers are presented as heroic saviors, pushing progress toward a better more civilized, and therefore, white culture.

Reclaiming Native Truth is a project that aims to “eradicate harmful and toxic narratives, stereotypes, structural and institutional racism, dehumanization and the invisibility of Native Americans... to increase access to opportunities and rights and to ensure that Native Americans live in a society where they are celebrated as a vital part of the fabric of the United States as both leaders and key contributors” (Changing the Narrative about Native Americans 2018: 3).

Today, many native peoples are resisting that dominant, deficit narrative. For example, in 2018, Jolie Varela, the founder of Indigenous Women Hike, hiked the Nuumu Poyo. Varela is Paiute, from Payahuunadu, more commonly known as the Owens Valley in eastern California. Varela founded Indigenous Women Hike as a way to reconnect her people to the land, and in this process, heal.

You see, the Nuumu Poyo, like Payahuunadu, is known by another name to most, a name that reinforces this problematic dominant narrative that both erases the peoples and culture that came before settler colonialism, but also reinforces colonialism as heroic, progressive, and natural (Abel 2018). The Nuumu Poyo, which means the people’s road or trail, was a trade route for the Paiute people (Abel 2018).

That trade route was appropriated by Wilbur F. McClure who “designed” the trail to honor John Muir. Muir is most famous for his writings about the Sierra. We frequently celebrate Muir as a profound champion for environmental protection but forget he too

shared racist views. Muir reported a “dirty and irregular life” of the Native Ahwahnechee living along his beloved Merced River. And in one of his most popular writings, *Our National Parks*, he assured readers that, “Indians, most of them are dead or civilized into useless innocence.”

So, as Varela hiked the Nuumu Poyo, she did it beside many who were walking the same path that they understood to have an entirely different history, one that honors the man who contributed to the same deficit-based model that exists today.

Though, Varela is resisting the oppressive norms. Rather than going through the process of obtaining a permit, as the Nuumu Poyo/John Muir Trail passes through three National Parks, Yosemite, Sequoia, and Kings Canyon, through two national forests, Inyo and Sierra, and through two Wildernesses, John Muir and Ansel Adams. To complete this route legally, one must obtain a permit. The permitting process is long, arduous, and obtaining one is not a guarantee. Truthfully, it is very difficult to get a permit to start from Yosemite and complete the entire 211-mile trail. The process is called a permit lottery, and when people received a permit, they truly have won the lottery, the odds are absolutely against you.

But Varela chose not to get a permit. As advised by her elders, she traveled under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (Johnson-Groh 2018). Varela chose to speak with land management agencies to let them know where she and her fellow travelers would be but asserted sovereignty in not obtaining a permit. Instead of being complacent in a system of domination and historical trauma, Varela chose to rewrite the narrative, assert her ability to transcend the perceptions of the past and reconnect herself, and her people to their ancestral lands.

Though, unfortunately, stories such as these are not commonplace. The reality is that the relationships that indigenous peoples have with land are complicated by the federal

government. For example, Varela explained that an event hosted by the American Alpine Club in Payahupaway (Bishop), California, part of the Payahuunadu (Owens Valley) was sponsored by Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) (Abel 2018). She explained that the history between LADWP is contentious as they have historically imposed strict water regulations on the reservation which persist today. For context, the Big Pine Indian Reservation, just minutes down the road from Payahupaway (Bishop) was told by LADWP that they would not fix a broken water pipe unless the tribe would relinquish their water rights. This happened in 2017 (Taliman 2017).

Varela was disappointed by LADWP's association with the event but organized a Paiute panel at the event. Organizers wanted to give her just five minutes, they didn't think people would want to hear about what indigenous people had to say about recreation, but the turnout was huge (Abel 2018).

The work of Varela and others like her, demonstrates the importance of creating space for underrepresented cultures. Moreover, most who are privileged enough to have access to these spaces and the resources to recreate are frequently not the same people who share this struggle which is why it is difficult to tell a person who idolizes John Muir that the trail they are hiking is actually a Paiute trading route, and that Muir was a racist.

We must remember, when honoring the legacy of the men who fought for the protection of these spaces, that they did so with a political agenda that was not absent of the removal of native peoples both physically from the land, but also from their part in this story.

The Nuumu Poyo was taken by white culture, silencing the very people who had created it. This path through the stunningly beautiful Sierras honors the legacy of Muir, and many like him that, in turn, denies the existence of people and culture that came before colonization. A culture that at best is homogenized into a singular people, but at worst is believed to be extinct. The legacy has been rewritten into a fallacious role of the savage

natives, in a biased and subjective history that honors the systems of power that were created and reinforced by white male supremacy and colonization.

Another example of modern resistance to the oppressive practices and dominant narrative of landscape is Standing Rock. It was a moment that native peoples united to undermine systematic erasure to redefine themselves, as Judith LeBlanc explains, “we interrupted the narrative of who and what Indian people are in the 21st century” (Reclaiming Native Truth 2018: 35). As over 360 tribes and 20,000 people came together to assert the human right to clean water. While public lands are defined in a particular way, state and federally owned spaces that are open to the public, the reality is that many places in which ownership is asserted is more complicated than simply owning land. Landscape is inescapably connected to human needs and rights. For example, the waters that flow across lands that are a patch quilt of ownership affect more than the arbitrary ownership lines that have been drawn. At Standing Rock Native peoples and allies united to assert that they were water protectors, not protestors.

However, due to the dominant narrative of erasure of native peoples, and corporate, profit driven policies, the rights of Native peoples were challenged. The irony of Native peoples, those who were there long before settlers and colonizers, those who held the most legitimate claim to that land were being persecuted as trespassers. As explained by Lawrence O’Donnell, “descendants of the very first people to ever set foot on that land would be arrested by the invaders of that land for trespassing” (Reclaiming Native Truth 38). This was a moment that challenged what most knew of the history of this country. Here, many Americans were faced with the harsh reality that Native peoples may not be treated as equally as many would like to think.

Many Americans are unaware, because our education system has failed to teach them, that there are 600+ sovereign nations within the United States borders. There have been over 500 broken treaties with Native peoples. The narrative of American history removes

these realities in favor of a heroic presentation of progress, individualism, and a unified national identity that is rooted in very biased perspective of the settlers.

A literature review conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research featured in *Reclaiming Native Truth* explains that while most Americans (59%) agree that what happened to Indigenous North Americans was genocide, they also underestimate discrimination that is experienced as most view injustice as being in the past (2018: 53–54). Though invisibility remains a common problem, with 39 million Black people, and 50 million Hispanic/Latinx people, the population of 3 million Native peoples most Americans do not have the same opportunity to engage with Native peoples, and this perpetuates the idea that Native people no longer exist (2018: 50, 53). Likely connected to this is the fact that many still express openly racist views against Native populations: the dominant view is that they are both rich with casino money and government subsidies AND living in abject poverty (*Reclaiming Native Truth* 2018: 51). While people tend to be open to sovereignty, they remain hostile to tribal governments, revealing the lack of understanding of sovereignty, and many white Americans see no problem with assimilation, and the dominant melting pot narrative of the nation only problematizes this further (*Reclaiming Native Truth* 2018: 51).

Though, the work of people such as Varela and her hike of the Nuumu Poyo, the resistance in moments such as Standing Rock, and the concerted effort of allies and academics such as Dunbar-Ortiz, Madley, Hixson, and Blackhawk to change this dominant narrative inspires hope. However, until history is more inclusive of a variety of perspectives, encouraging a critical engagement with the harsh realities of colonialism and modern power relationships we will continue to lack this perspective.

While Native people's relationship with the history of the United States is strained and complex, it is not only Native peoples who have to battle for acknowledgement of cultural trauma and systematic exclusion. The history of this nation is rooted in the

disavowal of humanity from those who were not considered “civilized”. The dehumanization of both Native peoples and Black slaves is integral in understanding the origins of this nation.

“Black Faces, White Spaces”

As explained by Reginald Horsman, the complexities of the founding of American are entangled with racial ideologies. He articulates that Anglo-Saxonism is middle in with European history, scientific racism, and idealistic perceptions of expansion rooted in Christian ideology (1981). Settlers optimistically believed that they would be teaching other populations how to best govern themselves, though that arrogance was also steeped with superiority and hatred of difference.

Moreover, Paul Outka (2008) explores the connections of race and nature in cultural history. He argues that the intersection of whiteness and pastoralism has fostered the connection of freedom and self-connection with whiteness. This is further perpetuated by the Transcendentalists’ obsession with the outdoors. This connection coincides with the changing race relations in the country as commodification of monoculture and domestication of animals as a justification of racialization (2008: 8).

Echoing that sentiments of Blackhawk about the ahistorical quality of the beginnings of environmentalism and the romanticized West we overlook the brutality necessary to foster and enforce a racial divide. This framework normalizes white identity, to which Outka calls for an un-marking of whiteness as natural (Outka 2008). As whiteness becomes normative, so does the policing of space and time. As whiteness developed into “humanity” so does blackness into a racial essence, one that is perceived and biased by ideas surrounding purity (Outka 2008: 11). If whiteness is humanity, blackness is not human.

Outka uses this framework to explore the experience of nature. As nature is socially constructed in the same way race is, he asserts that sublimity may in fact be in response to or sign of trauma, “moments when a white subject enjoys a profound and difficult-to-represent identification with the landscape... often signify another profound and ambiguous traumatic identification, and that both such moments are part of how racial identity has been historically constructed” (24). It is with this groundwork that Carolyn Finney (2014) explores the basis of the Black environmental experience.

Finney traces the co-construction of two distinctly separate environmental experiences, the white outdoor experience and the Black outdoor experience. Finney acknowledges, as would also like to, that these are not the only outdoor experiences. There is a Latinx outdoor experience, an Asian outdoor experience, even more specifically and intersectional outdoor experiences. Though, Finney focused in depth on the black outdoor experience.

While the outdoor experience is believed to be singular the reality is that the factors of our identity affect how we engage with our surroundings. By tracing the origins of the environmental movement, politics of nature, and representation Finney is able to demonstrate the ways white environmental experience is a romanticized perception of the wild which ignores historical events and traumatic cultural memory of people of color, in particular for Finney, African Americans in this country. The black environmental experience is riddled with fear, uncertainty, and exclusion.

Representation, as with the deficit model in Native culture, perpetuates the existing inequalities. Finney suggests that through acknowledging cultural trauma, telling both the painful stories of the past and the recent strides toward a more inclusive outdoors, we can combat a singular dominant narrative which universalizes the outdoors and the diversity of environmental experience.

Echoing the sentiments of Outka's work, Finney explains that a "white wilderness" is socially constructed and grounded in race, class, gender, and cultural ideologies.

Whiteness dominates the ways we come to know and understand our environment. This becomes a truth in the retelling of rhetoric, teaching of a singular perspective of history, ingrained in our systems, institutions, and personal beliefs (Finney 2014: 9).

But there are multiple wilderness experiences. Using historical particularity Finney finds the origin of the wilderness experience to be politically grounded in the Homestead Act for white Americans as they were granted the right to lay claim to 160-acre parcels of land; and the Black wilderness experience to be rooted in the Emancipation Proclamation which allowed "forty thousand freedmen to receive four hundred thousand acres of abandoned Confederate land" (Finney 2014: 36). The Freedmen's Bureau was established in 1865 to manage and supervise all abandoned and confiscated land in the South and assign tracts of land to former slaves.

By 1866, after less than a year, Congress defeated the portion of the Freedmen's Bureau that assigned land to former slaves, and President Johnson ordered all land titles be rescinded as former white plantation owners began to feel uneasy about former slaves holding land, and the potential for autonomy, and capital (Finney 2014: 37). President Johnson continued to veto all proposed land grants for former slaves (Finney 2014: 37). The Homestead Act created specific rules for all claimants to claim and retain their parcel of land, this furthered the divide between the white and Black wilderness experiences. While white people were granted claims to land that were enforced and protected by the Homestead Act, the lived realities of the Emancipation Proclamation reinforced the lack of autonomy or equal rights to all men.

As Black Americans worked to adapt to the structural inequalities implemented during the Homestead Act, John Muir and environmentalism began to rise to prominence. In

1875 Muir gave his first lecture on the purity of the wilderness (Finney 2014: 37), in the 1898 Gifford Pinchot became known as the “father of conservation” for his rational and efficient planned use of natural resources (Finney 2014: 37). These men “explored, articulated, and disseminated conservation and preservation ideologies, legislation was being enacted to limit both movements and accessibility for African Americans, as well as American Indians, Chinese, and other nonwhite peoples in the United States. This includes the California Land Claims Acts (1898), the Black Codes (1861–65), the Dawes Act (1887), and the Curtis Act (1898)” (Finney 2014: 37).

We must take into consideration the ways structural racism has taken form. Racial exclusion laws only further perpetuated the disparities between white and non-white bodies in their lived experiences and access to lands.

The Naturalization Act of 1790 was one of the first means by which immigration was regulated. Prior to this time, immigration has been by Western European settlers, though by 1790 immigration to the “land of opportunity” was happening at a rate that concerned many. To regulate this the Naturalization Act assured that only free, white persons of good character would be naturalized. At the time American Indians, servants, free Black people and Asian people were not included. And free Black people were allowed citizenship only at the state level.

For a time, those included in naturalization and citizenship grew. For example, post Civil War, the Naturalization Act of 1870 extended naturalization to “aliens of African nativity and to people of African descent.” The 1875 Page Act banned Chinese women from immigrating to the United States. And the Chinese Exclusion Act was signed in 1882 to prohibit all immigration of Chinese laborers. This was the first law to prevent all members of a specific ethnic or national group from immigrating to the country. This was rooted in the concern for competition of Chinese immigrants and white settlers during the California gold rush.

The Immigration Act of 1924 included the National Origins Act and Asian-Exclusion Act which set quotas on immigrants from certain countries. This was a mechanism to ban non-white immigrants, primarily Southern Europeans, Eastern Europeans, people of Arabian origin and Jewish people. Virtually all Asian people were also banned.

Though immigration is only one way that bodies were policed. Exclusion laws were enforced in many places and exclusionary practices happened in individual states as well. In California the Alien Land Law of 1913 prevented “aliens” ineligible for citizenship from owning agricultural land or possessing long term leases. This was directed toward Japanese people but also affected Chinese, Korean and Indian families. This law was predominately supported, being passed 35:2. And in 1920 the law was continued and tightened to prevent the use of loopholes for families to lease land for fewer than three years. They could not own stock in companies and guardians or agents of ineligible aliens were required to submit an annual report.

While the 1913 Alien Land Law did little to slow Japanese immigration, the 1920 Alien Land Law was passed in response to increased anti-Japanese sentiment in the state. This law was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1923 and a 1946 case reaffirmed the decision. Other states with similar laws include Minnesota, Nebraska, Texas, Washington, Utah, Wyoming, Arizona, Louisiana, Idaho, Montana, Kansas, Arkansas, and Oregon.

Though, Oregon is the most prominent example of racial discrimination and exclusion. While the Pacific Northwest may have a reputation as a liberal place, progressive and accepting, it has been one of the most discriminatory, racist and exclusionary places in the country.

In a similar way to the process of erasing the racial tensions, genocide, and trauma in our history, those who are privileged tend to overlook the persistence of these issues today.

While politically we focus on population centers, areas where the political map turns a more liberal blue, we forget that spatially much of Oregon and Washington are bright red, with the support for Donald Trump's Make America Great Again campaign, as well as the legacy of the exclusion laws from years before.

When Oregon was just a territory in 1843, encompassing modern day Washington state and parts of Idaho, the Provisional Government of Oregon established organic laws which included a ban on slavery ("Black Exclusion Laws in Oregon"). While this seems as though this is echoing the modern liberalism perceived today, it was more clearly elaborated on June 26, 1844 as the first Black Exclusion law to not only ban slavery, but force all black and mulatto settlers to leave Oregon with a punishment of whipping should they not leave (McClintock 1995).

This was not a means of refusing the oppressive and dehumanizing system of enslaving people as property, but instead to ensure the "white utopia" of Oregon would be upheld (Novak 2016). One settler was quoted as saying, Oregon pioneers, "hated slavery, but a much larger number of them hated free negroes worse than slaves" (Brooks 2004).

In 1857 Oregon was the first, and only state, to be admitted to the union with exclusion laws. This was upheld as the 1850 census showed fewer than 50 black people in Oregon (Davis 1972). This raised only slightly in the following Census in 1860 to 75 compared to neighboring California where the population was over 4,000 (Brooks 2004). This is not surprising as their presence was criminalized.

As explained by Walidah Imarisha in her talk, "Why Aren't There More Black People in Oregon? A Hidden History," "Oregon is not different from other parts of the country, the difference with Oregon is they wrote it down."

The exclusion of Black folks from Oregon was justified as the white settlers believed that had Black people been allowed in the state they may have encouraged or allowed a “native uprising.” Ultimately, this part of the history demonstrates that as white settlers moved into new territories, the rush of pioneers to enact Manifest Destiny, they feared that the indigenous peoples and the freed slaves that had been exploited, removed, dehumanized, and oppressed by resist as they forcefully engaged in constructing a legal system that would ensure their continued power.

As explained by Finney, much of what we understand about the environmentalism is rooted in a white male experience. “John Muir publicly spoke about preservation while Jim Crow segregation did not allow for African Americans to partake in sublime nature,” (Finney 2016: 46). Moreover, Muir presented a universality of experience of and in nature that was not accessible for all—only available for a specific few (Parker 2018: 26).

This has manifest in modern experiences of environment as well. For example, Kimberly N. Ruffin (2010) utilizes the Jena six case, one in which a “white tree” was example of the burden-and-the-beauty paradox. Ruffin connects the ways racism and ecological alienation are connected. The Jena Six were six Black teenagers who were convicted of beating a white peer at Jena High School in Jena, Louisiana. The high school is predominately white, 90%, while the other 10% are black. Ruffin uses the example because the Jena Six to demonstrate the ways that connections to environment are policed through racial lines even in the institutions set in social settings.

It is reported that this case began when a black freshman student asked the principal of the school if he could sit at the “white tree,” a tree that was at the center of the courtyard, and one of the only places where one could sit in shade. The black student population typically sat in the bleachers, while white students populated the space beneath the tree.

When the question was posed the principal responded by saying that students can sit wherever they wanted. The freshman sat beneath the tree with his friends.

The following morning students and staff discovered nooses hanging from the tree. The school investigation found that the nooses were hung by three white members of the school's rodeo team. The school's investigation committee found, "the three young teens had no knowledge that nooses symbolize the terrible legacy of the lynchings of countless blacks in American history" (Franklin 2007).

This example in particular speaks to the assertion by Finney (2014) that cultural trauma remains a prominent aspect of experience of the outdoors for people of color. As explained by Finney, "A tree became a painful symbol for many black people, reminding them that the color of their skin could mean death" (2014: 60). This is a prominent part of the environmental imaginary for people of color, an experience of cultural trauma that cannot be felt by people who have been privileged to have not experienced that threat of that type of violence.

The disciplinary process for the three students who hung the nooses was unclear and while the principal suggested expulsion, the Board of Education overruled his recommendation instead it was initially reported that the students would only have served three days of in-school detention (Fears 2007). The three students were placed in an alternative school for about a month, spent two weeks on in-school suspension, served Saturday detentions, had to attend Discipline Court, referred to Families in Need of Services and had to be evaluated before returning to school (Lewan 2007).

On December 4, 2006 17-year-old Justin Barker, a white student at Jena High School was reportedly punched, kicked, and stomped on while at school by a group of black students. The group claimed he had made a racist joke, some recanted that and said the attack was in response to the three nooses (Foster 2011). While Barker had been attacked and was

sent to a local emergency room, he also managed to attend a class ring ceremony and dance later that evening. Law enforcement arrested the six students, five of the six were charged with attempted murder (State of Louisiana v. Robert Bailey 2007).

It is through this example that Ruffin presents the ecological burden-and-the-beauty paradox in which she pinpoints the “dynamic influence of the natural and social order on African American experience and outlook” (2010: 2). Ruffin suggests that those who are marked racially (any non-white identities) are given an ecological burden which contributes to economic and environmental disadvantages.

These environmental disadvantages are often called environmental racism. The flip side to this experience is environmental privilege (Park and Pellow 2011). Environmental privilege is defined as, “the results from the exercise of economic, political, and cultural power that some groups enjoy, which enables them exclusive access to coveted environmental amenities such as forests, parks, mountains, rivers, coastal property, open lands, and elite neighborhoods” (Park and Pellow 2011: 4). Moreover, this is an experience, like race (Gravlee 2009) that becomes embodied, “environmental privilege is embodied in the fact that some groups can access spaces and resources, which are protected from the kinds of ecological harm that other groups are forced to contend with everyday” (Park and Pellow 2011: 4). And where environmental privilege exists, so does environmental injustice.

Utilizing Finney’s (2014) structure to describe the differences between the white outdoor experience and the black outdoor experience, one can easily trace the ways in which the dichotic experiences of environmental racism and environmental privilege were formed. One such example is Hetch Hetchy. In the early 1900s the Hetch Hetchy dam controversy brought the environmental movement to the forefront of American cultural thought. The proposed dam was to be built on the Tuolumne River in Northern California, an area of the Sierra, John Muir’s most beloved space. When Muir and his Sierra Club opposed the

dam, the public became very aware of environmentalism and felt the urge to speak to the management of public lands (Finney 2014: 25). While this was an incredible moment for the environmental movement, one very important point is often overlooked, the voices that were heard, on both sides of the debate were predominately white and middle class (Finney 2014: 25). The environmental groups that had formed at the time were largely segregated; this would remain a prominent factor in environmental groups.

Today, despite people of color making up 36% of the population of the United States, they have hit at 16% “green ceiling,” meaning they are not adequately represented in environmental organizations. People of color are disproportionately harmed by environmental, climate, and health impacts and the structural barriers to environmental justice and civil rights compliance keep them from being as involved in decision making and policy as necessary (Bullard and Garcia 2015).

Finney articulates representation at the core of this problem:

“the narrative of the Great Outdoors in the United States is explicitly informed by a rhetoric of wilderness conquest, Romanticism, Transcendentalism, and the belief that humans can either control or destroy Nature with technology (Lowenthal 2000; Virden and Walker 1999; Taylor 1997; Worster 1993; Nash 1982). Implicitly, it is informed by a legacy of Eurocentrism and the linkage of wilderness to whiteness, wherein both become naturalized and universalized (DeLuca and Demo 2001; Agyeman and Spooner 1997). Prominent views of nature, while not unified, draw from the experiences of those in a position to influence and establish legitimacy for their ideas institutionally and culturally. Furthermore, these narratives, which contribute to the American environmental imaginary, are grounded in the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the individuals who constructed them” [Finney 2014: 28].

In this way, all natural spaces, from urban parks to National Parks, are not neutral spaces (Parker 2018: 27). A racialized history is central to understanding usage on any public lands.

For example, the many people, men really, who are remembered as great environmentalists, conservationists, and founders of our modern system of public lands were biased by racist perspectives that undoubtedly affected their decisions on policy which shaped both the physical lands, and the cultural imaginary of public lands.

For example, the well known and loved John Muir. His contributions to public lands can be seen in the National Park System, the creation of six national parks, the founding and first President of the Sierra Club, and one of the most prominently cited environmentalists. While Muir was influenced by Transcendentalism, in particular Thoreau, he was also influenced by his own values of whiteness and his religious beliefs (Finney 2014: 28).

Thoreau's influence is critical in understanding Muir. Thoreau, with the help of fellow Transcendentalists, helped to create racist nature (Purdy 2017). His writing justified the white appropriation of landscape having proposed, "the farmer displaces the Indian even because he redeems the meadow, and so make himself stronger and in some aspects more natural" (Purdy 2017). The Transcendentalist perspective of romantic connections to the land also policed landscape, projecting the racist assumption that white settlement, development, and "improvement" was progress (Outka 2008).

The prominence of Transcendentalism in the United States birthed Muir's environmental movement, and as explained by Jedediah Purdy in his article "Environmentalism's Racist History," "For both Muir and Thoreau working, consuming, occupying, and admiring American nature was a way for a certain kind of white person to become symbolically native to the continent" (Purdy 2017). White appropriation of the landscape was an engrained aspect of the romantic and idealized writing of these men.

This is an often-overlooked aspect to these men who are heroicized in the history of American environmentalism, and modern outdoor culture. For example, Muir spoke of

the “laziness of sambos” and referred to the “dirty and irregular life” of Native Americans, calling them “civilized into useless innocence” (Purdy 2017).

Though Muir was more tame than his counterparts in the construction of the American system of land management. Gifford Pinchot, the man appointed the first Chief of the United States Forest Service, was a prominent Eugenicist. The pseudoscience justified racial purification through sterilization and criminalization of peoples who would dilute the purity of the “fittest” race.

Pinchot was a delegate to 1st and 2nd international Eugenics Congress in 1912 and 1921, as well as a member of the advisory council of the American Eugenics Society from 1925 to 35.

Pinchot, and other prominent Eugenicists such as Madison Grant touted, as explained by Grant, “the responsibility of saying what forms of life shall be preserved” (Purdy 2017). These leaders projected their ideals, rooted in oppressive racial ideology, into landscape as well. California is a perfect example of this, as explained by Alexandra Stern. Stern (2016) explains that through ceremonies of possession and rituals of proclamation (121); founding, directing, or organizing environmental organizations to facilitate land management and fiscal involvement (120); and integrating hereditarian and evolutionary tenets into a narrative of Westward expansion (120), Eugenicists engrained themselves in many of the landscapes of the state of California. This directly articulated a distance for “human beings who imagined, orchestrated and physically built these geographies... [who] are frequently rendered invisible... what is perceived is the sheer beauty of topography” (2016: 119) while the people whose backs carried these labors disappear in these spaces.

The Save-the-Redwoods League is a perfect example of the process of selective breeding and species endangerment was co-opted by Eugenics ideology. The Garden of Eden

narrative, the belief that all that is natural is pure, reinforces the belief that races should remain separate. As settlers moved West, populations expanded, and people began to fear a scarcity of the closing frontier. This was presented in Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 essay *The Frontier in American History* (1986).

Turner's infamous speech, which was given to the American Historical Society, cites the 1890 United States Census in asserting the American frontier was closed which speaks to the importance of American pioneers, Manifest Destiny and the realities of colonial expansion. Turner connects westward expansion to American character and democracy, "hordes of defectives and mongrels and menaced by the excessive breeding of undesirable" (Stern 2016: 124). Similarly, the redwood had been endangered by a "race suicide" from logging, urban development encroaching on critical habitat, and human ignorance (Stern 2016: 124). The analogies between the redwood and the white Anglo-Saxon race were common at the turn of the century. Even Muir had called the Big Trees of Calaveras County "the noblest of a noble race" (Stern 2016: 124).

This purity-based propaganda was utilized in particular in wild space because they were perceived to be "virgin lands, untouched forests, and the sacred quality of nature free from people" (Stern 2016: 119). Eugenicists utilized the notion of purity in both humanity and landscape as a justification for creating and contributing to building access to areas, built by the people who would then be forcibly excluded from the recreation and enjoyment of the outdoor space. These people capitalized on the Garden of Eden narrative to create and build wilderness as a cultural concept, what Stern calls the greatest of contradictions, a place believed to be unimpaired by humans, but built by those who were forcibly excluded or removed.

It was racist Eugenicist ideologies which laid the foundation for the modern our land management agencies. From this we can only work to uncover the ways in which environmentalism was founded on problematic principles, as explained by Purdy, "It can

only help to acknowledge just how many environmentalists priorities and patterns of thought came from an argument among white people, some of them bigots and racial engineers, about the character and future of a country that they were sure was theirs and expected to keep” (2017).

The agencies that were fundamental to American environmentalism and land management maintained these particular views, in the 1970s President Nixon called environment a cause beyond party because it was a cause for the white majority. In 1972, a vote in the Sierra Club showed that 40% strongly opposed concerning the club with conservation associated with the urban poor/ethnic minorities. Only 15% of the members who voted supported this initiative. During this time the Sierra Club was growing rapidly but was still riding on early environmental ideas.

It wasn't until 1987 that Environmental Justice launched at the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice. Legislation such as the Clean Air and Water Act paid no attention to discrepancies among races. Moreover, one of the biggest challenges for people of color who are engaged in environmental work is that there is an assumption that all work is environmental justice work (Finney 2014: 108). Finney calls for people to challenge this assumption because of the “potential consequences of perpetuating the idea that skin color is the primary determinant in one's ability to act and engage all environmental issues creatively and proactively” (Finney 2014: 109).

Even today some people genuinely believe the sole things from keeping people of color from visiting their public lands is a lack of interest. Some believe it is as simple as a lack of necessary resources (Kearney, 2016), when in reality the largest barrier to getting outside is actually a cultural barrier, one that is riddled with cultural trauma.

Who is Part of the “Club?”

The overwhelming majority of people who report recreating, are seen recreating, and contribute to the infrastructure of media, capital, and policy are white, white people are not the only people. The data I have collected is no different. Only five of the 49 interviews conducted were with individuals who identify as non-white. In the 626 survey responses collected over three years the overwhelming majority of respondents were white (see Figure 4). The average among the years remains over 85% of respondents were white (86.2%). Statistically that is much higher than the 72.4% reported in the 2010 Census data. While the 2010 data is admittedly dated in 2019 at the time of writing this, that number is only likely to have grown rather than shrunk.

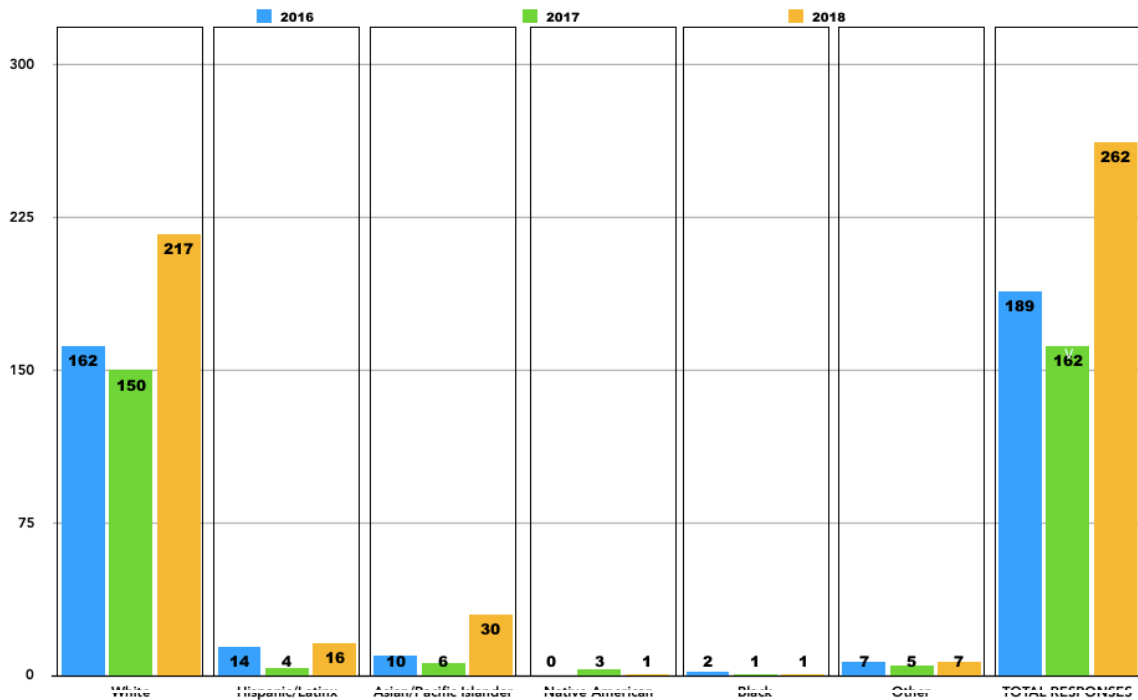


Figure 4: Survey Response Race, 2016-2018

The largest minority group to respond varied from Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and Other across the years. Though, Native American, Black, and Pacific Islander remained in the bottom three categories of respondents to my survey. This data is representative of the

social network that spans many Facebook and other digital hiking groups as well as a post John Muir Trail survey that kindly linked my survey.

My data and the data collected by many others suggests that people of color are simply the minority in recreation. The assumption is that these people are absent from recreation by choice, that they do not want to be outside or that they are more interested in other things.

I have found over the course of many years, both of personal experience and fieldwork that while the perception is that recreation is a white person thing, people of color do recreate. The problem is understanding that they are not coming to recreation from the same position as many who idolize John Muir, or Aldo Leopold. These individuals are not from the same sociocultural or political position as their white counterparts. Their experiences are different, unique and must be contextualized.

Recognizing the impact of cultural trauma is an invaluable aspect of understanding a diversity of experience. Lacking the ability to empathize, at the very least sympathize, with another's perspective leads to a singular view of reality, that while for that single person may be true, remains subjective. Donna Haraway (1988) explains this in "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." Haraway describes the flaws in objectivity, being as all humans are subjective creatures with diverse perspectives, experiences, and therefore, realities. While there is a singular truth to one vision, that truth is not objective. One cannot remove themselves from their subjective place in time and space. Our vision is clouded with our own subjectivity, and only through collective vision can be better recognize reality, and truth.

In this way, we must work to recognize the differences in our lived experiences and the validity of cultural trauma. A perfect example of this comes from the Willamette National

Forest just outside of Eugene. Evelyn White wrote of her experience teaching at a women's writing workshop called "Flight of the Mind" on the McKenzie River at the base of the Cascade Mountains. White, a woman of color, was often invited out into the woods, to explore the lava beds, hot springs and mountains. Though she often claimed to be too busy with teaching to go. The reality was that she was "hold up" in her riverfront cabin with the doors locked and blinds drawn (White 1996: 283).

She explained, "While the river's roar gave me a certain comfort and my heart warmed when I gazed at the sun-dappled trees out of a classroom window, I didn't want to get closer. I was certain that if I ventured outside to admire a meadow or feel the cool ripples in a stream, I'd be taunted, attacked, raped, maybe even murdered because of the color of my skin" (White 283). She went on to explain that the experience she felt, she believes to be common among African American women and that it limits the ways they move through the world. She describes wanting to move to a wooded area in Northern California, feeling elated at the chance to be closer to nature, but haunted by "memory of ancestors hunted down and preyed upon in rural settings counters my fervent hopes of finding peace in the wilderness. Instead of the solace and comfort I seek, I imagine myself in a country as my forebears were—exposed, vulnerable, and unprotected—a target of cruelty and hate" (White 1996: 284).

She connects these feelings to the events of September 15, 1963 when racists bombed a Sunday school in Birmingham, Alabama, killing Denise McNair, Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, and Carol Robertson. She remembers her mother ironing a black armband, one she had made for Evelyn and her siblings to wear. Evelyn watched, terrified, knowing that the armband would align her with the "bloody dresses, limbless bodies, and dust-covered patent leather shoes that had been entombed in the blast" (White 1996: 284). So horrified after her mother pinned the band on her arm, she rounded the corner away from her house, down the street, and ripped it off, "looking nervously up

into the sky for the ‘evil white people’ I’d heard my parents talk about in the aftermath of the bombing,” (White 1996: 284).

White roots this trauma, for her, in the death of Emmett Till, the 14-year-old Chicago boy who in 1955 was sent to Mississippi to visit family for the summer. Emmett was lynched, dumped in the Tallahatchie River with the rope still around his neck. He was accused of whistling at a white woman. She later recanted her accusation.

The experience of his death was visceral for White, it shaped her, “it seemed like Emmett’s fate had been a part of my identity from birth...I’d remember the ghoulish photos of Emmett I had seen in JET magazine,” she explains that the magazine was important to black families, “for within its page rested an important lesson they felt duty-bound to teach their children: how little white society valued our lives” (White 1996: 285).

The cultural trauma of a single lynching is felt through the lived experience of African American culture (Finney 2014: 56). This is echoed by others, for example, Latino Outdoors founder Jose Gonzales explained his own dual thinking of public lands, “What do you think of when you think of parks?” (1) Beautiful majestic landscapes where I can connect to nature (2) white supremacist spaces (Gonzales 2016: 49). Just as White had wanted to engage with landscape, found beauty in the woods, and admired the idea, she was frozen by the cultural reality. Gonzales echoes the sentiment that while these places are indeed stunning, they are also a breeding ground of exclusivity, terror, and isolation.

Outside magazine recently (2018) published an article by Latria Graham entitled, “Yes, Black People Like Camping.” In the article Graham explains that the perception that Black people dislike the outdoors is false, rather than a disinterest or distaste for the outdoors, the absence of people of color outside is “really more about history than desire” (Graham 2018).

She explains that public lands “were designed to be clean and white, and if we let the data tell the story, that’s how they’ve stayed” (Graham 2018). Graham cites a National Park Service survey that states African Americans are only 7 percent of visitors (NPS Comprehensive Survey of the American Public 2008–2009). Now, this survey was from a decade ago, but with the current political climate things are not getting better. In that survey 16 percent of African Americans cited safety as the main factor in their not having visited a National Park.

Graham though, calls herself a “disciple of landscapes” and claims to have been one, “as long as [she] can remember” (Graham 2018). She speaks about the relationship she had with her father, who wanted his children to be self-sufficient and took them camping. She cites learning herbal medicine from her grandmother, helping her uncle tend hogs, doing strenuous agricultural work, and in this way learning about landscapes. She speaks to the dichotomy of the front country and the backcountry, the area close to town, that despite being a natural landscape is not as good, or celebrated because it’s not deep within the woods, inaccessible. She speaks to how this features the differences of affluence and class. Who can get to these spaces? But Graham also speaks to her experience of cultural trauma and the fear associated with the outdoors. She took her parents to the Everglades. On the trip she never camped in the park. Instead they stayed at the privately owned Kampgrounds of America (KOA) or bed and breakfasts. She describes being unsure about how to get a camp reservation, needing her father to have access to healthcare if necessary, but also her father’s fear. He grew up in the Jim Crow South, segregation enforced by handcuffs and often rope. He could not let go of the trauma of “racist local laws, discriminatory social codes, segregated commercial facilities, and racial profiling by police” (Graham 2018) to relax in public spaces.

And this is similar to a story shared by Carolyn Finney. She describes taking her parents to the Martin Luther King National Historic Site in Atlanta, Georgia. The visitors center

is filled the sights and sounds of the Civil Rights Movement, so much so that when Finney's father noticed a "whites only" sign he grabbed his daughter's arm, clenched his chest with fear and uncertainty and only after a moment began to giggle with embarrassment. He had seen the sign and thought they were not supposed to be there. This happened in 2005. Finney explains, "I've told this story many times to highlight the power that memory has to shape our present and inform our future possibilities" (Finney 2016: 47).

In this way we must recognize the impact of cultural trauma and memory, Graham explains, "black people know instinctively that bad things happen in the woods" (Graham 2018). This was echoed in the interviews I conducted. James Whaley III mentioned that while he didn't believe race impacted his interactions with nature, he did note that the lack of people of color can be isolating. His hiking partner Morgan mentioned that on their thru-hike of the John Muir Trail they saw only one other black person in whole 211 miles.

When I completed the John Muir Trail, later in the same year as James and Morgan, I too only saw a handful of people that were not white. And this is shaded with my perspective, as diversity is a difficult thing to read, though I found that those hiking were predominately white, and many very privileged.

Others have mention regional differences. Professional thru-hiker Liz Thomas explained to me that her awareness varies by trail. When she moved to Colorado, she didn't think much of it, but she soon realized she was the only Asian American person around. Coming from California, where half the people on trail aren't white, it was more noticeable on trails in Colorado, she became more aware of it.

Some, like Marjorie Leach-Parker speaks to similar fears to White and Finney's parents. She describes growing up in a small town in North Carolina and working with her family

on farms owned by white families. She spent time fishing and exploring down by the river but was told not to get too far from home, “the feeling was that if you went out into the woods by yourself—and you’re black—if no one’s around, you might not end up coming back” (Pires 2018). Marjorie explains that even today as the first African American chapter chair for the Sierra Club in the state of Virginia, she still only hikes when she is with a group of people, “and I would never go there by myself,” she explains, “It’s not like the younger generation but the older generation that you see that look at you like you have no business there. Like you don’t belong. It’s like, ‘Get out. Get away.’ Even though it’s public land, some people are like, ‘I’m white and therefore I have more rights and I’m than you’” (Pires 2018).

This all brings me back to Alice, my friend who was confronted with another park visitor wearing a MAGA hat, a symbol of the same vitriolic hate that is seeded in much of our understandings of racial difference and the construct on which we have founded political systems which continue to, systematically, oppress people based on the color of their skin. While many like to believe that we are past race based hatred, that race is a cultural construct, and therefore a system we no longer need, the truth is that in denying race we are denying the centuries of oppression in which people of color have endured hatred, violence, persecution, and death.

The current political climate breeds this kind of hatred, one that reinforces exclusive places and resources. This has only exacerbated the already staunch lines of racial divide. Tiffany Thorpe a black woman explains, “After Trump became president, I became a little more nervous about traveling in the US. Racism became more overt. Just after the inauguration I went with a couple of friends to western Arizona... passed lots of gun stores, some with Confederate flags, and I felt very uncomfortable” (Pires 2018). These symbols have, for decades, communicated hatred and violence. And rather than moving past these antiquated ideas of racial difference to acknowledge the lived and embodied consequences of the construct of race, we have only made it more concrete, expanded its

borders to include new identities that are unacceptable, new means of regulating space, policing bodies, and enforcing a system which provides privilege to very few. Thorpe explains, “When we got there I mostly felt OK because I was with friends who blended in, but there was this one old man who stared at me from the other side of the street. He was eating an ice cream wearing a Make America Great Again hat. I felt challenged and stared back until he looked away,” (Pires 2018).

Like Alice, the mundane individual, in this case simply eating ice cream becomes a person to fear. Their willingness to publicly endorse a platform that spews that same type of racial propaganda, assuring that our differences are based on skin color, manipulating fears and blaming those deemed enemies in an effort to further a system that is representative of a privileged few, assure those around them that do not look like them, that they are the enemy.

This is echoed by the founder of Brown People Camping, Ambreen Tariq who felt the backlash of her work being featured on a main stage. The National Park Foundation featured one of her photos and as she explains, “I started seeing overtly racist things for the first time... ‘why do we have to talk about race in the outdoors? Why do people of color have to raise the issue of being POC all the time? No one’s keeping you off the trails. No one’s being racist on the trails. I am tired of these people making everything about race.’ That brings up the self-esteem issues I have. But I push myself to not feel angry or resentful. I push myself to remember this is our land too, and it’s on us to educate folks about why lack of diversity is a problem and why solving that is critical for our country and the future of the environmental movement. There is a huge level of privilege to visiting our public lands in America. To take the time and money to go is a privilege, of course, but also to see it as an option in the first place” (Berger 2016).

She describes another big lesson, there are many people who are offended by the word diversity, “The backlash was real and it was from people who felt I was accusing them of

being exclusionary simply but point out the lack of diversity. Others refused to believe that there is, in fact, racial disparities in the outdoors. Those folks rejected by assertions that getting outdoors takes time, money, and privilege and not everyone in this country has equal footing in overcoming those obstacles. I constantly see that rejection through statements like “If you want to get out there, you can get out there. No one is stopping you” (Kefauver 2018.).

And while a Pew Survey found that 43% of black people said that they believed America would never make the changes to give them equal rights as white Americans, a KOA 2017 North American Camping Report suggests that 42% of African American campers say they feel more welcome in the outdoors now compared to the past. And camping among non-white people continues to increase with nonwhites comprising one-fourth of all campers, double what it was first reported as in 2012. We must recognize cultural trauma as true, acknowledge the systems of oppression that have held people back and engage them in the creation, maintenance, and processes of public lands. Their voices must be heard. There must be structural change to a system that has been broken for far too long, exclude the majority of people, arbitrarily based on a system of race that was made up to justify exclusion, slavery, genocide, and erasure. Ultimately, we must break the system that has been broken for so long. We must recognize the history and experiences of the voices excluded from land management. People of color are not just uninterested, there are barriers of trauma and access that must be overcome to reach the moment when people can relax and feel the same connection that Aaron Jones described, “I was amazed by everything I was experiencing. I loved not hearing the commotion of the city. No cars, no yelling, no arguments on the corner. Just the water, the birds and the wind. It was like a reset button. I remember thinking, ‘Why haven’t I been doing this all along? Everybody should be doing this... it was overwhelming to realize that something I’ve always believed isn’t for me actually it. I had spent so much time being nervous about it when it was what I needed” (Pires 2019). The work done by organizations such as Latino Outdoors, Outdoor Afro, Outdoor Asians, Brown People Camping, and

countless others help to recognize the differences in access and culture. Their work brings to the forefront an awareness of white environmental privilege that is uncomfortable but necessary to confront because as explained by Nohemi Mora, a member of Latino Outdoors, “If you don’t feel safe leaving your house, you’re definitely not going to come out here” (Feldman 2018).

The belief that space is separate from race, that race is separate from space is a lie (Lipsitz 2007). While many believe that the outdoors is devoid of any social distinction, separate from the socio-cultural world, in fact these spaces are policed in the same ways. Expectations of who is there and what they will do are ingrained in the place.

Denying Expectations and Pushing Boundaries

Aaron Jones, a thirty-three-year-old African American man was invited on a hike with a friend. He was cautious, “all the fears I had about being in nature hit me in the face. It’s a very real fear for black people, especially those from urban communities, that bad things happen to black people in the wood, like lynching” (Pires 2018).

He wanted to go but the connection with natural environments and landscapes is a privilege that not everyone has. Natural environments are culturally shaped, social expectations, and lived cultural trauma color our expectations and experiences, Jones explains, “It’s something that you see again and again when you look at the history of the civil rights movement and slavery: black people going into the woods and not coming back” (Pires 2018).

It was something that he was taught, “I associate the outdoors with whiteness,” (Pires 2018). Jones’ mother never encouraged her children to have a connection with nature, it’s viewed as a white thing, because bad things happen to black folks in the woods.

He felt extreme anxiety, having agreed to go, and had second thoughts, he explained, “We had to drive through this very wooded area and I remember thinking: ‘I hope nothing happens. I hope I don’t have to get out of the car’” (Pires 2018). But ultimately, Jones went and enjoyed it. He felt relief and happiness, “When I started to hike, I had to let go of a lot of what I was feeling... I was amazed by everything I was experiencing. I loved not hearing the commotion of the city. No cars, no yelling, no arguments on the corner. Just the water, the birds and the wind. It was like a reset button” he explains, “I remember thinking, ‘why haven’t I been doing this all along? Everybody should be doing this. There’s nobody that shouldn’t be hiking” (Pires 2018). Now, Jones gets out seven or eight times a month, taking his daughter to ensure that her experience is different from his, that she recognizes how beneficial the escape can be. And while his mother is proud, he still hasn’t gotten her on a trail.

There’s a generational shift, movement away from the ugliness of generations past, the cultural traumas that are embodied in people of color, those who fear the bad things that happen in the woods. As more people find that importance of physical activity, the mental and emotional benefits of escaping a crowded and busy urban life and engaging with the ecosystem in which human are sustained, these realities become more apparent, and the need to combat inequity outside more crucial.

So, what happens next? How do we move past the ideas that frame our expectations so that more people can have positive experiences like Jones? How do we make lands more accessible for people of color, challenge the expectations of their lived realities, and ensure that public lands are indeed public?

We must do three things: (1) challenge assumptions, (2) validate all outdoor experiences, (3) normalize difference.

For one, we must listen. We must recognize, as explained by Donna Haraway, that singular objective truth is a fallacy. Human beings are inherently subjective. We are molded by our cultural perspective, biased by our own position, and physically unable to provide more than our own single view. Only by accepting the reality of our diverse perspectives and the complete lack of objectivity can we recognize that what you know is exactly that, what you know. Accepting another's perspective as their truth is a necessity in better understanding how systems, social, economic, political, systems of power, operate and effect someone other than yourself.

Listening to another's perspective, experience, and reality with the intention of accepting and validating it as their experience is required to better grasp the complex reality of experience. We must listen to indigenous peoples. We must recognize and accept that colonization has shaped this nation and continues to alter the ways native peoples exist today. For a native person, asking them to go to public lands is asking for them to acknowledge a government and land management system that took lands and freedom from them.

We must recognize the realities of cultural trauma. African Americans live with the cultural memory of slavery, a system of disempowerment, oppression, and dehumanization. These memories are felt by some as distant, that is because of privilege. Many feel the trauma of slavery, the Civil War, the Civil Rights Movement, and Black Lives Matter each day. For them, slavery is not in the past, but instead a vivid memory of a system of oppression that is enacted in new ways. For an African American, hiking in the woods may not be freeing, but instead fear inducing.

The Hispanic and Latinx populations may be some of the most vulnerable right now as they remain the most prominent group working on landscapes scarred by toxicity. Individuals who have migrated to the United States for work and the possibility of a better future are threatened with deportation and violence all while working diligently in

chemical riddles agricultural fields, through smoke filled skies, deep in the woods where trees may fall on them or chainsaws may hack off a limb. And while their working conditions are horrendous, injury is common, death is not unheard of, these people remain here, working diligently to ensure that they stay, in the land of opportunity, where they are labeled an illegal immigrant, threatened to be deported by the very legal system that was built by colonists, illegal immigrants themselves, nearly 300 years before. To ask a person of Hispanic or Latinx origin to become a steward to the land is ignoring the cultural associations and assumptions of agricultural work. When trail crews, and land management agencies say removing invasive species, it is a fancy way of saying pulling weeds.

We must recognize that not only does cultural history and trauma shape perceptions and experiences, but the dominant narrative resists diversity. Outdoor experience does not have to be universal. Not all people are going to enjoy doing the same things in the same ways. The sentence seems obvious, but so often we see recreation as a particular type of activity, one that should be and feel a certain way.

A perfect example of this type of bias is explained in Michelle Piñon's article "In Defense of Well-Traveled Trails" in which she explains why the trails that are deemed over populated or undesirable by recreationalists are often the ones that are the most likely to be spaces for people of color to enjoy. Some argue that populated trails are problematic. These spaces are overused, abused, loud, and lack solitude. But, the sense of community and togetherness allows these people the freedom to enjoy the space. Moreover, dominant white American culture prioritizes, celebrates, and champions solitude and the individual, while other cultures value community and connection. Well-traveled trails are a place where people can connect to landscape without the same fears associated with isolation.

Another such example of challenging the dominant narrative, and in his own words, bridging a gap in his culture and outdoor culture is CJ Goulding's "Why I Wear Jordans

in the Great Outdoors: A Natural Leader Builds Bridges Between Worlds” to explain why, in his role as an African American Outdoor Leader, he has chosen to wear Michael Jordan sneakers on trails. He says, “Jordan sneakers are a status symbol in the neighborhood I grew up in, a memento of importance and significance,” (Goulding 2014).

In his role as an outdoor leader, the Lead Organizer of the Children and Nature Network’s Natural Leaders Network and Legacy Camps, he recognizes that he bridges two worlds. He is both an outdoor leader and an African American man, two identities that he explains do not often intersect. In his position he finds that he is able to bridge two worlds, connecting young people to lands that they may not feel comfortable in, or know how to engage with. His experience as the only person of color in outdoor groups brought him to this place, “I no longer saw the singularity of my skin tone among my peers as a problem, but instead as a megaphone to give weight to the message that as people of color, people from different ethnic backgrounds, the outdoor world is ours to explore as well,” (Goulding 2014).

His Jordans are a comfort from home, a symbol of where he is from, but also where he has been, “my Jordans are falling apart, worn from adventures to places like the Grand Tetons and the Grand Canyon. This goes directly against how people ‘should’ wear them and what people ‘should’ wear outdoors. But I wear them wherever I go to remind me of the fact that though there are two worlds, I am a bridge” (Goulding 2014).

Rather than forcing assimilation to white recreation culture we must recognize that all outdoor experiences are unique. Our experiences outside are rich with various perspectives and ideas rooted in our diverse cultural frameworks. How one person engages with landscape does not have to be THE way that people engage with landscape.

And recognizing the biases that we have is only possible through listening to others, validating their lived experience, and accepting that collectively, the diversity of our experiences is the human reality.

But we must also challenge that reality, the assumptions which enforce expectations of hegemonic power. For one, representation must be inclusive. As explained by Finney, “representation and racialization sustain the way many Americans think about the natural environment in the United States, which informs our environmental policies, institutions, and interactions” (2014: 68). Finney explored representation in *Black Faces White Spaces* to demonstrate the importance of reinforcing the validity of our stories and experiences (Finney 2014: 69).

Finney cites Stuart Hall in his analysis of representation. Representation for non-white peoples has been a means of perpetuating invisibility in conversations about environment (Finney 2014: 69). Concerns and interests of people of color then become less legitimate, or these individuals become tokenized because, as Finney explains, in the context of environment, and more likely more generally, minority identity is narrowly defined and poorly articulated (2014: 69).

As explained by Hall, individuals give meaning to people and places by the way we think of them, how we speak of them, and what we feel about them (1997: 3). The ways we represent them gives us our own sense of identity, who are we and where do we belong? Hall suggests that those who are significantly different from the majority risk being subject to a binary, good or bad, civilized or primitive (1996: 230). Moreover, the accumulated representations of individuals are referential, they collectively build a sequence which is utilized to support or legitimize interactions with images in the future. This process is described as a regime of representation (Hall 1997: 232). So as an individual encounters images, situates them in their own perspective, they catalog these representations in a sequence. The more likely an image to be different from what is

normative, the more probable complexity is lost, and binary categorization occurs. From this we can recognize the ways representation has been reinforced through time, how images of normative identity become catalogued as normative and perpetuated while others remain unseen or utilized in a sequence of negative assumptions.

For example, Hall traces three moments in which the West encountered black people, marking moments in which racial differences were noted and sequenced: (1) European contact with Western African to acquire slaves; (2) during the spread of colonization throughout Africa; (3) and as people migrated West after WWII (Hall 1997: 239). These moments were foundational in creating representation of Africans as primitive, heightening moral supremacy of European colonizers and justifying the stereotyping and essentializing of black identity (Hall 1997). And through a narrow representation, as explained by Finney, “refusing to acknowledge the complexity of a black individual’s lived experience, one is implicitly denying the possibilities of expanding consciousness that is arguably the birthright of all humans. As a consequence, the articulation of one’s lived experience in the material world becomes stunted and constrained by that interpretation/vision” (2014: 72). This happens not just with black or African American people, but with all minority groups. Here the necessity to listen and validate differences in human experiences overlaps with the critical component of recognition and representation.

Finney found that much of outdoor media has historically focused on the “color blind” identity of Americans. According to bell hooks (1992) claiming color blindness, or a post racial world allows for individuals to take no accountability for anti-racist change and frees the individual of having to consider a viewpoint different from their own. Thus, claiming all Americans are the same, or uniting the diversity of peoples in American under a single identity such as the happens in the suggestion of a cultural melting pot denies the reality of the dominant white culture, and all of the privilege that comes with it.

Magazines such as *Outside* and *National Geographic* are guilty of the singular representation of environmental culture. *Outside*, for example, has worked for years to craft the narrative of the outdoor leisure identity (Finney 2014: 78). Finney analyzed a total of 44 issues over a ten-year period (1991–2001) and found a total of 6,986 images, 4,602 including people, of which 103 were of African Americans, predominately black males playing sports in urban environments. That is a total of 0.01% of all images of people were African American in *Outside* over a 10-year period (Finney 2014: 78). While this has made many people question the desire of people of color to be outdoors, the reality is more complex.

Moreover, the images of African Americans are overwhelmingly of male athletes playing football or basketball, but never, for example black people skiing. Finney explores the argument that African American people are perhaps simply not interested in other activities. The National Black Brotherhood of Skiers, one of the older ski organizations, white or black, in the country, has over 14,000 members and according to a representative, spends millions of dollars a year on skiing, which is not represented in advertising for skiing (Coleman 1996).

Some have argued that other magazines more directed at African American culture may bridge this gap, though according to Finney, magazines like *Ebony* are also lacking. *Ebony*, in comparison to *National Geographic*, *Time* and *Outside* have fewer ads featuring African Americans (Martin 2004).

Magazines are only one example. The National Park Service is also lacking in telling the true depth of history. Finney explores National Park brochures and finds, that like magazines, representation is lacking. This is not a problem with just African American representation, but representation of all people, across the country. One such example for

native peoples are the Ahtna of Alaska, where their heritage is told through the narrative of mining (Higgins 2016: 54).

A perfect example of this is Betty Reid Soskin, the 97-year-old Park Ranger who has challenge the dominant story to tell her own. Soskin, who is a ranger at Rosie the Riveter/ WWII Home Front National Historical Park in Richmond, California. She wasn't always a ranger but became one at 85. Betty had been asked to sit in on a planning meeting for the park and realized if she didn't speak up, no one would, "what gets remembered is determined by who is in the room doing the remembering," (Chideya 2018).

She explained the importance of representation, "There was no conspiracy to leave my history out, there was simply no one in that room with any reason to know it" (Chideya 2018). She utilized the platform to share her experience working at an all-black union hall, and briefly in an all-white branch of the Air Force (because they hadn't realized she wasn't white when they hired her) as well as others such as that of the 120,000 people of Japanese descent who were placed in internment camps by the United States government. Betty is a woman who "speaks extemporaneously and inclusively about America in its fullness" (Chideya 2018). And Betty recognizes the importance of representation, not only in the stories we tell, and the history we teach, but in her physical being, "I wear my uniform at all times; because when I'm on the streets or on an escalator or elevator, I am making every little girl of color aware of a career choice she may not have known she had" (Chideya 2018).

Which brings me back to Alice, my Chicana friend, walking through the National Park and being confronted with the same politics that tell her she does not belong in this country. Alice took an internship with the National Forest Service, an opportunity to hire people of Hispanic and Latinx heritage to normalize non-white bodies in uniform. It was a means of increasing representation, creating a better relationship with forest visitors and building stronger community bonds.

While Alice was confronted by a symbol of hate, of cultural trauma, and of fear, she did not allow the hegemonic system to perpetuate her exclusion. She instead took an opportunity to empower others.

Hegemonic power produces and reproduces difference (Soja and Hooper 1993; Finney 2014). The hegemonic American identity trope, that of a strong white settler has been produced and reproduced through time, ensuring the performance of this identity, and the exclusion of those who did not fit the expectations of that identity. Through the development of the race system and the enactment of white colonial power, American identity became co-opted by a singular skin color. American came to mean white Christian settlers. Through the process of colonization this grew only more complex, as populations increased, expansion limited resources, and American identity became more opaque, solidified and enforced through policy and policing.

As eloquently explained by Finney in *Black Faces White Spaces*, and I hope outlined in this chapter, there is a historical particularity of being a person of color in America, one that for black folks means segregation and slavery; for indigenous peoples is genocide, removal, assimilation; for Hispanic and Latinx populations means farm work, illegality, deportation; for Asian populations has meant similar things; but universally non-white bodies have been met with the universality of the white experience of nature that passes as normative and reinforces inequitable experiences (Finney 2014: 33). One cannot summarize all the ways that people of color have been excluded, oppressed, or brutalized by an American system of politics that ensure white supremacy, domination and colonial conquest, though, it has become apparent that there is not a singular experience of the outdoors. Instead, experiences outside are diverse, culturally build, individually embodied and in constant negotiation. We must recognize the fallacious notion that there is a singular wilderness experience and instead unwrap the reality of a dominant, racially based experience, projected as universal, that is bound by layers of privilege.

CHAPTER IV: WHAT'S MANLINESS GOT TO DO WITH IT?

“...she embraced the rugged individualism needed on the wild frontier and proved her equality with men, but she also upheld her civic responsibility to birth a mighty nation.” (Dorsey 2013: 423

“Gendered constructions complemented racial exclusions as the two became mutually reinforcing under colonialism. “Persistent gendering” marginalized the feminine and thus exalted male power.” (Hixson 10)

“The mythic West...the undisputed realm of the white male, a man without women, indeed, a man who shuns women, who searches for the ultimate adventure in order to avoid sex, marriage, responsibility, maturity, and civilization.” (Testi 1995: 1518)

As explained in previous chapters identity is intersectional and multifaceted. In this chapter I will be exploring broadly notions of manliness, masculinity, and femininity. I will engage, in these contexts with gender, sex, sexuality, and ability as facets of identity which manifest in manliness. I will articulate the ways in which Theodore Roosevelt's articulation of a “strenuous life” have been overlaid with the Frontier Myth to determine the acceptable forms of identity on public lands.

We were a little more than halfway up the pass, and halfway done with the trail. Having passed the halfway point two days prior, our movement up this pass, Muir Pass, seemed stagnated. It's the longest pass on the John Muir Trail, about 17 miles from the valley to the pass. It takes most people three days to complete the section, of course with some miles on each end. The motivated few can get it done in two, and the extreme, and insane, do it in a day. The problem with Muir Pass is not that it is long, that part is just annoying.

The problem is that it leads you to the Evolution Valley, an area prone to horrendous storms.

In fact, at top Muir Pass is the Muir Hut, a little rock structure that looks similar to an igloo. The hut was built by the Sierra Club over 100 years ago to honor the naturalist and club founder, the man the trail is named for, John Muir. It's an important structure, not simply because it's old and pretty cool inside, but because for many it's their only escape as they find themselves high up on a pass with nowhere to run for shelter. It's a feeling I had not once, but twice, while summiting the pass in the late summer of 2017.

I'd grown up spending two weeks each summer in the Sierra. The most beautiful place I've ever been privileged to see. Muir called it the range of light, and there is a quality to the gnarled granite that makes you want to agree with him. The landscape, while stunning, is unforgiving. I'd spent my childhood in campgrounds down, much lower than the elevation of Muir Pass. My neck always craned upward to the mountains that, as Muir is so famous for saying, were calling me.

Now, at 26 I was in the middle of those mountains, exhausted, dirty, and in awe of the tenacity required to carry all that you need to survive in the middle of nowhere, while hiking up and down mountains for days on end. People say it gets easier, that your body gets used to it. They aren't wrong. But it is never easy to lug a giant pack up 3,000 feet of elevation gain in high altitude day after day.

I asked myself many times, "why am I doing this?"

We were halfway through our hike when we got to Muir Pass. My friend Em and I had endured the first part of the trail. We'd encountered little snow or ice, a lucky feat considering the record high snow year, and the smoke from nearby fires had only been a problem in the beginning as we began the trail leading out of Yosemite National Park.

We had just left the Muir Trail Ranch, a place that is truly a dream to a thru-hiker. There are natural hot springs, soap to bathe, laundry, beds, and food, all the things you abandon to thru-hike. We started our trek up Muir Pass having left the luxuries of the ranch. It wasn't terrible, seeing as the first few miles are pretty flat. Though, that's the trick of Muir Pass, it never seems that bad, until it is.

We crossed three large bridges and back into a national park, Kings Canyon. Of course, having just left the comforts of civilization at the ranch we were easy on ourselves and took a snack break on a log. Perhaps it was a bit longer than it needed to be.

We finally stood up slowly from our snack spot and tried to thrust our heavy packs without throwing the feeling of defeat on our back as well, though it didn't work. We started back on the trail but met a fence. We hadn't encountered one yet, and the map didn't show this particular fence. We struggled to decide whether we wanted to climb over it or try to go around. We looked up the trail on the other side, and down the trail behind us. We waited to see if another group would come and walk on, but none came. We had just seen so many moves in this direction. This had to be the way to go. There was a rock wall on one side and a river on the other. The narrow section of forest was blockaded, but perhaps not to keep hikers out?

It was because of that fence that we met Niamh, an 18-year-old Australian who was hiking the trail alone. She was sitting below a tree when we asked her for directions. She pointed us the in the wrong direction unknowingly and we walked that way. When we realized it was a dead end we turned and walked the other way.

Trying to not embarrass the kind stranger who'd tried to help us we hopped the fence and made our way up the beginning of the incline of the pass.

The lines on the map grew to tight v's, showing the switchbacks that brought us hundreds of feet higher on the pass. It was brutal; we were tired. We stopped on a log for a break. We threw our packs to the ground and shortly after heard grumbling. It was quiet at first, but then drew closer, louder.

We were met with Niamh's face, red with exhaustion and frustration. She said hello and we asked her to join us on the log. She dubbed it a lazy log. We began chatting and soon enough continued on the trail together. We were getting closer to the infamous Evolution Creek, a river really. It was a notoriously difficult water crossing due to the width, speed, mossy and therefore slippery bottom, and most notably the location, just before a large waterfall. The west coast thru-hiking class of 2017 has been dubbed the class of fire and ice. The record snow year meant raging waters deep into the end of summer. People had died on this trail already, most in water crossings.

We were nervous, and anxious about this one. We had read that while the water looks calm it is actually much deeper in the middle. What looks like a shallow slog takes many by surprise as the water begins to hit their ankles with a brute force mid-crossing. The three of us found the crossing, took a moment and decided to swap our boots out for the water crossing shoes we'd each packed.

As we all unlaced our boots and began to unhook our packs, a practice that ensure that if you fall you are not weighed down by the bulk of your necessities, a man walked up. We had met him while we were on the lazy log briefly. He had continued on before us, stopped to take photos and met us as we were preparing to cross.

He stopped for a moment to brag about the amount of weight he was carrying, including his camera and many lenses. He pompously looked down at our efforts to ensure we safely cross and without vocalizing his condescension he pompously walked directly into the river, camera around his neck, pack strapped to him in multiple places, arms occupied

with his camera rather than his trekking poles (a practice that ensures one always has three point of contact to avoid being swept away) and as he met the center of the river, the fastest flow, he began to mock us. He laughed and told us that we should just walk across, “what are you waiting for, the water’s just fine!”

He began to waver in his steps moving downstream slightly. In this moment I was sure he would fall. I in that split second saw his body falling, his neck pulled below the water by his heavy camera, his body strapped to his heavy pack, pulled down stream. I heard his scream over the waterfall, and his last breaths muffled by the crashing water. But, as he wavered, he steadied quickly before taking the final few steps to get to the shore on the other side.

He made it across. But we let out a collective sigh of relief when his feet were gain on dry land. He said something else condescending before turning away, self-satisfied and continuing on.

We waited until he was out of sight and each of us, almost in unison acknowledged we were all concerned we were going to watch this man die. His lack of concern for the realities of the dangerous crossing was alarming. But it was his self-assured attitude that allowed him to feel entitled to tell us that our precautions, our safety measures, and our perspective of the raging water before us were unnecessary that sticks out the most.

We continued, crossing slowly, and safely, meeting the dangerous ankle pushing current before reaching the safety of the other shore. Having watched the man cross before I did, I was scared, but his mistakes were my lessons. Where he wavered, I walked even more cautiously.

The anonymous man demonstrated something that I was already very familiar with, something that many people, women, non-binary folks, those who are not

hypermasculine, the differently abled for example, experience every day. He was asserting his manliness, his physical ability, his “knowledge,” his tenacity in the face of natural danger. He asserted dominance as he mocked us and rearticulated the problematic framework on which American manliness is laid.

His carelessness stayed with me. I feared I would see him again, this time not on the trail but being taken off of it, injured or worse dead.

It was only the next day that we were met with what I can only describe as an unavoidable danger in the backcountry, lightning. As we climbed further up the seemingly never-ending pass storm cloud blew in. Thus far we had only been rained on a few times, not much rain either time. Being 8,000–10,000 feet up means the storms move quickly, both a positive in that the rain doesn’t last long, and a negative as you can’t really predict the weather or escape it when you meet a bad storm.

We had made it to Evolution Lake. We were tired and stopped for lunch. We were bathing in the subtle noise of nature, water puddling in a small creek, the “whoosh” of air moving around you.

Clouds began to roll in. The sky suddenly darkened.

We weren’t concerned because we had started the day in scattered showers. We watched the big heavy clouds roll through, only sprinkling us lightly and leaving quickly. So, we stood and decided to keep moving up the pass.

Em and I knew we wouldn’t make it over the pass that day. Niamh had hopes of getting to the Muir Hut, the top of the pass, that night. She had dreamed of sleeping there, a violation of the rules, but I’m sure a common practice.

We packed up our stuff from lunch, put on our packs and moved forward. The light drizzle began to turn to real rain. We stopped and put on our raincoats and pack covers before slogging on. The first part was mostly flat, just around the lake. But then we started to move up. The area we were in was full of scree and talus, large piles of rock. The weather was worse, but we couldn't camp here.

We followed the trail further, Niamh leading. The dark clouds seemed endless, meeting the tops of the mountains surrounding the valley we were moving up.

This was no longer just rain, but a storm. I knew we had to stop. But there was nowhere to go. We were in an open rock field. There was nothing, rocks and some short green vegetation.

On one side the earth fell, far, to a lake. On the other side, talus rising up higher to more danger. These electrically charged skies will hit the tallest point, the easiest thing to reach, and in a rock field like where we were standing, that was us.

We kept walking; I was scanning looking for anywhere to camp. The rule is that one must camp on an area that is already developed or lacks any flora. Typically, campsites are very clearly campsites, a small square or rectangle surrounded by green that is rock or gravel. A place that many thru-hikers have stopped all season and set up their tent, only to leave the following morning.

But here, there was nothing. Only rock in the few flat places where putting up a tent would have been possible were covered in small green plants. Niamh was still set on getting to the Muir Hut, more than a mile away, I knew that couldn't happen.

We walked on. I was still scanning for a spot because I knew it was comi—BOOM.

Thunder.

Niamh stopped, turned to me, eyes wide, and asked “what do we do?”

We walked quickly, looking for any flat place to put down the tent. The wind was stronger now, it was tough to move through. We were getting hit hard with rain and the thunder kept coming. Soon we could see the lightning, it was on this side of the mountain.

We found an area, that while vegetated, was flat. I threw my pack down and got the tent out. The three of us threw our trekking poles as far as we could, the metal would only conduct lightning better. The wind was too strong to get the tent up easily. I decided that we'd have to be inventive. I threw the tent down, with Em and Niamh holding the sides, I put the rain fly over it and then unzipped the door. I climb in and slipped the poles between the two pieces of thin fabric. I managed to get the two poles overlapping and connected to the corners so the tent was up. But the strong winds meant it wasn't staying that way. It was slapping me in the face with each gust.

The storm was closer now. And the three of us were now in my two-person backpacking tent, squatting down on our boots hoping we were not the tallest thing nearby. The wind was impossible. I reached out at one point and pulled our packs to each side to use as windbreaks. The wind was coming from all sides so bracing three of them with our large packs was helpful.

We had each settled into a deep sumo squat, getting as small as we could while keeping our flesh from the ground. The rubber soles of our boots would protect us, should lightning strike nearby and be conducted on the wet ground. We were careful not to let ourselves touch the metal poles above our heads, another hazard.

We were nearly silent, speaking only in hushed whispers, as if to ourselves as we counted the seconds between the flashes of light just outside and the boom.

First, it was eight seconds. We thought, good it's not too close. Then five, oh no, it's closer now. But then, seven seconds. It seemed like we might be okay. Our knees began to ache. We were squatting for nearly 10 minutes at this point without movement or the ability to adjust. We were squished into a tent that even with only two people is a tight squeeze. The light flashed before us and we counted, one, two, three—BOOM. We all looked at each other.

Our fear was palpable. There was no need for words. We just waited. There was nothing more we could do. We had planned, prepped, and retreated when faced with danger. We recognized our fragility. We understood, vividly in the flashes before us, that nature was not to be controlled or conquered. We were small, our lives insignificant to this natural process.

Then, the next flash, boom. It was farther. And the next farther. It continued until it got quiet. The rain stopped. The wind let up. We all fell to our butts. Each of us trying to make our knees stop aching. But we didn't leave the tent. We hesitantly unzipped the corner of the window and saw only a small bit of grey sky. And then, the clouds parted and there was sun.

Only then did we climb out of the tent, soaked. I used a camp towel to dry the bottom. We all got into our sleeping clothes to let our hiking clothes dry. Niamh set up her tent. And we all ate dinner cold and shaking sitting on our small bear barrels. We were happy to see the sun, but its visit was short lived. We were high up, near the pass and in a valley. It wasn't late, but the sun had set.

I wish I could say that was my last experience with lightning, or that it was the most scary. But I can't. And what struck me later is that without my own understanding of my place in the natural order, I may not have survived. Had I carried myself with the same bravado as the man who strode across one of the most notoriously dangerous river crossings, with little care or concern, had I believed I was invincible I may not have made it off that mountain.

There's something to be said for the fact that the first and only person we saw heading for the pass despite the storm that afternoon presented as male. They moved with bravado, greeted us as if the storm wasn't a concern. They kept moving to the more dangerous area. The wind whipped against the tent the whole night, and as we would find the next morning when we summited the pass, the weather there was worse.

We encountered many people who were doing stupid things, most presented as men. And this is not to say that men are stupid or incapable. Rather, this speaks to the cultural indoctrination to the belief that outside, men are more capable. This is telling of the rigid system of masculinity which has pushed these individuals to lack the proper caution and concern. This is what births the toxic outdoor culture many experience today, and it is rooted in a system of American culture that ensure that manliness is the pinnacle of outdoor experience. Moreover, this system ensures that manliness is the expected performance of identity outside.

This idea can be traced very easily to the sex gender system as explained by Judith Butler (1990). While generally people can identify that gender and sex are different categories, the separation becomes unclear. This is because while gender and sex denote separate things, gender a performance of a spectrum of femininity to masculinity, and sex representation of chromosomes, these categories become conflated (Butler 1990: 9). People cannot recognize that male does not inherently equal masculine in the same way that female does not mean feminine. These ideas have been entangled in ways that have

enculturated people to recognize the sex, gender, and frequently sexuality are unified by a binary system.

However, the system is incredibly flawed. People are not a gender, but instead perform a gender. Gender is not binary but fluid and in constant negotiation in the same way that other aspects of our identity are. Gender is not singular or rigidly defined in most people. While sex is a more rigid category, being that sex is representative of chromosomes, in an age where transgender people are able to legally identify as the sex they believe to be correct our ideas of sex are also changing, slowly and not without resistance. Though, one of the most important ideas in all of Butler's argument is that the sex/gender system is conflated and performed.

And this is not new. Michel Foucault (1988) famously deconstructed sexuality in his exploration of biopolitics, the policing of the social body through institutions such as the family structure, health care system, schools, etc. in which the physical body and expression becomes regulated (141). He explains that sexuality is utilized as a discursive object, a means of policing and controlling populations by forcing repression of one's sexual identity through the socialization of Victorian ideas of religiously rooted guilt and shame. Moreover, the deployment of sexuality created the category of sex (Foucault 1988).

Foucault asserts four ways in which sexuality has been deployed: (1) hysterization of women's bodies (2) the pedagogization of children's sex, (3) the socialization of procreative behavior, and (4) the psychiatrization of perverse pleasure (Foucault 1988: 104–5). Children's sexuality becomes monitored and controlled. Women's body become an object both of medical knowledge and of physical pleasure for men. The socialization of procreative behavior emphasizes the importance of heteronormative relationships in which sex is an act of reproduction not pleasure, which categorizes non-reproductive sexual acts as perverse and a problem of psychiatric concern. He argues that without

these categories sexuality does not exist, it is only through these modes of expressing biopolitics that we come to know and recognize sexuality.

Foucault ultimately asserts that while the expression of sexuality is presented as a means of liberation that it is actually a mechanism which reinforces these four categories of biopolitics. Rather than using the term sexuality, he asserts bodies and pleasure are more appropriate terms. It is with his framework challenging the heteronormative and procreative biases of sex and sexuality that Butler can explain the performativity of the sex/gender system.

It is through challenging the normalization and enculturation to the repressive sex/gender system that we can liberate individuals from the cumbersome identity politics rooted in Victorian notions of purity (Foucault 1988). Though, the sex/gender system has infiltrated much of our lives. The ways we have come to understand the world have been gendered and the outdoors is no exception.

Intersectionality, and a Bit More on Race

While in the last chapter I focused solely on race, here I'd like to expand and complicate our understanding of privilege. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) coined the term intersectionality to explain the ways that aspects of our identity overlap. She explains that while we may fit one category, for example I am white, I do not also have the privilege of being male. While I am cisgendered, I may not always fit standards of femininity. In this way, some people who have a higher level of privilege, for example white people, are not all treated the same. White women have less privilege than white men, straight white women have more privilege than queer white women, and so on.

Being white is a primary factor in comfort outdoors, it is not always the most critical, or the target of policing from others, but it remains the most prominent factor on which data supports an increase in access in both quantitative and qualitative ways. For example, in a 2008–2009 poll run by the National Park Service, they found that 78% of visitors were white (National Park Service). This was a 4% increase from their poll in 2000. The survey also found that African Americans were the most underrepresented group, making between 11 and 12% in their survey sample but comprising a total of 7% in visitation (National Park Service). This was also seen for Hispanic/Latinx visitors, though to a lesser extent than African Americans. Asian Americans and American Indians/Alaska Natives were found to be represented among visitors, with the white population being the only population over-represented. Though, this information is not only out of date being a decade old, but likely not entirely representative of the actual diversity in use.

In his thesis, “Seeing Race, Culture, and Community,” Josh Parker cites a 2015 National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey for the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest which found that 94.2% of forest visitors were white. This is a worrisome statistic seeing as Washington state is 80% white and Seattle, the closest urban center to the National Forest is only 77% white as explained by Parker citing the Census Bureau.

While many Americans see the importance of public lands, and share in celebrating their beauty, the politics of land are lost. For example, the National Park Service is a branch of the Department of the Interior. The United States Forest Service is a part of the Department of Agriculture. The separation of the agencies into two separate branches of federal management means they operate in fundamentally different ways. The National Park Service (NPS) is dependent on visitation for funds. Recreation and tourism are the primary means of engagement for the Park Service. The National Park Service has a much more strict standard of operation in relation to visitors. Much of National Park land is Wilderness or kept in a preserved state. This means that NPS cannot harvest timber or other forest products for profit or their budget.

Meanwhile, the United States Forest Service (USFS) relies each year on meeting timber targets. Timber is the largest source of income for the USFS. And while much of the nation's National Forests offer Wilderness, recreation, and tourism, most National Forests do not have entry gates. The entry fees associated with National Parks do not exist. Many National Forests require parking passes, though they are often much cheaper than the required week pass for a National Park. Moreover, National Parks are policed in a way that National Forests are not. National Parks have entrance points, there are limited ways to access the park, and often not a way to sneak in or otherwise not pay. The process of entering a National Park is more rigid.

For National Forests, many people are often unaware where they begin or end. They are not gated in the same way. There is less infrastructure for ranger stations, interpretive centers, and development. Instead, National Forests are less regulated and, in a way, more accessible. However, that freedom of accessibility may also make forests more concerning. The fear of being entirely alone is higher. While in parks you will find paved roads and many signs, Forest Service roads are often unpaved, sometimes unmaintained, and overlap with private lands. It is not uncommon to see bullet holes in signs, find a road that forks but is not labeled, and an area where you may not find help.

Moreover, Forest Service lands cannot possibly keep a consistent tally of usage. In my experience working for the Forest Service while some front liners, those who work at the front desk of ranger stations, do interact with visitors, it is only a very small percentage that stop at the station. Unlike the National Parks there is no stamp to collect in a passport, or extensive merchandise to buy. People do not pass through a gate and pay an entrance fee. Many, I would argue millions use Forest Service lands each day without purchasing a parking pass, filling out a permit for Wilderness, or providing any other source of tracking for their usage.

However, I don't imagine usage numbers look much different in many forests than they do in parks. My interview and survey data, as laid out in the last chapter, echoes these use/visitation numbers. I want to reiterate that while race and gender are separate categories, identity is intersectional and therefore it is impossible to understand environmental privilege without recognizing the ways race and gender overlap.

The Frontier Myth and The Strenuous Life

The narrative of American identity is rooted in the Frontier Myth and bolstered by Roosevelt's assertion of the importance of the "strenuous life." In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner gave his now infamous speech, *The Frontier in American History* (Bennett 1975) to the American Historical Society in which he cites the 1890 United States Census in asserting the American frontier was closed. Turner explains the westward expansion was a representation of American character and democracy. His assertion that the frontier was closing sent shockwaves through the young nation as it was the frontier that was the most integral part of fostering the nation's identity.

Richard Slotkin (1973) articulates the importance of the Frontier Myth in the formation of American national identity. He argues that the cultural ideas and perceptions of reality were dependent on the myth of the frontier, what he describes as, "the conception of America as a wide-open land of unlimited opportunity for the strong, ambitious, self-reliant individual to thrust his way to the top" (1973: 5). This myth contributes to the frontier psychology, the way colonists perceived of the "New World" as a place to, "regenerate their fortunes, their spirits, and the power of their church and nation" (1973:5). They of course did so by ignoring that their regeneration came through violence, genocide and oppression, a reality that has been perpetuated as it has become structural in the American experience of environment and privilege (5).

Slotkin, much like Benedict Anderson (1991), connects a unified national identity to a unified narrative achieved through writing. Slotkin (1973) argues that the cultural archetypes within the frontier myth emerged from the realities of the colonial, and later frontier experiences which now operate as myth in American popular culture. He stipulates that these archetypes emerged from the development of American literary culture, bolstered by the creation of the printing press. As settlers began to share their narrative and perspectives through writing, a literary tradition, and form of communication, became standardized (Slotkin 1973:15–16).

He argues the force of myth is in its representation individuals are compelled to believe and by tracing the conventions of narrative literature. Slotkin traces the origins of cultural values. He articulates Boone literature as the origin, the creation of American heroes as lovers of wilderness, his affirmations of love are actions of violence against the spirit of the wild (22). Thus, the mythology of the American frontier, a myth that has lasted through the history of the nation, originated in the violence of settlers and sharing of their perspectives and language through printed press. The American literary tradition reifies the American hero as one who dominates landscapes and people with violence, perpetuating the rugged individualism of the settlers who began this nation.

This literary tradition was an invaluable part of the enculturation of one of the most powerful forces in public lands, Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt incorporated this mythology both in his own life and in the philosophy he espoused.

Roosevelt's now famous speech, "The Strenuous Life" has become an integral part of our understanding of Roosevelt, his political platform, actions as President, and his continuing legacy. In the speech he addresses men almost exclusively. He explains: "the doctrine of the strenuous life, the life of toil and effort, of labor and strife; to preach the highest form of success which comes, not to man who desires mere easy peace, but to

the man who does not shrink from danger, from hardship, or from bitter toil, and who out of these wins the splendid ultimate triumph” [Roosevelt “The Strenuous Life” 1899].

He goes on to explain that hard work is what makes the country great, that only men whose fathers before them worked hard with good purpose can be freed of work, and that health can only exist when men and women (one of the very few times he acknowledges women) lead “clean, vigorous, healthy lives” (Roosevelt 1899). He furthers a gendered dichotomy in identifying men’s work, the “righteous war,” and women’s work, motherhood.

He draws a connection between the health of the individual and the nation. He also explicitly connects a strenuous life to a belief that conquest and colonization are part of the nation’s work, explaining that the strenuous life is the only life worth leading, “The timid man, the lazy man, the man who distrusts his country, the over-civilized man, who has lost the great fighting, masterful virtues, the ignorant man, and the man of full mind, whose soul is incapable of feeling the mighty life that thrills, ‘stern men with empires on their brains’—all of course, shrink from seeing the nation undertake its new duties; shrink from seeing us build a navy and an army adequate to our needs shrink from seeing us do our share of the world’s work, by bringing order out of chaos in the great, fair tropic islands from which the valor of our soldiers and sailors has driven the Spanish flag. These are the men who fear the strenuous life, who fear the only national life which is really worth leading” [Roosevelt “The Strenuous Life” 1899].

He explains too, that expansion is critical, “we cannot sit huddles within our own borders” (Roosevelt “The Strenuous Life” 1899), as is domination “we must grasp the points of vantage which will enable us to have our say in deciding the destiny of the oceans of the East and West” (Roosevelt “The Strenuous Life” 1899). Ultimately, The Strenuous Life is Roosevelt’s call for men to be good and physically able, to be honest and righteous, but also maintain the understanding that the nation’s health (meaning

power and expansion) is dependent of the willingness to get rough, dirty, and aggressive, for men. Women were asked to their duty and continue to produce more American children, to be taught the ways of the strenuous life.

Roosevelt broadly combined his Victorian ideals of morality and purity, with his love of the Frontier life, wild, dirty, and rough. His incorporation of politics in his model of a strenuous life ensured the imperialistic warfare and racial violence, Gail Bederman (1996) argues this “distinguishes him as one of the chief promoters of manhood at the turn of the twentieth century” (Dorsey 2013: 424).

While the frontier myth has been utilized in many aspects of American history and culture, by no one with more success than Roosevelt. Roosevelt, as explained by Bederman (1996), and many others, exuded both a “kindhearted manly chivalry and aggressive masculine violence” (Bederman 1996: 172). Roosevelt was a particularly interested intersection of bourgeois civility and frontier aggression.

Throughout his life Roosevelt adored his father, who adhered to Victorian ideas of manliness, “strength, altruism, self-restraint, and chastity,” (Bederman 1996: 172). These were deeply ingrained in the upper class, high society life of the Roosevelts. But it was not just Roosevelt’s father than was demonstrating manhood to little Theodore. He was a fan of books such as *The Boy Hunters* and *The Adventures in Search of a White Buffalo* by Mayne Reid. These books showcase male characters who are traveling in thrilling adventures facing off with hostile Indians and wild animals (Bederman 1996: 173).

Reid draws on Western themes such as the white hero achieving manhood through battle and conquest. Moreover, the themes in Reid’s stories are often linked to the idea that these boys are both simultaneously related and connected to Native peoples, and still white, and therefore superior (Bederman 1996: 173). This theme is carried through American literature with other figures as well, such as Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone,

uncoincidentally, two figures that inspired Roosevelt, so much so they would be the namesakes of his later established conservation organization, the Boone and Crockett Club.

Though, the most prominent theme from Roosevelt's favorite books was the "eat or be eaten" lesson drawn through much of the stories, a perspective of nature and animals that captured the young, and often sickly Roosevelt. Roosevelt, as a young boy came across a dead seal, he connected to the experience of power and violence. Roosevelt, enacting Lucien, a character from Reid's books, annotated measurements of the creature and wanted to acquire the skull as a first exhibit in his own Natural History Museum.

As a child he connected masculinity with aggression and the same type of exploration as seen in the fictional Western frontier, the one he had read about in Reid's books. He learned that heroic masculinity was connected to battling Indians and killing fierce animals (Bederman 1996).

Some have traced Roosevelt's transformation from a sickly bourgeois young boy to a Western hero to the death of his first wife, Alice Lee. Though, Bederman argues that in fact Roosevelt was connecting to the Western ranch lifestyle while Alice was still alive. On a trip to South Dakota Roosevelt committed himself to spending forty thousand dollars on ranch. Financially, it was a poor decision, but it was this moment that committed him to a shift in his own identity (Bederman 1996: 173–175). After her death and in his mourning, Roosevelt was able to more fully commit himself to the Western hero persona he had so idolized. I'd argue, in his grief, he threw himself into that new identity. He became a ranchman, writing books about hunting and staunchly rejecting any effeminate traits that others had associated with him.

Roosevelt remains an incredibly important political figure having federally protected many of today's public lands and creating the agencies which manage those lands today.

In his political career, Roosevelt created the United States Forest Service and 150 National Forests, five National Parks, signed the 1906 Antiquities Act which allowed for his creation of 18 National Monuments, established 51 bird reserves and four game preserves. Roosevelt singlehandedly protected 230,000,000 acres of North American land.

TR was unapologetic in his protection of public lands, so much so Congress feared he was abusing his power and encroaching on too many lands that could be better used for homesteading, or resource extraction. In fact, Roosevelt alone signed 1,081 orders, no President before him had signed more than 253, and all Presidents prior to TR combined had signed 1,262.

In response to this, Charles Fulton (R-OR) attached an amendment on an agricultural appropriations bill that would keep the President from reserving more lands. While Roosevelt saw the importance of the bill he did wait until the absolute last minute to sign it and established 21 more forest reserves before doing so.

But Roosevelt was also a cultural symbol, one who quite literally wrote the history of the western frontier. In TR's four volume series entitled, *The Winning of the West*, Bederman explains, "Roosevelt depicts the American West as a crucible in which the white American race was forged through masculine racial conflict. By applying Darwinistic principles to the Western tradition, Roosevelt constructed the frontier as a site of origins of the American race, whose manhood and national worth were proven by their ability to stamp out competing, savage races" (1996: 178).

Roosevelt's construction of American identity was deeply seated in his experience with the frontier myth, through his favorite childhood books, and later his experiences in South Dakota. His father's example of manhood, rooted in Victorian standards, paired

with TR's fondness of the Western hero developed the perspective that would be represented in both the lands and their systems of management as created by Roosevelt.

This is a critical piece of the history of public lands that is often overlooked. Manliness acts as an intersection between racial superiority and aggressive masculinity. Bederman explains that race, gender, and millennialism have shaped our dominant narrative of civilization (1996: 25). Race, as explained in the previous chapter, grew from the Darwinian perspective of evolution. As this was projected upon human culture, stratification was seen where in reality there was only diversity. The West and industrialized societies, those built by white populations, were believed to be more advanced than primitive savages or violent barbarians. It was assumed that whiteness and civilization were linked, that somehow civilization was a racial trait.

Moreover, gender became conflated with civilization as well. Populations defined as savages were frequently egalitarian or, in some cases, matriarchal. This was seen as an undesirable quality. Civilized cultures were thought to be superior, they were also white, frequently industrialized, predominantly Christian, and male-dominated.

Bederman then connects this white, male driven, superiority to Protestant millennialism. Protestant millennialism is the strict belief that progress is rooted in a Christian fight against evil (Bederman 1996: 26). As Darwinian principles of evolution became popularized, survival of the fittest became co-opted, applied directly to racial superiority in Social Darwinism, which would, as believed, lead to the most pure and perfect manliness and womanliness possible. The survival of the fittest meant more than strictly a biological mechanism of adaptation and eventual evolution, but instead an advancement of civilization.

So, with civilization, whiteness, and male dominance viewed as the height of superiority and the pinnacle of progress, hegemonic white male domination becomes normalized. In

the same way that Roosevelt preached a strenuous life, working constantly in the direction of progress, manliness is presented as the standard Roosevelt asks Americans to live up to.

Bederman asserts that manliness was the highest level of moral achievement. Masculinity, contrarily, could and was found even in savages. Manliness was only found in the morally superior race. It was a characteristic, that while not found in all white men, could only be found in white men. And just as manliness is the highest form of manhood, so was civilization the highest form of humanity, found only in the most dominant and superior race.

We cannot isolate race or gender when studying the development of American culture as it was so entangled in ideas of civilization, development, and progress.

But this is not simply a matter of sex, gender, or sexuality. While each of these pieces of identity are conflated in manliness, this is also a mechanism of biopolitics. As explained by Ray, in *The Ecological Other* (2013), the physicality of a body, the ability of a body to move as expected is also policed.

Similar to Roosevelt's roots in Victorian culture, Ray traces the development of disgust culture to the dichotomy of dirty and clean seen in Victorian ideas of purity. As explained by Mary Douglas (1966) cultural ideas of dirty are relative to our understandings of order. Douglas defines dirt as matter out of place (1966: 44). Douglas explains, "Our pollution behavior is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications" (1966: 45).

Our understanding of what was and is normal or acceptable is influenced by roots in Victorian standards, which as Americans constructed both a national identity, so too were wilderness and identity politics being co-constructed. Ray explains urbanization and

immigration began to challenge the free movement of the open West, as well as the racial purity touted by Eugenicists. The narrative of social superiority was prominent, and, in this way, disability becomes stigmatized by dominant culture. The disabled body was unnatural, unfit, and therefore, unworthy.

Using the work of Edward Said (1978) on orientalism in which the other is defined in an opposition, Ray explores the ways environmentalism, through an experience-based perspective, identifies a loss of the nature experience as a direct response to the racial other. As civilization advanced westward, urbanization and immigration led to the closing of the frontier, the loss of the outdoor experience, and in turn, a loss of something superior.

Ray asserts that scholarship, while having detailed the ways other identity categories have led to exclusion, has overlooked disability. She traces this specifically to the wilderness ideal, the fit body which connects landscape to dominance and fitness. She points out the paradoxical quality of environmentalism, “it functions as a critique of some dominant relations, especially capitalism, and yet it reinforces many social hierarchies along lines of race, class, and gender” (Ray 2013: 4). The origin of nature for humans, is in fact, the body as all humans gain knowledge of nature through sensory and subjective natural experience (Ray 2013: 7).

Ray argues the absence of recognition of the physicality of the body in environmental experience illuminates an illusion of separation (2013: 8) and in this way, “the historical origin of disability as a social construct is also the historical moment at which the body became a means of reuniting with nature” (Ray 2013: 8).

The outdoors becomes a mechanism for bodily purification, reigniting, or justifying social order in which white manliness is superior. Wilderness is a means of producing the manliness of moral supremacy which assures the same progress of Social Darwinism and

Protestant Millennialism as explained by Bederman (1996). Ray explores the ways environmental privilege becomes more prominent, as able and privileged bodies were able to escape toxic urban spaces and while others were forced to exist in, and then were blamed for, the pollution of urbanization (2013: 9).

Ray connects Bederman's (1996) analysis of Roosevelt's "strenuous life" as a fantasy of raw masculine identity which was threatened not only by the feminizing, but disabling, modern society. If society is feminizing and disabling, wilderness was and is the counter space, the dichotomic place to rescue manliness (2013: 15). In this way, environment is both spatially and corporeally deployed as a mechanism for sculpting the American population and landscape to fit a national political ideology (Ray 2013: 15).

Ray explores the connections between bodily relations with environment and how this discourse enforces social hierarchies that make the environment exclusive to particular bodies. She creates links between colonialism, the outdoors and the able body. The fit body was capable in the colonial expansion of Manifest Destiny. The disabled body is removed from this narrative of freedom and movement, and instead identified as unfit in the Eugenic campaign seeking a superiority pure human race (2013: 2).

Ray explains, "disgust shapes mainstream environmental discourse and vice versa, and it does so by describing which kinds of bodies and bodily relations to the environment are ecologically 'good,' as well as which kinds of bodies are ecologically 'other,'" she defines her study stating, "The Ecological Other seeks to understand how environmental discourse as a discourse of disgust enforces social hierarchies even as it seeks to dismantle other forms of hegemony" (Ray 2013: 1).

Broadly, the work of Ray speaks to the intersection of identity politics, space, and disgust culture to explore the ways connecting with nature has become a corporeal act (2013:

37). The dirty, impure, and unnatural are defined by the ways they engage with the cultural understanding of nature (Ray 2013: 2).

The process of colonialism was defined by perceptions of race as a legitimate means of categorizing people in a linear hierarchy. A panic of purity bore Eugenics and other forms of discrimination based on false notions of superiority. This allowed for the creation of “pure” space, such as wilderness to form in our cultural memory. The concept of purity has legitimized the taking of indigenous lands, assured the spread of Eugenics and racial disparity, promoted American exceptionalism, and reinforced America as a benevolent force, working toward the most morally courageous task one could imagine.

Working with the frameworks articulated by Bederman and Ray one can see how wilderness became a space for the able-bodied white man to demonstrate his manliness, and in turn, his purity. He could experience “purity, grace, and transcendence through the wilderness encounter,” and in this encounter “there is an appeal of personal challenge” (Ray 2013: 39). Here, he was pitting himself against nature to conquer or beat it. This reinforces the moral superiority of the white, male, elite identity and creates the wilderness body ideal (Ray 2013: 41).

Double Binds

The culturally constructed and socially policed outdoors is ripe with hypocrisy. People of color were assumed to be less human and more animal, therefore more associated with nature than civilization (Finney 2014). Women’s ability to reproduce marks them closer to nature than men, though wilderness is a space to celebrate and protect manliness (Ortner 1974, Bederman 1996). The able body is in constant threat of becoming disabled in dangerous outdoor pursuits (Ray 2013). Ray frames these juxtapositions as double binds.

Exploring in more depths these double binds, we find a juxtaposition of the systems used to justify superiority being rearticulated to fit a larger system of power. In Ray's analysis, disability is a category deemed impure, dirty, or unnatural, which creates the "ecological other."

Though, using the same framework, one can trace both race and gender directly to the ecological other. Building on the work of Finney explored in the previous chapter, we can recognize the ways non-white bodies have been more closely associated with the natural world through the association of the uncivilized savage. People of color were thought to be animals, this was a means of justification of slavery, and white supremacy.

This has also been a part of the discourse surrounding women's subordination. For example, the seminal work of Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" (1974) looked at the ways women had been, as she had suggested at the time, been universally subordinate to men. Frequently, it was women's association with the natural process of reproduction that more closely aligned them with nature. Here, we can trace the binaries, dirty, uncivilized, unpredictable, disorder, or impure to the categories of race, gender and ability in ways that align them with nature as opposed to culture or civilization. And yet, in this case, wilderness and environment in developing American culture was articulated in the narrative of the Frontier Myth and the Strenuous Life.

As the nation expanded and adjusted to expansion, the goal of the Manifest Destiny became more muddled. Civilization was the pinnacle of progress, until it was feminizing and urbanization brought filth. The closing frontier frightened many into believing the space, both physically and metaphorically, for unregulated expansion, for the growth of individual capital, was ending.

Civilization, urbanization, and technology were corrupting the strenuous life. The disabled body cannot properly engage with the outdoors as they cannot enact the strenuous life in the same ways TR believed were necessary. The female body cannot be as capable as the male body because women are assumed to be feminine, lesser, and somehow incapable. Women and men should be reproducing. A “true woman” would contribute new strong life to the American population (Dorsey 2013: 429). “New women” who chose not to have children were not practicing a strenuous life (Dorsey 2013: 429). And non-heteronormative relationships were irresponsible as they lacked reproduction of strong young Americans. These non-normative positions were impure.

The wilderness became a place for rugged, tough, manly men to cleanse themselves of the unwanted qualities found in these subordinate spaces. Within this construction of wilderness, people of color are not worthy of the pristine pinnacle of American pride. And while each of these aspects of identity has been, in one way or another, associated with the lesser, this was in the context of nature. Nature is not the same as American wilderness. Wilderness is what makes the United States exceptional, different from Europe, unique as a new race of explorers, aiming for progress and purity.

This is all to say that these categories of identity have been created, cultivated, and enforced culturally. There is no objective means of substantiating these ideas outside of a cultural system that abides by them. The justifications for exclusion are arbitrary, as is the enforcement.

I see this double bind being due to the construction of nature and wilderness as separate cultural categories. The work of Ortner, and Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo (1974) was some of the first to draw this distinction between nature and culture, or domestic and social spheres. There is a clear understanding with many of my interview participants that nature is what surrounds the creation of man. The air we breathe, the sky, a little grass in a parkway, or a bird flying by are all part of nature. Nature is everywhere, always.

But wilderness (note the lowercase “w,” implying the colloquial term not the federal definition) is something special, without people, harder to get to, less forgiving, more dangerous, and oftentimes, based on interviewee responses, more desirable. You see, wilderness is a distinct category, that like these other double binds, both is and isn’t nature. American wilderness is a culturally constructed idea, rooted in the colonial reports of the American landscape.

It’s important to note that European wilderness was a frightening place that people feared, and in turn avoided. But American wilderness was unique, stunning and profound, drawing in visitors. It acted as a means of creating a distinction for the newly forming nation, a mechanism of difference and separation from Europe (Nash 1967:67). Thomas Cole, an English born American artist, spoke highly of American wilderness, “American scenery... has features, and glorious ones, unknown to Europe. The most distinctive, and perhaps the most impressive, characteristic of American scenery is its wilderness” (Nash 1969: 81).

The unique and stunning landscape was what made America unique, how Americans proved themselves, what the nation could unite around in literature, art, photography, and later a system of land management (Cox 2017).

These ideas are entirely culturally constructed. As explained by William Cronon, “The work of literary scholars, anthropologists, cultural historians, and critical theorists over the past several decades has yielded abundant evidence that ‘nature’ is not nearly so natural as it seems. Instead, it is a profoundly human construction.... the way we describe and understand that world is so entangled with our own values and assumptions that the two can never be fully separate” (Cronon 1996: 25).

The inherent subjectivity of humankind can be directly linked to the importance of culture. Our worldviews are shaped by our perceptions of reality and the systems we are taught to operate in. Nature exists as a culturally constructed category. It will be defined different across cultures but broadly can be understood to relate to environment, in opposition to what is made by humans. Though, wilderness is a unique category of its own. It too is relating to environment, but in opposition to civilization in particular.

Furthermore, wilderness as a category cannot exist without the separation between human and land, environment, nature. Wilderness is a category constructed in opposition to humanity, civilization and urban spaces. The use of the words nature, wild and wilderness are deeply rooted in “semantic history that tracks backward to the medieval church and even to classical antiquity, implying without much reflection that nature is One Thing with One Name, a monolith that can be described holistically in much the same way as God” (Cronon 1996: 35).

This connection to monotheistic religion clouds the cultural meanings of nature; nature becomes pure, free of cultural context because it is “natural.” Describing something as natural, or an action as “part of it’s nature” removes a need to probe furthermore, nature becomes essential, inherent, unquestioned (Cronon 1996: 35).

Roderick Nash similarly problematizes nature and wilderness as categories of space: “‘Wilderness’ has a deceptive concreteness at first glance. The difficulty is that while the word is a noun it acts like an adjective. There is no specific material object that is wilderness. The term designates a quality (as the ‘-ness’ suggests) that produces a certain mood or feeling in a given individual and, as a consequence, may be assigned by that person to a specific place” (Nash 1967: 1).

As I trace the systems of exclusion in outdoor experience, we can trace these double binds back to a single cultural double bind, nature and wilderness are both one in the

same, essentialized environment, but entirely different. Nature is everywhere, associated with the subordinated categories of identity. Wilderness is a place that is accessible only to the elite, privileged few. Though, wilderness in part of nature, the natural world AND a culturally constructed space.

Not-Manly-Men in the Wild

In the last chapter we explored the ways race has been a means of exclusion on landscape. Race played a role in both the formation of the ideology of American landscape, but also in modern representations and experiences. This too can be seen in issues of gender, and gender identity. As individuals formulate and adapt to their surroundings, so do their identities. Identity is in a constant state of negotiation depending on who is there, what a person is doing, and where an individual is. This dynamic process is confusing, and at times extremely complex. Because people like to understand the world through experience and comparison, there have been many identities that were constructed in opposition such as sex (male and female), gender (masculine and feminine) and sexuality (gay or straight). These categories were also constructed in a binary which implies one is superior, or normative.

People may assume someone who is assigned male at birth will be masculine and heterosexual, attracted to a feminine female. This is reductive at best and not true of human behavior. While there is a binary of sex, XY is male and XX is female, even biology has proven to include more than two expression, intersex individuals challenge this binary from a biological perspective. This is also seen in culturally constructed category of gender. Masculine and feminine are two extremes of a spectrum, rather a dichotomic option. The same goes for sexuality, rather than a binary of homosexual and heterosexual there is a spectrum of attraction. Spectrums of gender expression, gender identity, and sexuality are in constant negotiation. And, even the more rigid category of

sex is being challenged by transgender individuals as they adapt their physical body to be representative of their gender identity and/or expression.

It is important to note, I will be defining women broadly, to be inclusive of all female identifying individuals. I did not ask people their sex, or to define their gender, rather I asked if they had a gender identity.

There is frequently an expectation that women are less capable, weaker, unfit, or unable to exist outside without a male companion. As I've laid out, spaces that are not civilized are spaces to assert manliness, something that women, good women at least, should not have.

I believe, in general, individuals who are not manly men, using Bederman's notion of manliness, are unwelcome outside. Not-manly-men is a category that encompasses all identities that fall outside of the expected performance of wilderness. I believe not-manly-men are excluded from these spaces and I myself have felt this exclusion firsthand.

As a child I was never told that because I was a cis-gendered female I was any less capable or worthy. I watched the women in my life be more successful than the men, more stable, and dependable. I was raised to never think about my gender. Though, as I got older and began to explore my independence, my mother did worry about my safety. When I attempted to engage in activities traditionally thought to be male-oriented, football for example, I was often ridiculed, challenged, hazed, and forcibly excluded.

Later in my adolescence, as I began to explore my independence outdoors, other women in my life would mention every now and again that hiking alone wasn't safe. They told me there were creepy men, and I could hurt myself. Injury was always a secondary concern, primarily they were concerned about other people.

When I moved to Oregon, and began to explore my surroundings, I was met with strange stares. Others saw me alone, or with my dog, and asked if I had left a friend behind. Others told me it wasn't safe to go to the woods alone. I had friends that told me I shouldn't ever hike alone. These were men and women, young and old, rich and poor. People all the time everywhere told me not to go out alone. It was frustrating and confusing. I asked them why and if they went alone. The women said no. The men said yes, and justified it because for them, "it's different."

I began thinking, what if I had never been encouraged to spend time outside? What would my perception of the outdoors have been without positive experiences, and role models? How would I understand the world differently without my own privileged access to a space? How can I better understand the system that created this inaccessibility for women, people of color, differently abled individuals, queer people, immigrants, people who live off of land rather than visit it?

I spent years working on this project before I was able to fully understand my own place in it. As is the nature of bias and culture, we cannot fully understand the influence they have on us until we are exposed to a different perspective.

In the midst of working on this chapter, after years of studying American public lands, it became clear to me how I was indoctrinated into the Frontier Myth, through the work of Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House on the Prairie series.

Laura Ingalls was born in 1867. When she was just two, her family, her mother, father, and older sister, moved from Wisconsin to Kansas. There her father unknowingly claimed land on the Osage Indian Reservation, land he could not claim via homesteading or preemptive claim. The family eventually moved back to Wisconsin. Life in Wisconsin would provide the material for Ingalls' first two novels, Little House in the Big Woods

(1932) and *Little House on the Prairie* (1935). She would later spend her life writing about her frontier experiences, living in Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, South Dakota, and Missouri. Following the Stock Market Crash of 1929, Ingalls' daughter Rose, would help her work on her eight "Little House" books. She wrote of her experiences in the late 1800s, moving across the Great Plains, homesteading, and living in the American Frontier.

These books, and the television show "*Little House on the Prairie*" (1974–1983) starring Melissa Gilbert as Laura, and Michael Landon as her father Charles, proved immensely popular. I remember reading the books when I was in elementary school, longing to go back in time, to a moment when you could take a covered wagon across the country, live in a small cabin and explore the wild plains. I paired the story lines from the books with the images I'd watched in the show.

Growing up, my family had loved Westerns, shows like *Bonanza* (1959–1973) and *Gunsmoke* (1952–1961) where the prolific rugged American cowboy would battle wild Indians, and the evil outsiders, and ruthless outlaws. These shows, *Gunsmoke* for example, play on the tropes of the American hero, pulling themselves up by their bootstraps, to overcome the challenges of the desolate, complicated, and isolating frontier to find prosperity, camaraderie, and independence.

It was with this foundation that a show like *Little House on the Prairie* could become wildly successful. And, to put it simply, the popular culture icons of our parents' generation transcend time. As those who raise us guide our own enculturation, we become exposed to, and accept the cultural ideas they share. My exposure to these shows and cultural ideas taught me what it meant to be an American.

While I have always despised the Western genre and style, I found something I liked in *Little House on the Prairie*. I saw a character like myself, a young white girl. As an only

child who was being raised by a single mother, I found comfort in watching with my uncle, my male role model, as Laura and her father Charles bonded.

I would see myself living in the Western fantasy of *Little House on the Prairie* in ways that were not available for me in other Westerns like *Gunsmoke*. The novels provided me a space to explore a different world, separate from the structure of school and the suburbs. I could escape to a different world where I was the narrator in a landscape from the past, a place where people were more family oriented, grounded in their home, in the land, and fighting for what was good. As so often is the case, we long for a more simple time.

As I wrote this chapter, I spent a lot of time thinking about my own position in this work. I must acknowledge that my own understanding of the American landscape emerges from the images and ideas rooted in Westward expansion. My own perceptions of ideal characteristics come from the presentation of likable characters, ones that I could identify with. I learned to like the outdoors because I could see myself in Laura Ingalls. I had a model of what I could be, crafted in the narrative of progress, purity, and prosperity.

But with this I also carried the baggage of colonial ideas of progress. The dominant narrative of expansion was not one that shared other perspectives. There was not a show that featured the peoples displaced by settlement. There was no conversation about how women were tethered to reproduction and domesticity. The allure of a frontier life, for me, was that I could still be outside. I could be self-reliant, close to nature, and far from the big, crowded world of urban America.

Which brings me back to Roosevelt's strenuous life. It was through the exploration of this ideology of arduous physical labor, supreme moral adherence, and the notion of expanding the most fit and pure to ensure the prosperity of the nation that I came to understand my place in all of this.

I was raised to do good, to help, and be kind. I was taught to be strong, and resilient. I was told not be a quitter. I had role models that did what they had to get by. These were all parts of my daily life, but also what I saw represented by writers such as Ingalls Wilder.

Through my exploration of the pioneer image and frontier, I came to better understand my origins as an “American.” Of course, this is all part of a very naive understanding, I was unaware that no one in my family had traveled to the West in covered wagons. None of my relatives were pioneers, or colonists. Instead, my family came much later as Eastern European immigrants.

But young Nikki wouldn't know that. I saw myself as part of the same lineage as Laura Ingalls. I was an American, tough and good intentioned, hardworking and tenacious. I would spend my young life challenging expectations of myself, as a girl, but also succumbing to connecting my self-worth to domesticity. I would accept romantic ideas of exploration as inspiring and admirable.

As Laura grows on the show her character transforms to a rough and tumble young girl with a real affinity for her Pa, to a young woman, being courted, an object of male attention, I lost interest.

I turned to books. I read the work of John Muir and the transcendentalists, Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. I found myself investing in the idea that returning to nature meant returning to simplicity, to a place of self-discovery, that the wilderness was a place free from the constraints of the social world. I clung to this idea until only recently. Through the process of completing this research I have uncovered the roots of a problematic and tremendously harmful system. I can see now how I was indoctrinated to

white environmentalism, but I have also recognized now the layers of exclusion that left even me out of the boys' club.

I have spoken with many women about their experiences in the outdoors. I have interviewed just over 30 specifically about their own perceptions, motivations, and experiences.

These self-identified women were 18–57. Respondents were predominately white (82%), one identified as Asian American, one identified as Latina and one identified as Other (Appalachian Melungeon) (see Figure 5). These individuals spanned several states including: California (7), Oregon (5), Washington (4), Arizona (1), Colorado (1), Connecticut (1), Idaho (1), Iowa (1), Massachusetts (1), New Jersey (1), North Carolina (1), Oklahoma (1), South Carolina (1), Virginia (1), Nevada (1) New Hampshire (1), and one individual claimed the Northwest as their home. One respondent is from Australia but was living in Ireland at the time of our interview. Others preferred not to mention where they were from.

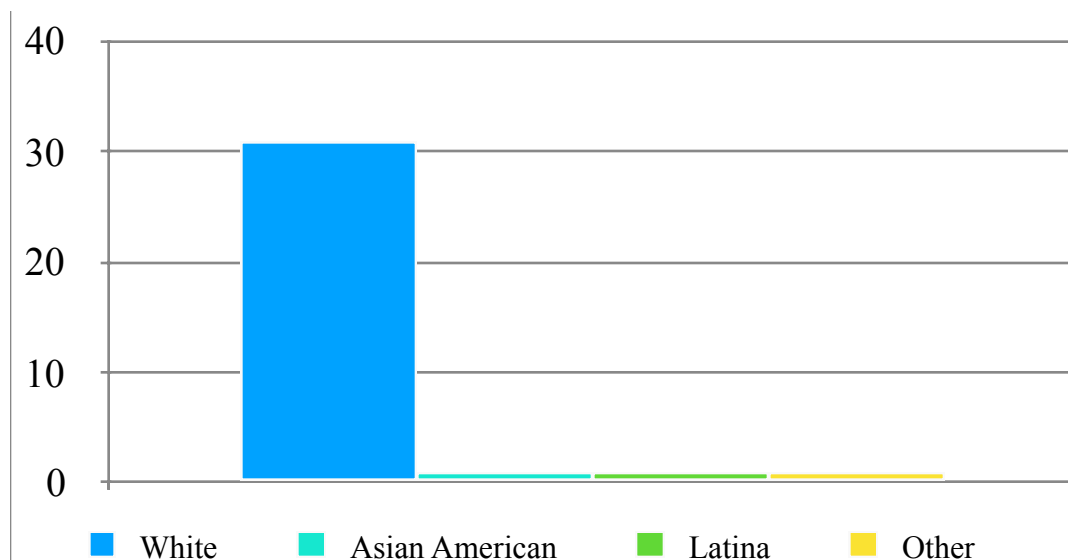


Figure 5: Female Interview Respondents: Racial Self Identification

These women describe recreation as freedom, liberation, relief, rejuvenation, healing and peace while others may cite activity, exhaustion, meditation, sweat and strain. Though more often than not, it is cited as a necessity for mental and emotional health. Their practice is both empowering and strengthening for their physical body, mind and spirit. Individuals mention, “It give me a lot of energy,” “it’s a therapeutic exercise... it gives me time to think about stuff and get away from everything,” and “it’s like my body is craving to be away and outside. The air is different.”

This is a clear trend, as women find their own place in recreation. The now infamous work of Cheryl Strayed, *Wild* (2012), has inspired many women to release their inhibitions and try something new or different. Women I interviewed, survey respondents, and online communities have cited Strayed as an outdoor hero, a motivation, and a source of inspiration. Though, unlike Strayed, not all women I spoke with hike alone. Some told me they prefer not to but will, others refuse to hike alone.

One such woman, Emily, describes becoming empowered when hiking. She explains that for her, a practicing Pagan, it is a spiritual experience, and a stress reliever. Though, Emily recognizes her own cultural upbringing in her practices outdoors. As a self-identified feminist, she told me that she cannot shed her upbringing. Raised in South Carolina, she was taught never to hike alone:

“I do not hike alone, I have never hiked alone. I was raised in South Carolina and I was raised in a culture that is very, that puts an emphasis on manliness, and women shouldn’t do such things alone, that is very much my hiking persona still, because I grew up constantly hearing don’t go hiking alone, don’t go backpacking alone, not only as a woman, but as a protection thing, if something happens you are going to want someone with you, all the better male, and by male I mean biologically.”

Emily was taught culturally normative gender binaries which are prominent not only in the South where she grew up, but throughout American culture.

These expectations of gender performance are affecting women's interactions with and experiences of the wild. Some women cited a fear of getting lost or injured. These responses mirror those in my online survey. Emily's experience is not isolated, although many of the women I spoke to reject these cultural teachings. I purposefully chose to interview female hikers, meaning I selected for a people who have overcome restrictive categories of gender and gendered space.

57% of the women I interviewed said they do not hike alone, and 15% said they rarely hike alone or will sometimes hike alone. For the women who choose to hike along, they describe feeling competent and cite their only hesitation as unavoidable risks such as injury and animals and other people. Preparation helped to mitigate most of their fears. Again, the interview data echoes the responses in the online survey.

In these interviews, the bottom line is that what women fear most about being in the outdoors alone is encountering other people, truly, encountering men. The same vulnerable position of being a woman in society is carried to the wilderness.

One interviewee mentioned, "the reason I sometimes don't hike alone is because I don't know who is going to be there, if I don't feel comfortable I don't go, but I am more afraid of other people, I don't think a coyote can tell if I am a woman..."

Though, many find that community building has helped to dismantle this barrier. Many women start hiking and backpacking through online hiking groups. Women Who Hike, founded by Nicole Brown, has worked to create a community for women to unite together in outdoor pursuits. What was once a small group with an Instagram page has become a large organization with regional groups and ambassadors who lead group hikes and other adventurous activities.

Women Who Hike is an organization which highlights the accomplishments of female hikers and cultivates a community for women looking for hiking and camping comrades. This is a common theme for many women. Two interviewees mention, “one of the things, for me, about hiking is the social experience, even in silence you are still with someone, you get to see and experience these things with others. You can share them. We will have a better time than going by myself,” and “I think... I enjoy hiking with other people. I would rather experience hiking with other people... I am definitely an extrovert and don’t need to be on my own to feel nature and feel the experience of it.”

No matter if women choose to hike alone or with others, gender is still an aspect of identity that affects the experience of wilderness. When asked how she felt about her own gender identity affecting her experience of wilderness, Emily (the Tattooed Emu) replied: “I don’t want to use the term civilized or settled, but the way the US developed the West, westward expansion and the emphasis on civilization, taming, aggregation, building, plowing... the West was a wild untamed land of possibility. It was a fresh start full of potential. So, we expanded westward and then wilderness writers pop up, John Muir. Here’s John Muir who jumps over his fence with a loaf of bread, a block of cheese and a wool blanket going to hangout in the wilderness. You have Jack London writing about Alaska and projecting this sort of idea that only a man’s man can survive in the wilderness. That man’s man can be seen in folklore, Davey Crockett, Paul Bunyan, masculinity is projected on wilderness. Wilderness is socially constructed, because there is no wilderness in the US, all wild is managed.”

She paused for a moment then finished:

“How do you reconcile the innate femininity of the Earth with the innate masculinity of wilderness? Do women feel more at home in non-wilderness areas and places that have been domesticated? Women are allowed to be comfortable in a landscape that is domesticated and dominated by men because that is safe and accepted.”

Many female hikers are aware of the gender dichotomy. Some interviewees mention the media associating men with wilderness. Interviewees often underline the cultural assumptions about women, such as “in a lot of situations as a female you feel less capable and... it’s not true.”

Other women narrate their negative experiences, “you get looks, even hiking with other women, you get looks from male hikers, they question us and I’ve never gone overnight, and I feel like my experience as a woman will negatively impact that.” When asked if race effects positively or negatively their experience of wilderness another interviewee explains, “I’d like to say no, but I think it does, especially when I do urban hiking,” she mentioned feeling as though people do not speak to her as frequently when she hikes alone compared to when hiking with a white friend.

As I’ve laid out, gender alone is not the single discriminatory factor, it is intertwined with other aspects of identity. 85% of my interview participants identify as white. For the women of color that I spoke to, race played a factor in their experience of wilderness. One self-identified Asian-American became more aware of her intersectional identity after moving: “In Colorado I was shocked and surprised... I definitely had a sense of, ‘I am the only Asian American person here,’ and then I hike in California, this is crazy half the people aren’t White... it’s noticeable on the trails. As far as long distance [hiking] after Colorado I was more conscious of it, the stereotype of White dude, 20 something...”

Alice, the Chicana who was confronted with MAGA hat in a National Park explained “I would like to think it [race] doesn’t [affect my interactions with or in wilderness], but I sometimes feel it does in a negative sense. I get acknowledged less compared to white friends.”

And while the majority of the women I spoke with identify as white, they are aware of the lack of diversity and their own privilege as white people in wilderness. Lauren Austin

explained, “I recognize it is a huge privilege to got to the backcountry, a white privilege, a white person thing. I have some guilt, but I cannot help who I am or the skin I was born into. I am thrilled to share the outdoors with non-white friends, and it’s pretty cool to take them out.” She then shared, “I took a group of students from Hong Kong camping and they had never slept outside. These were athletic people, but this was their first evening outside and there was a clear sky covered in stars. They had never seen so many stars. It was their first experience with it. It was powerful.” She continued, “it’s an issue that the backcountry, wilderness, outdoors are limited to people who have White privilege.”

Others mention, “I have the benefit of growing up in a white middle class family that made me learn to like the outdoors... I feel lucky,” “there a lot of white people hiking and the only reason I am thinking about hiking is because I had a comfortable up-bringing,” and “I am privileged, my perceived race, and my parents have given me the money to drive and acquire gear. I can afford to take time off to go out and interact with nature.” The same interview continues, connecting the intersection of race and class, “if I were from a lower class I would not be able to do it, but I think class and race are deeply connected.”

There is an awareness of the ways our identities overlap to create more accessibility to these spaces. By deconstructing our biased patriarchal and racist cultural history we can recognize the falsehoods embedded in our cultural “truth” and engage with the realities of a diversities of perspectives, experiences and identities.

This was eloquently explained by Emily (The Tattooed Emu):

“Wilderness is the great equalizer. As a female hiker myself, I am what you call, ‘on the curvy side’ and even though I am on the curvy side what segregates me in real life is a moot point in the wilderness. What matters is, can I get up this incline? Can I sustain this speed? Can I get to where I am going? And someone who wears a size 2 may not be able to do what I can do. And I have seen that happen... what it comes down to

is do you believe what society is telling you, or do you believe what your body is telling you?"

Femininity, Exclusion, Fear

Though, after speaking with all of these individuals, the thing that returned to me the most frequently was that fear was the most dominant reason people do not recreate. Fear of being alone in a desolate place, of other people that may be in the woods, of basic safety concerns (i.e. who will help me out if I break my leg?). What strikes me as interesting here is that the root of the perception of the space, and consequently, the experience, is a perception of inferiority.

Women, feminine individuals, those who are differently abled, non-heteronormative individuals, are presented as inferior in these spaces. Somehow, that double bind of nature being polluting and pure, of civilization being the pinnacle of progress and also the feminizing space, that the physical body must be elite but also threatened, these aspects of the outdoors are constructing an inferiority of the non-manly.

The dominant narrative states: women are not rugged enough for the outdoors; queer people too, gay men are not masculine, gay women are too masculine and are still women; the differently abled body is not fit enough, and technology they may use lessens the pure wilderness experience; people of color are both closer to nature, uncivilized and animal like, but also not pure enough for pristine wilderness. We return again to Roosevelt's *Strenuous Life*, and Bederman's exploration of manliness.

Wilderness emerges from the closing frontier. Wilderness is a place for the strong, virile, pure, white men to assert their dominance, their superiority, their power. Manliness articulates the ways that race, gender, sex, sexuality, and physical ability become conflated to articulate the ideal American.

These ideas were spread through writing. Playing on Benedict Anderson's (1991) articulation of nationalism, writing is a means of creating a national identity. As the United States began to formulate a national identity nature writing began to create a culture. American literature lays the foundation for American cultural identity, one in which the white man narrates explorations and adventures. In some cases, there is exploitation, conquest, and expansion, in others a notable absence of any one other than the white man.

As explained by Sarah McFarland, "In canonical American nature writing by folks like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, John Burroughs, Aldo Leopold, Ed Abbey, and Barry Lopez, the male narrator demonstrates the manly pursuit of wilderness travel, and nature, the object of their pursuit, is often metaphorically feminine" (McFarland 2008: 41).

Moreover, McFarland explains, "Traditional American nature writing has been burdened by a discriminatory history, influenced by wilderness exploration and scientific study that excluded women" (McFarland 2008: 41). But it's not just women that are excluded. Prominent writer and thru-hiker Carrot Quinn has been vocal on her personal blog and in publications on the exclusions of people who are not white, able-bodied men. In a blog entitled, "F U C K - K E R O U A C" Quinn explains:

"At some point in my coming-of-age years (not that long ago, really) I read Kerouac (white man has adventures, shit-talks women). I read *Into the Wild* (White man writes about other white man's stupid adventures). I read *Evasion* (young white man rides freight trains, eats dumpstered bagels, encourages reader to do same). I read Jack London (White man has adventures, makes up a lot of bullshit about the Far North, refuses to put any female characters in his stories, except one woman who gets 'hysteria' and dies). What else? They're countless, really, and the publishing industry churns out more of them every year, seemingly worse in quality as time goes on.... Let's face it—young, wealthy, able-bodied white man is not the only person who has ever had 'adventures',

nor is he the only one capable of having them. So why does he have such a corner on the market?”

Quinn asserts the bias of the literary world. Those we champion for writing about adventure are all white men. Quinn then points to modern folklore, the narratives shared through blogs and other more informal channels of personal expression:

“Believe it or not, there is no shortage of other sorts of people having adventures in the world these days. Just check the blogosphere—it’s plastered with all manner of humans running around doing things you would never think to do. Families riding their bikes to Argentina. Women living on sailboats. Hell, every fifteen minutes a fat man walks unassisted across the continent. And the even greater adventures—people battling addiction, mental illness, oppression. So why is it that we are flooded with stories of able-bodied, wealthy white men running off to ‘find themselves’, stories chock-full of misogyny and racism and flat-out made up shit (Kerouac never rode freight trains, London’s account of life in the arctic is ridiculous), and it’s like there’s no-one else on the goddam earth who has ever done anything exciting or new?”

Quinn pokes at the lack of representation and suggests that the reason we have lack diversity in these types of stories in major literature is because speaking about less privileged bodies would require acknowledging they are less privileged. Quinn provides a reading list of diverse authors with unique stories that refuse to universalize adventure to a singular perspective.

Representations in Media

Ultimately, the universal presentation of the outdoor narrative perpetuates perception of the outdoors as a place to display and practice manliness. Countless media products outside of books have also masculinized wilderness and perpetuated the hypermasculine camping trope. Television shows such as *I Love Lucy*, and *The Brady Bunch*, and animated series like *The Simpsons* and even *Grey’s Anatomy* plays with this idea. The

episodes which feature this trope demonstrate the male romanticization of wilderness, his skill or aptitude to handle such a place, his desire to share it; these shows depict women (and sometimes children, also typically female) as unfit, unprepared or uninterested (Cox 2017).

In one I Love Lucy episode, Lucy wants desperately to get closer to her husband Ricky and demands to spend more time with him. She insists on going on a camping trip with him despite the fact he doesn't want her there and is sure she will hate it. Lucy has her dear friend Ethel help her "prove" herself in the wilderness by buying a fish rather than catching one, beating Ricky to the camp spot while Ethel drives her there, and pretends to shoot a duck as Ethel drops a dead duck before them. The show reinforces the idea that women are lousy or unfit to be in the wild and would only be capable of proving themselves through trickery (Cox 2017).

This is seen again in a Brady Bunch episode entitled "A-Camping We Will Go" in which the parents Mike and Carol decide the girls will join the boys on their annual camping trip. The boys confide in their father they do not want the girls to come and the girls insist they don't want to go because camping is a boys' activity. The episode reinforces the stereotype that wilderness and camping are for men. These classic television shows represent cultural values of their time. The men-camping-without-women, or men-camping-with-women-who-are-inadequate trope has stood the test of time (Cox 2017).

For example, the very popular show Grey's Anatomy furthers this trope with the episode, "Where the Boys Are" in which the male characters set out the woods for camping and relaxation. What was intended to be a weekend of solitude between two male friends becomes a group camping trip. The women of Seattle Grace Hospital mock their partners who have gone to the woods for "fresh air" implying surgeons would be above such an activity. Further, the women are not invited. The men manage to come to blows after discussing their personal lives and sexual escapades. This demonstrates an innate

aggressiveness of men in relationship to an ownership of women. Further, the excluded women reinforces wilderness as exclusively male, a place where the men can go to “escape” women (Cox 2017).

This trope is not only prominent in sitcoms but also in animation. However, in “The Call of the Simpsons” writers Matt Groening, James L. Brooks, Sam Simon, John Swartzwelder and Jon Vitti poke fun at the trope, inverting the assumptions of male superiority in the wilderness. In the episode, patriarch, and well-meaning buffoon, Homer loads the Simpson family into his new recreational vehicle for a camping trip. Homer assures his family they will love nature and camping. He is confident of his abilities, though he manages to drive the family off a cliff, leaving them stranded. His overconfidence and lack of skills is mocked by his son Bart.

The males, Homer and Bart manage to survive a chilly naked night in the woods while the females, Marge, and daughter, Lisa make a fire, shelter and domestically tidy camp. Meanwhile, the youngest Simpson, Maggie, makes friends with a bear family and is taken care of by them. Groening et al. demonstrate the humor in the concept that men are inherently prepared or equipped for the wild by creating a storyline in which the women are more capable and comfortable in a time of crisis alone in the woods. The episode ends with Homer identified as Bigfoot and captured. The above sitcoms reinforce gender stereotypes associated with wilderness. And the example of the Simpsons, a show that never hesitates to display the creator’s progressive views, shows a satirical backlash against such assumptions. The prominence of such representations in popular culture help us understand the ways in which these gender expectations are passed on to new individuals (Cox 2017).

These cultural expectations of human behavior, male dominance in the outdoors, and female inability are reinforced in the media, and normalized. Through the process of enculturation and the absorption of cultural meanings in media, such a poetry, literature,

art and television, Americans are taught how each gender, with an assumption of a gender binary, is expected to react to and engage with wilderness.

Ultimately, media is perpetuating the inferiority of those who are not manly by presenting an inability or disinterest. That inferiority contributes to the most common barrier keeping people from going outside, fear. Fear can be a driving force in a choice to avoid outdoor culture and recreation, or a nagging feeling that affects one's experience.

Danger and the Outdoors

In outdoor pursuits it is undeniable that the risk of danger lies in each step. There are more hazards outdoors, wild animals, unstable and uneven ground, accidents, or lightning for example. But for those who are not straight, cisgender white men, the social dangers cause more concern and threat.

As the wild is a place for the rugged to display their manliness, and ultimately, their superiority, any threat to this is policed. In practice this is an active attack on the non-normative identity in the cultural space. Femininity, expressed or assumed in any sense, is attacked. Women, the queer community, the differently abled are all assumed to lack the masculine ability and superiority to exist in these spaces.

Manliness in and of itself is challenged by non-dominant narratives of outdoor experience. The reclamation of space by diverse individuals, women, people of color, the queer community, the differently abled, the non-dominant population in the outdoors is a threat to a place claimed and protected through generations in this nation.

As American identity has been forged through the process of violent conquest, colonization, and brute force, challenging the practice by which the most privileged have celebrated their victory, we too are challenging what they've learned to be normative.

Roosevelt presented the strenuous life as a means of perpetuating colonial ideals of progress through racial purity, Christian ideas of progress, and gendered notions of productivity which have manifest in exclusive systems of oppression. The outdoors was the place that these elite white men could escape the pressures of the social world, reinvigorating their spirit and validating their rugged tenacity.

In perpetuating this system, we have harmed both sides. Those who have been told that they are capable of controlling, or conquering the outdoors continue to put themselves into harm's way. They are refusing their own vulnerability to avoid showing weakness, dismissing the universal fragility of human life.

And those who are not the elite few privileged enough to have full access to these spaces either are denied the access to experience them or are battling cultural assumptions of their abilities and worth in a space constructed to celebrate the very system that has proliferated this oppression.

The cultural system is flawed. It is biased to a narrative that is inherently exclusive. This has been perpetuated by the politics, media, and practice of American culture. The exclusiveness of these spaces is dependent on the belief in manliness. We carry with us the restrictive categories of identity from society to the spaces we believe to be absent of humanity. The reality is that these spaces cannot exist with the cultural systems with which we have come to understand them.

In an interview with author of "A Woman's Guide to the Wild" Ruby McConnell, she said it best, "The female outdoor experience is both unique, and valid." We must recognize that outdoor experience has been universalized to be a singular perspective, one of extreme privilege which has biased the expectations and accessibility of the space. I would expand on what Ruby said, all outdoor experiences are unique, and valid. The

systematic exclusion of the non-manly is rooted in larger cultural power system that must be dismantled to make public lands public and create space for new perspectives on the universalized outdoor experience.

CHAPTER V: FOREST DON'T MANAGE THEMSELVES

“Wealthy white men held the power to preserve places in their own vision, for their own aristocratic purposes.” (Parker 2018: 24).

“We need to demolish the notion that the National Parks and the rest of nature are an exclusive club where minorities are unwelcome.” (Nelson 2015)

Relationships to land are filter through a lens of recreation. Relationships of those who work on land or live off of the land are dismissed or ignored in a way that thru-hikers' experiences are not. In this chapter I will explore the ways recreation culture has diminished or ignored other types of relationships to landscape. I will articulate that while class dynamics are multifaceted, ultimately those with privilege are able to engage in meaningful, culturally accepted relationships while other variation in experience has been rejected as invalid.

On December 22, 2018 at midnight Eastern Standard Time, the United States Federal Government shut down, it was the longest in the history of the country. The shutdown was fueled by Congress refusing to support \$5 billion dollars of federal funds to build a wall at the Southern border of the United States, a campaign promise of President Trump. This led to a lack of sufficient funds be allocated for the 2019 fiscal year, meaning all non-essential employees were to be furloughed without pay, while essential employees were directed to continue working without pay, signing an agreement to receive back pay when the fiscal budget was approved. This was the longest government shutdown in American history.

While the border wall proposed at the southern US/Mexico border may not seem directly related to experiences of the American outdoors, there are many intersectional aspects of the 2018 federal shutdown which speak to the larger systems at work on public lands.

First and foremost, it is important to recognize that the proposed wall at the United States/ Mexico border runs through four states, California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. It is 1,933 miles long (Ocasio-Cortez 2019). The federal government owns just 33% of the lands necessary to build the wall proposed by President Trump. Much of the land proposed for building the wall is owned by sovereign American Indian nations (Ocasio-Cortez 2019). This land is owned not by the federal government but by sovereign Indian Nations through treaties (Ocasio-Cortez 2019).

More than 60% of the land along the US/ Mexico border is owned privately (Ocasio-Cortez 2019). This land would be seized through eminent domain, the power of the state or federal government to seize private property for public use with “just” compensation. Eminent domain was granted in the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution stating, “... nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.”

This means the federal government would acquire all land at the United States/Mexico border including the more than 60% that is privately owned without consent from those landowners. So long as those landowners are “justly” compensated it is within the federal government’s ability to take that land.

We must also remember that this land would not just be the land directly at the border, but one to ten miles along the border for the demilitarized zone. As explained by Ocasio-Cortez:

“Even if we could only take 100 to 500 ft of land in densely populated areas, that is a lot of private property that is going to be seized by the Federal government. The land necessary for this project would also run through some highly populated areas in the US such as San Diego, Calexico, Nogales, El Paso, and Laredo. There will be a lot of Americans who are going to have their homes and businesses taken by the federal government. Which will also mean a lot of lawsuits” (2019).

This is a perfect example of how the state continues to deploy systems of power which are constantly altering people's experiences of American landscape. Fundamentally, the development of a border wall would directly affect existing federally owned lands, as well as the lands proposed to be acquired through eminent domain. The process of this publicly funded federal works project has ripple effects which are altering the lives and sustainability of many Americans.

But this is more than just an issue of land ownership. The federal government employs more than 800,000 peoples across all 50 states. Many of these individuals work on or for public lands. The government shutdown had a tremendous impact on employees during the hectic winter holidays. Many began sharing stories of the ways this shutdown would impact their daily lives. Some wrote about being unable to make mortgage payments, others lacked child support from their ex-spouses or partners who were not being paid, one man even mentioned the more long term consequences, stating that he needed his tax return to pay for a necessary surgery ("How the Government Shutdown is Affecting Americans" CNN 2019).

Meanwhile public land themselves also suffered. National Parks remained open. Buildings were locked and unstaffed, the public had free reign to engage on these lands without the rules and regulations in place for both environmental and public safety.

The Chief Executive of the Trust for Public Land, Diane Regas urged President Trump to close National Parks as a measure of public safety. He did not (Papenfuss 2019). By the third week of the shutdown, three people had died in National Parks, including a 14-year-old girl who fell from Horseshoe Bend on December 24, 2018 (Levenson 2019). In the first two weeks of the shutdown many parks were overrun by trash, human feces, and high levels of visitation that could not be attended to with little to no staffing (Joyce 2019).

Yosemite National Park in California, one of the most popular and well-known National Parks in the nation spoke up. Employees reported trash was piled up along roads and in parking lots, public toilets were overflowing, and the access to first aid was extremely limited. On January 4, 2019 it was publicly shared that a death in the park went unreported for a week (Blumberg 2019).

Though, Yosemite was not alone, other parks such as Joshua Tree spoke out about the damage being done to the park by remaining open during the shutdown. It is clear the shutdown caused damage to lands, employees, and visitors alike on federal lands. But this is more than an environmental nightmare, and a loss of revenue, but disrespect and desecration of sacred lands to many indigenous peoples.

Indigenous Women Hike (IWH), a “collective of indigenous women reconnecting with [their] ancestral homelands” (“About” Indigenous Women Hike Facebook page) have created multiple public posts on their social media accounts to address this issue. In one post IWH calls attention to the hypocrisy of the Wilderness Act of 1964 in that, as explained in earlier chapters, it claims that wild lands are expected to be free of human life. They explain, “The American idea of wilderness did not exist, it had to be created,” (Facebook post 1.17.19). They direct attention to the way National Parks were created, on treaty lands and “in the midst of the government shutdown National Parks are being desecrated. Indigenous homelands are being desecrated. But it is any wonder when we consider how these lands came to be known as public lands in the first place?” (Facebook 1.17.19).

They remind the public that many indigenous peoples still collect food, medicine, and hold ceremonies on these lands. They advocate, always for the respect and protection of these spaces.

Broadly, this government shutdown affected people working and living in the United States in many ways. But, those most affected are those who hold the least power, those in the most marginalized groups. Those utilizing government assistance for basic human necessities, food, housing, healthcare, were all without resources for five weeks.

Food for example was a major source of concern. The shutdown affected Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the country's food stamp program. Data from September 2018, the most recent collected and available, states that \$4.7 billion worth of SNAP benefits were disbursed through every state in the country. The Department of Agriculture, which oversees the program remained unfunded during the shutdown, though USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue ensured that SNAP would remain funded through February 2019.

But it wasn't just SNAP that was affected, other programs such as the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Woman, Infants, and Children (WIC) received no federal funding during the shutdown but were being run through state and local funding that remained available (Segers 2019).

As reported by the USDA, WIC served 7 million Americans in the first five months of 2018 in every US state and territory, granting nearly \$5 billion in resources to pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants and children five and under who are at "nutritional risk" and live within the poverty index (Segers 2019). These programs are critical for the daily survival of many, and they remained teetering with uncertain funding and a lack of clarity about when there would or wouldn't be available service.

As a Resource Assistant through the Department of Agriculture I was directly affected by the government shutdown. I was told to leave my work computer in a locked drawer at work, be sure to take all necessary belongings with me as I cannot re-enter the building

during the shutdown, and turn off my government issued cell phone. While these things may not seem to be impactful, they were.

Being the Youth Engagement Strategy Program Manager, I worked directly with community partners. I had meetings with these non-profit organizations to build and maintain rapport. Primarily underserved groups, some of these groups serve immigrants, other serve people of color, all serve groups that are directly, and negatively impacted by the shutdown.

In my role, I could not allow a government shutdown to end that relationship building. Luckily, though the partnership with Northwest Youth Corps I could attend these meetings as a representative of the non-profit rather than the federal agency. I wanted to ensure that the community groups I had created relationships with didn't feel as though I had forgotten about them. And more importantly, I wanted to show up for the people who needed it most in a confusing and stressful time.

A co-worker, the Youth and Community Engagement Coordinator, continued to take these community organizations on trips, again as a representative of Northwest Youth Corps. Though, she admitted that the experience was different. Bathrooms were locked, areas were overrun with trash, and ultimately, it was not the most optimal time to take groups who have never been to on public lands to see them. It's a hard sell when you take a hesitant but curious individual out and they find the beautiful woods filled with trash and find themselves with no restroom to use.

Many employees were not lucky enough to be in the same position as community engagement interns such as myself and my colleague. For example, most employees on the Willamette are not deemed "essential employees" and are on a mandatory furlough without pay. Others, mainly line officers, law enforcement officers, and some dispatch employees are working without pay and promise of backpay. As expected, many people

across the country were on the edge, pursuing employment elsewhere to get by, asking for the help of family and friends, and making do with what they had.

The 2018 government shutdown is an example of the ways power has been co-opted by a group of individuals who fit the intersectional identity that has historically and currently maintained power and prestige. Ideas of immigration and purity were critical in the formation of the United States and remain a prominent aspect of how the federal government is run. As mentioned in previous chapters there have been many laws implemented to regulate who enters the country and when.

The motivation for this shutdown is rooted in neo-colonial ideas of racial purity, progress, and success. And while public lands were overrun and abuse, 800,000 employees were without pay and many other Americans were without the critically important social programs that help them to sustain themselves and their families.

The shut illuminates three critical things (1) the United States is still willing and able to co-opt private lands (2) the current administration is unconcerned with environmental issues and public safety, and (3) there is an often-overlooked intersection between landscapes, labor, and class (Pulido et al. 2019).

We the People Want Land

At the turn of the 20th century many Oregonians were growing frustrated. Newly declared forest reserves, Bull Run Timberland Reserve (1892), Ashland Forest Reserve (1893), and Cascade Range Forest Reserve (1893) limited the settlement of those moving west. So much so that petitions to dismantle the Cascade reserve, the largest in the nation at the time, encompassing 4,492,800 acres, came in 1895 and 1896 (Williams 2018). Protests came from sheep owners, miners, and homesteaders alike which lead the Oregon

congressional delegation to consider severely reducing or eliminating the Cascade Forest Reserve. Efforts from both outdoorsman William Steel, conservationist, John Waldo, and members of the Mazamas, Oregon's now 124-year-old climbing club, managed to keep the reserve intact. Though people were still not happy. In 1903 in the Portland Oregonian newspaper published a very critical article complaining, "that Oregon was losing its land to forest preserves and that the Forestry Bureau was the 'Spoiled Child' of Roosevelt. It was suggested that the reserves withheld from development by citizens were areas where Oregonians should be allowed to settle" (Minor and Pecor 1977).

As mentioned in Chapter II, this was also a problem in California. The Hutchings case went to the Supreme Court when James Hutchings and Thomas Lamon were not granted their preemptive claim despite having completed the necessary steps (settle, cultivate, improve, stay). The issue in the Hutchings case was that these men had settled in what would become Yosemite National Park. Environmentalists saw them as vultures looking for a quick buck as tourism would undoubtedly bring people, and their paychecks to the park.

Though, the general public believed this was a means of restricting settlement of homesteaders while allowing railroads and the rich to acquire Mexican land grants and monopolize California land. Ultimately, in California, the working class lost, despite the strong argument that this was an issue of class and labor, seeing as those who were of a lower class needed the free or cheap land acquired via preemptive claims or homesteads and their labor was their means of investment. In *Frisbie v. Whitney* (1897) the Supreme Court ruled the survey, which is completed by the federal government, had not been completed and therefore the claim was not finalized. The federal government retains the power to refuse a survey and exchange of land, leaving homesteaders and settlers without any power in the exchange.

In the same way, Oregonians grew frustrated that the resource rich lands were inaccessible for settlement. While California was a more hospitable environment, Oregon forest reserves limited people's ability to lay claim to much land. Parcels near rivers were claimed quickly as they would allow for great agriculture, most of the Willamette Valley provided such an opportunity at agriculture. Soon people were feeling antsy to get at the lands, and resources, that had been set aside. Again, as explained in earlier chapters, the construction of the American public lands system has been biased toward a particular and privileged position.

Labor for Lands

The man responsible for the largest contribution to American public lands, President Theodore Roosevelt was born into a wealthy and well-connected family. The Roosevelt name carried prestige. His family, and in turn Theodore, were well known in the high-ranking Manhattan elite society. His father, Theodore Roosevelt, Sr., a prominent businessman, came from a long line of well-known businessmen. Theodore Sr. helped to found the Metropolitan Museum of Art and was very involved in New York cultural affairs.

As explained by Doris Groshen Daniels, "Wealthy families in New York City were ruled by tradition and ignored change. They 'dreaded scandal more than disease... and considered that nothing was more ill-bred than 'scenes' except the behavior of those who gave rise to them.'" (Daniels 1996: 648).

Despite his family's wealth and prominence, young Theodore was not without struggle. Roosevelt was a sick, weak child. He had severe asthma, something that perhaps without the resources afforded to him, he may not have survived.

Young Teddy was able to watch the funeral procession of Abraham Lincoln from his grandfather's mansion in Union Square in New York City (Beschloss 2014). As a boy, Roosevelt went on family trips to Egypt, tours of Europe, and hiking in the Alps (Roosevelt 1920). It was on the hiking trips in the Alps that Teddy noticed he was able to keep pace with his father and recognized the benefits of physical exertion for his asthma. He also, after being bullied by two older boys on a camping trip, hired a boxing coach to teach him to fight while also building strength (Testi 1995).

Roosevelt was homeschooled by hired tutors and his parents. He was admitted to Harvard in 1876. Though, his father's sudden death in 1878 shook him. He inherited \$125,000, equivalent to \$3.2 million in 2018. He decided rather than studying natural science he would attend Columbia Law School before dropping out to become involved in politics.

At just 23 he was able to enter the New York assembly. This was not the same background most Americans had. Roosevelt had not come from a family that settled out West, longed to own land, and invested their time and labor to earn it. Instead, he was born into a family where things came easy.

He had the freedom to flee urban spaces in a way that others could not. When his mother and wife died on the same day, he had the means for an escape. He fled West to escape his tragedy, but also to fulfill his dream of exploring the Western Frontier. He fled to the West in 1883, and in 1887 he was able to just come back to high society and resume his political career.

His political career and social capital afforded him an appointment as Secretary of the Navy. His war conquests were rewarded by being added to the McKinley 1900 Presidential ticket, which following McKinley's 1901 assassination led to Roosevelt's Presidency.

This is all to say that Roosevelt has many privileges afforded to him. He was born into a well-known family. He was raised in elite Manhattan society. He was able to travel, explore, and afford luxury. His family was well known and liked. He was provided private education and ivy league degrees. He was granted a large inheritance which afforded him freedom. He was given political power at a young age, granted power in military matters, and later Presidential power. His life, while shaped by his experiences of ill health, and loss, was still far more privileged than the average American in his time, or now.

And these aren't reasons to dislike Roosevelt, or damn him for having something other's didn't. Instead we must recognize the ways he moved through the world to see how the systems of power he enacted were rooted in a vision of truth that was different from most other Americans.

Roosevelt had the ability to move freely across the country, and the world. Roosevelt was not concerned with finding a homestead to claim. Roosevelt could not truly understand the importance of more available land to those who would only be landowners because of laws the Homestead Act.

Roosevelt instead saw forest reserves, National Parks, National Monuments and wildlife and bird refuges as a means of protecting the nation's resources. He was afforded the privilege to not need those resources directly. He was able to explore those lands when and how he liked. He could not possibly have understood the experience of a homesteader concerned that much of the land that remained unclaimed was being reserved by the federal government.

Moreover, Stephen Mather, the first man appointed to oversee the National Park Service by President Woodrow Wilson was also a man of great privilege. An industrialist, Mather was the owner of the Thorkildsen-Mather Borax mine. While he was also a well-known

conservationist, he was a wealthy businessman first. He was rich from mining in Death Valley, today a National Park, then, a rich resource for Mather.

Mather was born in San Francisco, where he attended a private Boys' High School before graduating from University of California Berkeley in 1887 ("Stephen T. Mather House"). He moved to New York to work as a reporter for the New York Sun. Unlike Roosevelt, Mather had ties to homesteading. In 1906 he inherited the Mather family homestead in Connecticut which had been built by his great-grandfather in 1778. Despite having connections to a family homestead, it was clear Mather had not had to homestead to acquire land. Mather used the family homestead as a vacation home.

Mather made his money when he began working for the Pacific Coast Borax Company in New York where his father was an administrator. He helped the company find great success by introducing the label "20 Mule Team Borax" which became a household name (Hildebrand 1982).

By 1898 Mather helped his friend Thomas Thorkildsen start another borax company. After suffering a severe bipolar episode in 1903 Mather chose to resign from Pacific Coast and join Thorkildsen in the Thorkildsen-Mather Borax Company. By 1914 they were millionaires. Mather was able to retire in his 40s. This granted him the ability to invest in other passion projects.

This is when he launched his campaign to promote the creation of a federal agency to oversee the National Parks Administration. At the time there were 14 parks and 19 national monuments. He was a friend of John Muir and joined the Sierra Club in 1904. In 1916 he became an honorary Vice President of the Sierra Club, after having become a member of Roosevelt's Boone and Crockett Club in 1915. He was well connected and believed leadership was need for National Parks.

The common story, which has been largely discredited, but speaks to the state of public lands at the time was that simply wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Interior, Franklin K. Lane, who responded with “if you don’t like it, fix it yourself.” So, Mather did.

While he was a strong believer that scenery should be the first criterion in establishing National Parks, he was also the man that brought concessions to parks. He promoted a park to park highways so that people could easily access them all as the more people coming to parks meant more buy in and profit.

He was the man responsible for helping the National Park System move east and expanded the tourism to parks. Though, he struggled with bipolar disorder his entire life. While escaping the nature was soothing, he had to take leave often. He left in 1929 and died just one year later.

The important piece here is that Mather was afforded the money to be an advocate and activist for public lands. Moreover, he was first and foremost a businessman, he brought business to National Parks, transforming them from nature reserves to places of tourism and commerce.

While I will not argue that both men did not work hard, I do suggest that their social capital added to their ability to successfully influence a public lands system which remains today.

Labor on Lands

What often is removed from our understanding of public lands, forests, parks, wilderness areas, is that these spaces are managed. In some cases, these lands are managed by

physical labor. Other times there are people who are investing hours in an office to manage these lands.

The work of historian Alexandra Stern connects the erasure of labor and the model of white supremacy that ensured environmental elitism. Stern explores the ways Eugenics became ingrained in landscape through processes such as the naming of places, ceremonies of possession, and proclamations of ownership through financial investment (Stern 2016:121). Stern explains that Eugenicists tied their motivations of purity to landscape justifying investing in infrastructure of Westward expansion to California:

“Eugenicists profoundly shaped California’s landscapes. Their approaches to the environment encompassed the entire spectrum from preservationists fiercely intent on forever insulating the wonders of nature from intrusion, to parks and recreation enthusiasts who wanted to build roads, lookouts, and concessions to make the outdoors more accessible if not commercially profitable,” (2016: 119).

Though, they simultaneously articulated a distance for “human beings who imagined, orchestrated and physically built these geographies... [who] are frequently rendered invisible... what is perceived is the sheer beauty of topography or the concrete arduous labor, such a bridges, skyscrapers and highways,” (2016: 119). The labor of the people who tangibly constructed means of access, railways, roads, trails, recreation areas, were erased from the narrative and disinvented to the spaces when they were not longer sites of work, but instead recreation. Eugenicists relied heavily on the Garden of Eden narrative, building and creating wilderness and wild spaces free of human being by forcibly removing native peoples and dismissing the investment of labor of those who were not white (2016: 125).

Stern’s work looks at a more foundational moment in the creation of public lands, a time when westward expansion was still possible. But it is critical that we recognize that the management of these spaces does not end when the space is created. As explained by Kerry Mitchell, John Muir was invested in creating a system of public lands to preserve

wilderness as a private experience, “wilderness needed to become public to remain private” (Mitchell 2016: 14). Mitchell too speaks of the ways in which the nature experience has been managed. The development of public lands, both through the management of expectations of experience, and the physical development has crafted a particular experience which is void of the mechanisms required to create and maintain that experience.

The work of Mario Jimenez Sifuentez (2016) speaks to the physical labor invested in landscape. Sifuentez cites Ernest Callenbach’s 1975 novel *Ecotopia*. *Ecotopia*, a popular novel among environmental activists as it told the story of a sustainable environment, notably lacked diversity to Sifuentez. There were no black people, they had self-segregated out of *Ecotopia*. Native Americans were presented as relics of the past. And Mexicans were non-existent (Sifuentez 2016: 1). Sifuentez explains, “For ‘Ecotopians’ work is not labor but a pleasurable exercise in sustainability. Perhaps *Ecotopia* does not need any Mexicans because it does not need any workers” (2016: 1).

Sifuentez alludes to the split between the privileged population who recreate, have the ability to consider environmental sustainability, and engage in practices that bring pleasure rather than income.

In *Of Forests and Fields*, Sifuentez tells the history of the bracero program. The bracero program was a response to a need for workers during WWII. As men were heading overseas to fight in the war, many farmers and growers needed help in agricultural fields.

In response to this need the United States government and the Mexican government developed an agreement to bring temporary guest workers from Mexico to the United States. The bracero program was intended to help fill gaps during WWII, but the program ran from 1942 to 1964 (Sifuentez 2016: 10). In that time 4.6 million workers were

brought to the United States (Sifuentez 2016: 10). From 1942 to 1947 40,000 braceros were brought to the Pacific Northwest alone (Sifuentez 2016: 37).

Initially, the United States believed the workers would not be needed in post-war time, as, when men returned home, they would return too to their jobs. But after the war, many soldiers did not want to return to agricultural labor. The braceros provided cheap and reliable labor. Though, with major grievances such as poor living conditions, no food, and low wages, the workers were growing frustrated with violations of the agreement.

Because the Fair Employment Practices Committee protected African Americans but not Mexicans or Mexican Americans many violations of the agreement went unreported. The fear that documenting the violations of working conditions would reflect negatively on the United States and risk the longevity of the bracero program, one that was necessary in the post-war years. Moreover, there were only two inspectors for the program in Portland who were to monitor the labor camps in Utah, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Montana.

Workers were growing frustrated and as they united in strikes, growers began to turn to Tejanos, Mexican-American workers in Texas. Tejanos migrated to the Pacific Northwest in the 1950s and 1960s to replace the braceros who, with an oversupply of laborers, were unwilling to work for the lower wages that Tejanos had come for (Sifuentez 2016).

Around this same time the bracero program was growing in the 1930s and 1940s, dams and irrigation brought many Japanese Americans to Oregon to farm. In 1940 4,958 Japanese Americans were in Hood River, the Willamette Valley, and Portland (Sifuentez 2016: 37). Though, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan in WWII, many Japanese Americans were forced to leave their homes, and farms. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 authorizing the removal of people of Japanese ancestry from western states in the US. Two-thirds of these individuals were citizens (Outside Inside).

Many were forced to move to internment camps, most to Minidoka Relocation Center in Idaho. The effects were long lasting, of the 120,313 interred, two-thirds never returned home. Many, 52,789, relocated to interior states (Nute 1958). 4,724 people moved or were removed to Japan, while 1,322 were sent to mental institutions (Nute 1958).

In Oregon, the state was divided into three militarized zones. In zones 1 and 2, the western and central part of the state, Japanese Americans had to move (Sifuentez 2016). In zone 3, known as the “free zone” they were allowed to stay. “Voluntary relocation” meant that some were allowed to move to Zone 3 if they could provide proof of private employment or sponsorship by friends or family (Sifuentez 2016). Ultimately, the majority of these individuals were Nisei, they were born in the United States and were citizens, though that did not matter.

Though, these Nisei growers were allies to the displaced braceros as they were forced out by cheaper Tejano labor. Here we see a perfect example of the ways labor and relation to landscape has been removed from the narrative of landscape. While we have conceived of the outdoors to connote desolate wilderness or lush forests, we often forget that agriculture requires an intimate understanding of the natural world, and a deep respect of landscape.

Moreover, we can trace the hypocrisy of the United States government to have brought many Mexican workers to the United States, both legally and illegally with the promise of work, despite poor working conditions and low wages, only to continue to discriminate, exploit, and erase their contributions. And the ability of the federal government to forcibly remove American citizens from their homes and land because of prejudice assumptions.

In the time of the bracero program, with the labor of Tejanos and Nisei growers, the Pacific Northwest became one of the most productive parts of the nation following WWII (Sifuentez 2016). It is important to recognize the bracero program as the beginning of a tradition of dependence on Mexican and Mexican American labor in agriculture. Moreover, and even more directly related to public lands, Sifuentez directly connects the bracero program and influx of Mexican and Mexican-American laborers to the introduction of timber to agricultural industry.

Sifuentez dismisses the arbitrary line of forest work and agricultural work. Articulating timber as a crop, Sifuentez reveals an even more troubling exploitation of the labor these men in the management of our public lands.

After the bracero program official stopped bring Mexican men to work as migratory agricultural workers many men continued to come to the United States for work. By 1965 only 20% of workers were migratory, people began to settle (Sifuentez 2016). This transition made finding work in winter months even more important, and many undocumented workers found employment on National Forest lands thinning trees, replanting in reforestation efforts, and digging fire line (Sifuentez 2016).

As Sifuentez explains, conditions on forest were worse than those in fields. Reforestation workers, the most common of forest workers, often worked 16-hour days without breaks for low or no wages in harsh weather, and with a looming fear of potential abandonment. Not to mention that there was exploitation and threats made by white reforestation workers.

Timber was and is an impactful resource in the Pacific Northwest. Timber extraction began on the Pacific Coast in the 1880s (Minor and Pecor 1977). The industry was hardly regulated, and many areas were clear cut with the belief that the supply was inexhaustible until the 20th century (Sifuentez 2016). Soon lawmakers and loggers alike recognized the

need for sustainable yield practices and made headway on reforestation legislation. By the 1970s three million of Oregon's fifteen million acres were bare (Sifuentez 2016).

1970s reforestation efforts were described as “inefficient, ineffective, amateur, and sometimes fraudulent” (Sifuentez 2016: 84). Soon an established set of skills and benchmarks were established, as was a collective of mostly white, middle class, educated men, and some women called the Hoedads, named for the tool used in reforestation. This group, in a few years, had collectively won most federal and private tree planting contracts (Sifuentez 2016). Soon, contractors were frustrated with the Hoedads, their union, the Northwest Forest Workers Association, and the minimum work standards and pay they has established (Sifuentez 2016). Contractors soon began hiring undocumented workers.

This not only undercut the Hoedad power, but meant less insurance and wages to pay, increasing profit for contractors. And despite these contractors working on federal lands, the Forest Service refused to investigate the low bids for exploitation of workers, they claimed it wasn't their job to keep companies from losing money (Sifuentez 2016: 86).

Wages were nearly non-existent as payment was dependent on the number of trees planted. Many contractors would deduct or underpay workers. Undocumented workers were asked to buy or rent their own supplies and the cost was deducted from their pay (Sifuentez 2016). Because of the often-remote locations of this type of work many workers also had to carry their own shelter, another cost contractors deducted from pay. These people were dependent on contractors for food too. They sometimes went days without food, other times they overpaid for very little (Sifuentez 2016).

There were many other work hazards such as bugs, Lyme disease, rabies, allergic reactions, extreme temperatures, dangerous tools, and toxic chemicals. Agent Orange was approved for use on forest because the agricultural product was not a food product.

Workers were exposed to Agent Orange until women living near national forest reported having a high number of miscarriages in 1980 (Sifuentez 2016). Agent Orange is no longer used on forest, though other toxic chemicals are (Sifuentez 2016).

Undocumented workers were also reported to Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was called on workers, deporting 250 workers a month in 1979 (Sifuentez 2016). In winter months, the height of reforestation efforts, 73% came from forests working on tree planting (Sifuentez 2016).

Tree planting is not the only dangerous and exploitative work found on forest. In a three-part expose entitled “Timber’s Fallen” Emily Green reveals the labor violations and exploitation of forestry immigrant workers (2016). Green cites language barriers and the precarity of undocumented workers as they remain hidden from public view in desolate locations. Workers are often denied basic rights, some of the same violations Sifuentez discusses in tree planting, these workers are refused water, breaks for rest, fair pay, and adequate safety gear or training (Green 2016). The widespread abuse of labor laws dictating working conditions is not surprising seeing that many of the state’s 284 contractors have not been inspected (Green 2016).

Though, the work of Sifuentez and Green is not the only research that speaks to the exploitation of mind and body of agricultural workers. Seth Holmes’ book *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States* (2013) also documents the exploitative nature of this type of work. Holmes’ work demonstrates the conditions of the fields many migrant workers likely spend at least some time working in.

In both Green and Sifuentez’s work they are speaking about undocumented labor hired through contractors. Many public lands agencies also hire seasonal labor directly. These positions are typically lower in grade level, meaning they require less experience and less education. These positions are often “tech” level meaning predominantly physical labor.

The positions are lower paying, almost never extended to a full-time position, and require flexibility seeing as they are predominately summer based. Informal interviews with seasonal employees revealed that many of them have been trying for years to land a seasonal position that helps them advance to full time work.

Some people work for years, decades even, in this type of seasonal work. I spoke with young people who had aged out of the AmeriCorps program. AmeriCorps is program supported by the federal government along with other foundations, corporations and donors to engage young adults in public service work. AmeriCorps offers full or part time work through a network of non-profit community organizations and public agencies. Some programs focus explicitly on public lands such as the Student Conservation Association, others are connected but less directly such as Girl Scouts of the USA, Boy Scouts of America, and Camp Fire.

In these AmeriCorps positions individuals make a small stipend. The wage is very low, and many of these people depend on federal aid for food. Most have taken on these seasonal positions each summer with the hope that they can enter the full-time federal workforce, working on public lands, outside, and in niche areas.

Though, most of the people I spoke with have worked many years at this. Individuals are applying for low paying internships with the hope that they can expand their network and gain access to a full-time position. In the case of both AmeriCorps and summer seasonal hires, these individuals are covered by American labor laws. There is regulation on the number of hours they work, basic work safety and conditions. These individuals tend to be white and educated.

The difference between these seasonal workers and the undocumented workers in Green and Sifuentes's research is that they are in a less precarious position.

In most cases, progressive class politics fall apart in the context of racial comparison. As explained by Heather McGhee and Lucy Mayo, “Class consciousness has always been formulated racially in America,” they continue, “Landless European immigrants and their descendants in the early days of the multicultural colony were given a new identity that undermined allegiance with black slaves by offering the promise of mobility to the aristocracy based on skin color, not heredity” (2018: 10). They link clearly, the separation of the low class into racialized groups, those who were capable of upward mobility, and those, people of color, who were not.

McGhee and Mayo continue, “Throughout American history, populist movements have been destroyed because of the illusion of racial difference and hierarchy have overridden class solidarity” (2018: 10). This has continued today, where white people can depend on wealth accumulation, people of color cannot. Class becomes complicated by the creation of a racial hierarchy.

Though, class is more than income and wealth accumulation, but also social status. I think an artificial boundary is drawn between these types of work. In timber and reforestation there is less prestige than in building trails, working as a wilderness ranger, or conducting wildlife surveys. The separation of the timber industry and recreation is artificial. Recreation is dependent on management in the same ways timber is. Recreation is as much an industry as timber, as capitalistic, and frequently, as exploitative. Though, there is a romanticization of working outdoors in recreation that does not exist in other types of labor outdoors.

Park rangers are heroic, while agricultural work is not. How people engage with landscape is entirely linked with class. And this surpasses recreation and delves into the larger context of the politics of environment.

Whitney Woods (2018) explores the ways that Wilderness is articulated as heritage. Fundamentally, Woods explains the ways Wilderness, as a federal designation, and therefore enforceable law universalizes American Wilderness heritage in a singular way. The articulation of Wilderness in the Wilderness act, “created a distinction between those who wilderness as a ‘space’ within which humans and nature interacted intimately, and those who saw wilderness as a ‘place’ in its own right, where humans may visit, but can never belong” (Woods 2018: 149).

Woods looks specifically at the tensions between two sides of the Wild Olympic Wilderness campaign, the environmentalist push for more lands to be designated Wilderness and protected, and those who see that distinction as limiting, and the process as erasing their heritage of working on and sustaining themselves by the land.

Wilderness areas are heavily protected. Wilderness is a place where people aren’t intended to be more than visitors, therefore there cannot be mechanized machines, lasting construction, or manipulation of a space. This means that outside of trail maintenance not much work can be done in Wilderness spaces. Those with family histories of working in and on the forest would lose that ability.

Moreover, these people tend to see themselves as stewards of the lands, they see themselves as “self-made” people who are original conservationists, working intimately both to sustain the forests and themselves (Woods 2018: 157).

These people see the increased protection offered by the Wilderness Act and designation of Wilderness as a means of co-opting a space to increase recreation tourism but decrease local sustainability. Those who work in resource extraction, in the case of the Wild Olympic Wilderness, timber, are at a loss.

Though, while the opponents of designating more spaces Wilderness argue that preservation is the government taking more control, both of space and the population, others argue it's an environmental issue. Recreationalists see the Wilderness Act as a means of stopping resource extraction, such as logging, from destroying the woods. Here, the competing narrative of heritage demonstrate what Woods cites as Turnbridge and Ashworth's "heritage dissonance through heritage disinheritance" (2018). This occurs when the existing heritages no longer conform to the present goals, norms, or objectives of heritage creation (Turnbridge and Ashworth 1996: 30).

The separation of labor and recreation speaks directly to the class system. Those with more capital have simultaneously more access to the recreation experience and distance from the processes that create the opportunity for that experience. While, those with less access to the experience are intricately connected to the labor required to make recreation and outdoor experiences possible.

Recreation is a classist practice. To recreate one must have excess time and money, two commodities that are not evenly or fairly distributed. Recreation is an elitist practice, one that is outlining an expectation of experience, demanding a certain level of economic commitment, and ensuring exclusivity.

Hiker Trash Versus Homeless

One of the most direct representations of the class discrepancy of outdoor experience can be found in the instance of homelessness. As wages have stagnated, big business and lobbyist continue to attack labor unions, and workers are exploited with long hours, low pay, and little benefits. Young people are entering what feels like an unavoidable debt cycle.

The federal government's reports on poverty tell a much different story. According to Census data in the Income and Poverty in the United States: 2017 report (2018) the official poverty rate in 2017 was 12.3%, down 0.4 percentage points from 2016 (Fontenot et al. 2018). This marks the third consecutive year in which poverty was in decline (Fontenot et al. 2018). According to Fontenot et al. since 2014, the poverty rate has fallen 2.5 percentage points, from 14.8 to 12.3% (2018).

While this data is presented as though we, as a nation, are combating poverty, the lived reality is much different. Noah Smith, in "America is Poorer Than It Thinks" (2018) argues the definitions of poverty are inadequate to describe current conditions. Smith outlines three definitions of poverty: (1) absolute poverty, without the basic necessities (food, water, shelter) one cannot survive. The federal government utilizes this definition to determine that should one make less than three times the minimum amount people need to spend on food, you're poor (Smith 2018). This definition means in practice an individual making \$12,140 or less, or a family of four living on \$25,100 or less is considered poor (Smith 2018). But these numbers are much too low.

As inequalities continue to grow, we must adjust our understandings of poverty, in the 1960s the federal poverty level was about half the median income, known as (2) relative poverty (Smith 2018). As the country grows richer, hunger becomes less common and our definition of poverty becomes skewed. Though, relative poverty seems to be reductive of lived experience. By comparing one to the median income we are defining those who are below the median income as poor no matter the lived conditions. If the median income is much higher than necessary to sustain oneself, we are pinpointing an arbitrary group to be defined as poor, though the opposite is also true (Smith 2018). If the median income is too low to sustain oneself, we ignore those conditions in this definition.

Smith proposes a third definition of poverty, (3) material security. In material security, more than the present moment is considered. Maslow's hierarchy of needs ranks only

food and shelter above safety. So, while someone may be able to meet their basic needs, food, shelter, water, clothing, etc., knowing whether they can sustain those necessities contributes greatly to their ability to feel safe (Smith 2018).

Smith uses an example of an individual with diabetes working a part time job making minimum wage, living paycheck to paycheck, should she lose her job or have a medical emergency, she will likely become homeless (2018). The lack of accumulated capital makes for a kind of insecurity that is stressful and impedes a feeling a safety. In recognizing the importance of security-based poverty, we have a much more accurate understanding of what poverty in the United States looks like.

The Census data lacks the type of qualitative materials which help to provide a more accurate representation of experience. Poverty, by federal definition is lacking concern for the lived realities of individuals.

The American class system is dependent on the idea that anyone can be upper class, so long as you work hard you can and will achieve that kind of success. Unlike the English monarchy of our colonial parent, America was without a finite hierarchy, anyone could be someone and the way to prove it was through a strenuous life proving your grit and tenacity.

Here, another double bind is met. As explained in previous chapters, there are many aspects to the expectations of the outdoor experience and performance that contradict one another. Wilderness is both natural, but more elite than nature. Women are associate with nature because menstruation marks them closer to natural processes and men, in opposition, are in control of cultural processes; but men are the more adept at outdoor pursuits because of their rugged manliness.

Similarly, in the case of class, labor, and power, those with the most are often those who are capable of the most distance from landscape. Working on land directly, the kind of physical labor described by Sifuentes (2016) of Mexican, Tejano, and even Nisei workers does not cement a relationship with landscape in the same ways that someone like Teddy Roosevelt, who was afforded the privilege of abandoning his life to visit the West, role play the life of an American cowboy, and yet return to a lavish New York lifestyle, jumping directly into political power and continuing to direct the ways lands would be regulated.

Beginning with the Protestant work ethic, individuals were taught that hard work would be rewarded. Those who worked diligently, and consistently would be reward in turn. This reinforces an exploitative capitalistic model in which productivity is key.

First and foremost, one must acknowledge that profit, not people, not happiness, or social benefit, but profit alone is prioritized in a capitalistic model. The working class are underpaid to ensure profit by the owner of the means of production, the bourgeoisie.

The workers who contribute to the management of our public lands are those who are most likely to be distanced from the idealistic outdoor experiences. Even the privileged few whose work is rooted in the recreation experience, Wilderness Rangers, for example, are still separate from the outdoor experience that ensures a disconnect from social hierarchy. Recreation requires a freedom, one that a worker never truly has while engaging in labor.

Fundamentally, the individual worker is disempowered, often distanced from the process and final product of their labor while simultaneously being exploited and underpaid. The individual is separated from their own ability to produce in favor of a larger system with higher levels of production for a higher volume of supply.

The capitalistic model serves one group only, the elite owners of the means of production, those who hoard capital at the disadvantage of the workers. But in the case of public lands, we the public, are the owners. Yes, but those with more capital remain more capable of benefitting from their public ownership.

Many colonists abided by the notion of the Protestant work ethic, if one works hard consistently, they will be rewarded. The idea of pulling oneself up by the bootstraps emerges from this idea that hard work will pay off.

The bootstrap proposition is idealistic at best. The belief that one can work hard enough to achieve any dream is reductive of the mechanisms of social control and distribution of power that oppresses and exploits individuals.

So, when someone like John Muir decides to be homeless, to live freely and without ties to any geographic space, it's an adventure. But, when a displaced person without money or the social network necessary to find a place to stay is looking for a place to exist peacefully, they are removed from public lands.

Returning again to Smith (2018) and the notion of material security. Individuals work to meet their basic needs before other needs. First and foremost, people need food and shelter. Urban spaces can be frightening, not to mention they are more policed both by citizens and officers. Shelters are problematic for some, those with families and pets in particular. Shelters are separated by gender, males as young as 11 have been separated from their mothers despite having no other adult to stay with (Bottorff et al. 2012). Pets are not allowed at shelters, for some their pets are their only family.

Moreover, public lands, having been so romanticized in the lives of many Americans, are seen as a place of refuge, peace, and freedom. Most people who seek refuge in the forest,

non-recreational campers as I chose to refer to them, are not there to cause conflict, but instead to avoid it.

Though, public lands are regulated through land management agencies at the county, state and federal levels. A primary concern of these agencies is environmental protection, though a close second is recreation and tourism. To ensure both environmental protection and engagement with lands that produces revenue, individuals can stay on public lands for a limit of 14 days in a single spot. After 14 days one must leave the site they are inhabiting, both in designated campgrounds and in dispersed sites and not return for 28 days. Some agencies require that an individual move to a new jurisdiction following 14 days, other are more lax and simply enforce a move to another spot.

What is important to note here is that the most feasible way for an unhoused person to live on public lands is to live for 14 days at a time, at three separate sites over three different jurisdictions. For example, a person could camp on the Siuslaw National Forest for 14 days, move to a state park for another 14 days, then to the Willamette National Forest for 14 days before returning again to the Siuslaw. This requires the ability to move, often very long distances, quickly, and frequently. Ultimately, it is not a feasible plan for most unhoused individuals.

As poverty in this country continues to grow, wages have stagnated, and the housing market is unstable, many individuals are battling with stability and are in need of shelter. Some individuals are choosing camping as an option and heading to the forest.

There is shockingly little data on non-recreational campers on public lands, though one such study conducted by Joshua Baur and Lee Ceveny (2019) found that most non-recreational campers are rarely aggressive or violent. Baur and Ceveny cite mental illness/crisis and substance abuse as a frequent issue for those who are unhoused on forest, as well as a primary reason for conflict, though ultimately the biggest interaction

between law enforcement officers and non-recreational campers is the issuance of a stay violation, or a ticket for overstaying the 14 day limit in a site (2019: 73–74). It is important to note too, the data collected in this study was representative of law enforcement officers only.

A study conducted for the Willamette National Forest by students in the PPPM program at the University of Oregon present three categories of people who are displaced or unhoused and living on the Willamette: (1) economic refugees (2) separatists, and (3) voluntary nomads (Bortorff et al. 2012). Economic refugees are those who have an inability to house themselves, they may have lost their source of income or employment and feel that camping allows them the temporary shelter necessary to regain stability (Bortorff et al. 2012). Separatists are those who seek isolation, self-reliance and privacy. These individuals are seeking the forest as a place that can provide them separation from society, and for this reason this group tends to be more permanent than economic refugees (Bortorff et al. 2012). Finally, voluntary nomads are the individuals or groups who view camping or moving as a lifestyle. These people are often more likely to be non-recreationally camping in specific sites temporarily as they are more motivated to move frequently (Bortorff et al. 2012). This list is in no way exhaustive.

Baur and Ceveny (2019) provided different “classes” of non-recreational campers including: separatists-asocial (often veterans or survivalists types); families (frequently economic refugees); rainbow families (groups who are part of voluntary or intentional communities living nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyles); forest workers; seasonal amenity workers; informal gathering of homeless adults (unlike Rainbow families these are less organized groups); transient retirees (retired individuals who choose to live in recreational vehicles either because they cannot afford permanent housing, or prefer a nomadic lifestyle); university or college students; groups of teens, gang members, undocumented workers, or other marginal groups; and fugitives (Baur and Ceveny 2018: 71).

Living in the woods as a displaced or unhoused person is not accepted or appreciated as it challenges social norms and expectations.

Non-recreational camping is considered an issue. In informal interviews those who manage public lands have described this as an issue, a problem to be addressed. Predominant concerns are environmental. The concerns for people come first for those recreating, second for employees and, rarely if ever, people will acknowledge that the problem they are speaking of directly are also people who are often in need of assistance. It is easy to forget the second half of the Forest Service motto of caring for land and serving people.

It's frustrating to see how society has heroicized many individuals who have decided to partake in this type of experience. The most prominent, and arguably, the most romanticized in modern popular culture is Alexander Supertramp, also known by his legal name, Christopher McCandless, the focus of the book (Krakauer 1996) and film (Penn 2008) *Into the Wild*. While he is elevated to a cultural icon, a person who is strange, an outsider, but mysterious in a good way. People find the story interesting, tragic, and compelling. And yet, the people who are choosing to take a bus to the forest to avoid the threats of being unhoused in an urban setting are demonized. These individuals are doing nearly the same thing.

McCandless would fit the category of voluntary nomad, at times a separatist. What separates McCandless from any other white man with no money and a desire to live outside? McCandless had a book written about him after his grand adventure went sour. The same can be said of John Muir and Henry David Thoreau. Both of these men prioritized a separation of man from society. But Muir, Thoreau, McCandless had the ability to return to a different life. Thoreau and McCandless were both college educated,

Muir and Thoreau, during their lives held great social capital. These men, like Roosevelt were able to recreate. They had made a choice.

In this way, thru-hikers could be categorized as separatists or voluntary nomads. Rarely, never in my data collection, have I come across a thru-hiker who chose to hike because they were an economic refugee with nowhere else to turn.

When individuals make a choice to walk 2,660 miles to complete the Pacific Crest Trail that runs from the Mexican border in California to the Canadian border in Washington, or 2,200 miles to finish the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine, hauling everything they need on their backs, un-showered and unhoused, why is their journey or experience any more acceptable than someone who is living on public lands because they lost their job? Unlike non-recreational campers, thru-hiking is still a category of recreation. There is still an investment in gear, permits, and food, an exchange of capital.

Recreation, Tourism, Elitism

How can public lands produce a profit? Are public lands a public good? Can fees be imposed on the use of public lands? Some scholars argue that fees on public lands are par for the course, usage of facilities expected on public lands, for example bathrooms, running water, picnic benches, trails, among many other things require maintenance and one is not paying to be in public lands but instead to use those resources. Others argue that public lands should be entirely public, federal dollars are funding lands and those resources should come from that money. And still, others argue conversation about fees is a moot point, those who can afford to recreate do, and those who cannot afford to recreate won't be dissuaded by a small fee, but instead by the hundreds of dollars one must pay to have the necessities.

But how much can recreating actually cost? Outdoor recreation is an enormous industry. The 2017 Outdoor Recreation Economy report produced by the Outdoor Industry Association cites \$887 billion dollars in consumer spending annually. The Outdoor Recreation Economy report utilized data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis to collect results from all 435 congressional districts.

They cite many activities as part of outdoor recreation economy such as camping (RV campsites, tent campsites, rustic lodging), motorcycling (on-road and off-road), trail sports (day hiking on trail, backpacking, rock or ice climbing, running 3+ miles, horseback riding, and mountaineering), wheel sports (paved road bicycling, off-road bicycling, and skateboarding), fishing (both fly and non-fly), off-roading (ATV, ROV, dune buggy, 4x4 and Jeep), water sports (kayaking, rafting, canoeing, surfing, scuba diving, sailing, stand-up paddling, and boating including cruising, sightseeing, wakeboarding, tubing, kneeboarding, and waterskiing), wildlife viewing, hunting (shotgun, rifle, bow), snow sports (cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, Nordic skiing, snowboarding, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, Telemark skiing) (Outdoor Recreation Economy 2017).

Based on this number, outdoor recreation is the fourth biggest portion of consumer spending, next only to hospital care, outpatient healthcare, and financial services/ insurance, respectively (Outdoor Recreation Economy 2017.) Outdoor recreation is nearly double the next two largest sector, pharmaceuticals, and motor vehicles and parts, respectively (Outdoor Recreation Economy 2017). And outdoor recreation consumer spending is more than three times consumer spending on education (Outdoor Recreation Economy 2017).

Shockingly the Outdoor Recreation Economy report reveals that Americans spend more on trail gear sports, a total of \$20 billion, than on home entertainment, \$18 billion (2017). The same can be said of other types of recreation, for example more is spent on water

sports gear, \$14 billion, than movie tickets, \$11 billion (Outdoor Recreation Economy 2017). Similarly, Americans spend \$97 billion on cycling and skateboarding, which is more than is spent on video games, \$61 billion (Outdoor Recreation Economy 2017).

These numbers reveal both how important recreation is to American culture, but also the financial requirements associated with the activity. The Outdoor Recreation Economy report data is skewed by including recreation activities that are not the type of traditional outdoor activities most would identify as recreation. For example, including motorcycling, wheel sports, and off-roading is being inclusive to activities that most would not typically assign to outdoor culture. Each of these activities, motorcycling, wheel sports, and off roading require specific conditions, and are excluded in many areas of public lands. By definition, mechanized equipment is not allowed in designated Wilderness, including self-propelled bicycles. Other areas restrict these activities for safety reasons. And, including motorcycles, and off-roading may artificially inflate some of these numbers seeing as a motorized vehicle is a much larger financial investment than other recreational activities and supplies.

Though, the type of recreation with the highest level of outdoor spending on gear and accessories is camping with an impressive \$31,271,155,486 spent annually, followed by fishing (\$11,867,666,850), and hunting (\$16,059,527,274) (Outdoor Recreation Economy 2017). The Outdoor Recreation Economy Report also parses out trip expenses which include \$13,591,624,999 for camping, \$23,908,160,290 for fishing, and \$11,318,772,808 for hunting (2017).

But how much does it cost for an individual to backpack? According an article in the REI Co-op Journal by Aer Parris, to complete a thru-hike of the 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail one should expect to spend about \$6,000 (Parris n.d.). Parris explains that it is easy to spend much more if one doesn't budget, can't practice self-control, or worse, has a setback during the hike (Parris n.d.)

REI reached out to their employees who estimated trail costs were between \$3,500 to \$6,000 not including gear, which ranges between \$700 and \$5,000 (Parris n.d.). Though, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy cited about \$1,000 per month on trails, and with the majority of hikers taking about six months to complete the hike across 14 states, that's \$6,000 (Parris n.d.).

Many of the costs are the food, transportation to and from the trail, and any last-minute costs on the trail, though to even entertain the notion of completing a thru-hike, or backpacking trip, one must obtain the appropriate gear. Because backpacking is different from car camping, one must have specific, lightweight gear. The kind of tent one might bring car camping, where you drive your car into a camp spot, in a campground, is likely between 10 and 20 pounds depending on how large and extravagant the tent is. These types of tents can be found for \$40 on websites like Amazon.com, or other discount retailers, Target, or Walmart for example. Though, these types of tents are much too heavy to carry when backpacking.

In terms of backpacking gear, the new gear necessary to hike the Appalachian Trail for example, would run between \$1,200 to \$2,000. Tents for one person range from \$140, for a four-pound tent, to \$400 for a two-pound tent (Parris n.d.). Packs are similar in price to tents and one of the most important purchases you make seeing as it will be the device which hold everything you need to survive, but also the thing that will be on your back for many hours each day as you traverse rugged terrain. Packs range from \$150 to \$400. While some packs may be cheaper, for thru-hikes packs should carry between 40 and 75 liters because of the amount of gear one must carry. Cheaper packs are often unable to hold the weight or amount of stuff necessary for such a long hike.

Between the pack to carry your things and the tent to sleep in you're likely already spending \$300 and you haven't gotten a sleeping bag (between \$100 and \$500), hiking

boots (\$50 to \$400), sleeping pads (\$20–\$400), trekking poles, (\$40–\$230) food, maps, or many of the other essentials.

During my 2017 thru-hike of 180 of the 211 miles of the John Muir Trail I shopped frugally. Since becoming a graduate student I've worked between three and five jobs to have some semblance of financial stability. It's difficult, when money is tight to collect the necessary items to complete something like a thru-hike. I shopped two years in advance, taking advantage of annual and semi-annual sales, coupons, and clearance items. But, even with my extreme budgeting I still spent \$1,200 on gear. I bought what was cheap, not what was good. This meant my pack weighed between 45 and 65 pounds for the entirety of the 180 miles.

It was tougher on my body to carry that much weight. My pack was ill fitting and the weight shifted from being on my hips, where it should be, to on my shoulders, within minutes of putting my pack on each day. My sleeping pad was uncomfortable and awkward to carry. My sleeping bag, while warm, was large and took up nearly half of my pack.

I chose to make my own camp stove from a cat food can and a pot. It cost me \$30 to get the appropriate pot, though I managed to save about \$100 by doing so. I wore boots that were about a year overdue to be replaced. I wore clothing I already owned. And I chose to pack my own food rather than purchasing pre-made meals.

The food for the 24 days costed about \$300, but it was another \$100 to send the packages to points on the trail that we could re-supply at. Because of where the trail begins and ends it made the most sense to drive there, it saved money seeing as it would have been a flight, a bus, and hitchhiking to do otherwise. The permit itself was one of the cheapest aspects to the trip costing only \$8.

And, to make things more complicated, it was a year of intense weather, both a record-breaking snow year, and an intense fire season. There were expenses such as micro-spikes, metal cleats that go over hiking boots to avoid sliding in snow or ice, that were necessary but expensive at \$65. In all I spent about \$2,500 to complete my hike.

So, while others completing longer trails may only spend \$6,000 for six months while I spent \$2,500 for less than a month, it's important to recognize that some of the fundamentals for completing a hike such as this make the experience expensive regardless of the length of the trip. Food is one the only things that would need to be purchased to extend a trip and can often be one of the most affordable parts of a thru-hike.

My survey data supports the relationship of income to the feasibility of recreation. It is important to note survey respondents were predominantly white and educated. Moreover, the brackets income was collected in makes parsing out the specific breakdown of those in upper (\$187,872), middle (\$78,442), and lower (\$25,624) class, according to a Pew Research Center, difficult (Kochhar 2018). However, the largest reported bracket of income in survey respondents was \$100,000+ (23%), followed by \$50–75,000 (17%), and \$75–100,000 (15%). Income below \$50,000 was a total of 25% of respondents: \$10,000 or less (4%), \$10–20,000 (4%), \$20–30,000 (4%), \$30–40,000 (8%), and \$40–50,000 (5%). Using the Pew class brackets this means about 12% of my respondents were in the low-class bracket. I believe it is also important to note that the federal poverty line for a family of four is \$25,100, making that lower-class bracket just a few hundred dollars above poverty for a family. The middle class remains the largest percentage reported, 62%, and upper class second with 38%. Again, it is impossible to pinpoint the exact percentages here as the class brackets delineated in the Pew report did not match the choice brackets in the surveys. Though, it is important to note that the majority of those responding to this survey are living above the poverty line, many report professional careers such as attorney, medical doctors, and professors. Some students

reported their own income but acknowledged that their parent's income was much higher and more indicative of their socio-economic class.

Ultimately, this data demonstrates that people of all classes are attempting and completing thru-hikes, but those of a higher class, and/or those with higher income are more likely than those with less income. It is possible to complete a thru-hike if you are living below that poverty line, I am an example of that. When I completed my thru-hike I was working both as a Graduate Employee at the University of Oregon making around \$15,000 a year and tutoring on the side at Lane Community College which added about \$6,000 a year to my income. Though, even with the two jobs I was still living paycheck to paycheck in an inflated rental market, with student loans and almost no savings. I had to work hard to afford the ability to complete a thru-hike.

Others work hard for it too. Thru-hiker Liz Thomas wrote a blog post entitled "Budget Hiking" in which she reveals that she spent about \$1,000 on gear during her first thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail (AT), and spent another \$1,000 on gear while on the trail (2019). Thomas provides tips on how to budget while thru-hiking which include things like, sharing motel rooms with other hikers when possible, not getting motel rooms at all, eating at grocery stores rather than restaurants, and knowing the difference between hunger and thirst (2019).

While these tips might be great for people who are completing longer trails, or trails like the AT that run through many small towns, for most these expenses are not the most concerning ones. These amenities can be skipped, while having the appropriate gear, and feasibility of getting to and from the trail take priority.

What's more thru-hikers frequently use gear as a means of distinguishing themselves. Those who are serious rely on ultra-lightweight gear, the most expensive gear to acquire and consistently preach the importance of their "base weight" or the weight of their pack

without food or water. Others make their own gear, typically ignoring the importance of safety on trail to whittle down their base weight by not carrying something like an ice-ax for the case of an emergency arrest when crossing snow and/or ice. This type of elitism is prominent on long trails, in particular, the PCT and AT.

What strikes me as odd is that while these individuals will bring little to nothing with them, limiting their comfort and safety, there is justification implying that people should live off the land or have a connection with environment that the comforts of society are dismissing.

This draws me back to the argument presented at the beginning of the chapter: the relationships to land that are had by those who work on land or live off of the land are dismissed or ignored in a way that thru-hikers' experiences are not.

The work of Sifuentez (2016) and Green (2016) parallels much of Jake Kosek's work in *Understories* (2006) in which he explores the politics of the regulation of the forests in Northern New Mexico, tracing effects of policy and practices of agency culture on the Hispano population. Kosek traces exploitation back to the cessation of land grants following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo as companies and wealthy individuals exploited the legal ambiguity established and began to claim land titles.

In Kosek's work there is a divide between the local Hispano population and white environmentalists who cannot recognize the ways environmentalism is linked to racism and exploitation (2016: 10). Kosek looks specifically at the Forest Service as an "army of occupation" in the local Hispano view as the federal government created and enforces definitions of public domains and regulations of lands (2016: 13).

The legitimate relationship to the landscape of the Hispanos is ignored in favor of the perspective of white environmentalism. Kosek asserts the materiality of nature:

“Nature is treated as something that is both imaginary and material: the product of labor and history, the bedrock for all life, and, yet, at the same time, the elusive and deeply contested subject of intense political debates. This politics of nature requires an engagement with the political consequentiality of nature, a tracing of its movements and a reimagining of possible future forms” (285–286).

The materiality of nature manifests through politics of landscape. At times nature is a product to be harvested, in the timber industry or agricultural fields, the profits of which are benefiting a predominantly white population (Sifuentez 2016, Kosek 2016). Though, nature cannot be harvested when local populations need the wood for fires, or the food to eat (Kosek 2016). Federal regulations are enforcing an exploitation of land that serves a particular population while directly disadvantaging another (Kosek 2016, Sifuentez 2016, Green 2016).

This drives again at the class politics of it all. If one is working on land or living from it, it is somehow not as legitimate or honorable as those who have more privileged access to recreation.

It's Classed Based, But More Complicated

The outdoors is a space that has been used both as a place of work and leisure. People both rely on landscape to survive and regulate landscape to be free of people. It seems as though this can be simplified to a binary of those with money and privilege recreate, those without money and privilege do not. And while that could be said, it's ignoring an important and multidimensional aspect of this work.

Labor on landscape is not always a negative thing. Some people love working outdoors and would prefer manual labor outside to higher paying jobs inside. Some people who recreate, don't recreate in expensive ways.

There is a divide of how people engage with landscape that can be traced to two different ideas of American identity. It has been well established that landscape, wilderness, and the outdoors are an intricate part of American identity (Nash 1967, Cronon 1996, Smith 2018), but American identity is not singular.

There are two dominant and distinct ways in which people engage in the American outdoors. I believe these two can be traced to two of the first environmental organizations founded in the United States, Theodore Roosevelt's Boone and Crockett Club, and John Muir's Sierra Club.

The Boone and Crockett Club is named after Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. Daniel Boone was an American frontiersman. He is known as an American folk hero for his exploration and settlement of modern-day Kentucky. Boone was a farmer, a hunter, and a game trapper. Davy Crockett is often referred to as King of the Wild Frontier, also a frontiersman, gained a reputation for his hunting skill while growing up in Tennessee. Roosevelt idolized the two hunter frontiersmen and honored them by creating the Boone and Crockett Club in 1887.

The main goal of the Boone and Crockett Club was to conserve wildlife. The club was responsible for eliminating commercial hunting, helping to develop the National Park, National Forest Services, National Wildlife Refuge system, and wildlife reserves. The club preached the importance of conservation.

Following a successful campaign to expand and create Yosemite National Park from what was at the time a small state park, John Muir began to work toward creating an association to protect his beloved Sierra Nevada. The Sierra Club was founded in 1892. Muir was President of the Sierra Club from its formation until his death in 1914.

The first goals of the club were to establish new National Parks at Mount Rainier in Washington, the Redwoods of California, and one in Montana, today Glacier National Park. The Sierra Club, with the leadership of Muir was focused on preservation.

Unlike the Boone and Crockett Club, Muir saw value in preserving natural spaces, allowing no human interaction (i.e., hunting, fishing, grazing, mining, or other resource extraction). Conservationists found value in limiting and regulating natural resource extraction.

Though it is more than conservation and preservation that separates these groups. I believe seeds of future ideologies of American identity were planted in the creation of these clubs. The Boone and Crockett Club was founded on the values associated with the American Frontier and Roosevelt's strenuous life, steeped in a manliness that was problematic at best, associated with Victorian ideas of purity and religious ideals.

The Sierra Club though, was more focused on the perspectives of Muir that would blossom in the environmentalist movement of the 1960s, persisting until today, in what many described as white environmentalism. Muir's ideas, while ripe with religious ideology, are often presented as areligious. The core of environmentalism is a belief that environment is important and we, as humans, have a responsibility to protect it.

And therein lies the binary of American identity, those who have rooted their practice in the frontier myth, and those who are deeply seated in environmentalist views. Of course, this binary, as with all binaries, is not absolute. Though, this divide can be seen clearly in outdoor retailers REI and Cabela's.

REI does not sell gear for hunting or fishing. REI sells clothing that is high visibility, emphasizes a social and environmental approach to their co-op. Meanwhile, Cabela's decorates their stories with hunting trophy taxidermy. Much of the clothing is

camouflage, and in searching their website, the tagline associated with the website is “Hunting, Fishing, & Outdoor Gear by The World's Foremost Outfitter.” REI’s reads, “From backpacking to cycling to staying in shape and more, outfit your outdoor activities with the latest gear, clothing, and footwear at REI.” The way each of these companies brands it’s, Cabela’s as an outfitter, and REI citing backpacking as the first activity speaks to a different demographic.

While it would be much more simple to generalize and imply that those of higher class are more connected to the environment because of various levels of privilege, it is also dismissing those who engage in different ways. Labor in landscape is diverse. Relationships with landscapes are diverse. And the ways people connect with landscape to enact an American identity is not universal.

Ultimately the system is larger and more complex than class alone. It is a privilege to both to trophy hunt and to peak bag (a colloquial term in the hiking community to describe summiting tall mountains). Both activities are recreational versus necessity based, both are elitist in different ways to designate unique articulations of American identity. Fundamentally, recreation is elitist, but the expression of such is multifaceted.

There is evidence of people of color being exploited on lands. This country was founded in a system of slavery, one that while not opaque remains fundamental in the development of infrastructure of the nation (Fiege 2012). The system of race that reinforced systems of oppression and exclusion remain even today. Class, labor, and power only intersections in a much large system.

We must recognize the ways lands have long been co-opted from the working class. It began when homesteaders fought for their claims in the legal system such as in the Yosemite case, and continues today as President Trump declared a National Emergency to build a border wall between the very country we brought laborers from during WWII.

We are erasing the systems we endorsed, co-opting lands from American citizens through eminent domain, and rearticulating the federal government's ultimate control over was is believed to be a public good.

But we must not forget this system began by taking the lands from those who lived on them, tended to them. We continue to prioritize an economy that begs for a commodity chain, demands complexity rather than simplicity, and teaches Americans that the further you work from the ground the higher class you are. We perpetuate a settler colonial model in which native lands remain occupied by settlers, exploited by recreationalists, and managed by an imposed federal system.

The foundations of our public lands system were a boys' club, two really, the Sierra Club and the Boone and Crockett club. Both clubs were led by powerful men with both social and economic capital. The privileged, white, male perspective was the foundation for a public lands system sold as a place for all but constructed as a place for the elite few who carried the prestige and wealth necessary to access that experience.

Ultimately, the bodies that toiled to build the trails, to manage the forests, and to bring the infrastructure necessary to allow people to visit these places are not as remembered in this history, or today. The back-breaking work or callused hands are dismissed in favor of acknowledging the romanticized view of the American dream, of the practices that ensure American exceptionalism. While the expressions of this American heritage may not be singular, the ability to partake in that narrative remains elusive to many as the outdoor experience remains inaccessible for many.

CHAPTER VI: THE NATURE OF EXPERIENCE

“In God’s wildness lies the hope of the world—the great fresh unblighted, unredeemed wilderness. The galling harness of civilization drops off, and wounds heal ere we are aware.” (Muir 1938: 317)

“Hardly anybody takes account of the fact that John Muir, who knows more of mountain storms than any other, is a devout man.” (Austin 1903: 67)

“I’m trying desperately to get some sleep but my mind is racing with millions of thoughts...I feel very conflicted about this trip. I feel simultaneously that I have learned nothing and everything about myself.” Field notes, day 18, Rae Lake, John Muir Trail 2017

“We need to demolish the notion that the National Parks and the rest of nature are an exclusive club where minorities are unwelcome.” (Nelson 2015)

Building on the intersectional identity politics and contested histories presented in previous chapters I will now engage with the notion of thru-hiking as pilgrimage. Using the dominant narrative as a foundation on which cultural ideals and expectations have been laid, I will explore narratives of experience by thru-hikers. Here we will see more clearly the motivations and experiences of thru-hikers overlap with the dominant narrative. It will become more clear the ways public lands are policed and protected by those with the most cultural power, trail bros. I will also engage, in particular, with the ways trail bros demonstrate a form of toxic masculinity rooted in ideas of manliness and wilderness.

When I sat down to write this chapter, I thought it was important to re-read my field notes. They are intensely personal. I wrote each night. Emily and I hiked for about ten hours a day and slept for about 12. The hour in the morning and at night that were not hiking were dominated with establishing our camp or re-packing our backpacks and eating. But, at night, after dinner, we'd slip into the tent, long before sundown. Lying flat on the half inch inflated mat was the most liberating part of each day. The pressure on your joints, the weight of our packs, the pain of standing was gone. It was freeing, euphoric.

We're both writers. Writing is how I process most of my experiences. How do I feel? What do I understand? What questions do I have? But, re-reading these journals, the things I felt each night before falling deeply to sleep, they brought back a wave of intense emotion. I remember the smell of camp, the sounds of the rivers, and creeks, and animals. The slick feeling of our sleeping bags rubbing against the tent, or the sleeping pads. These memories carry with them immense emotional weight.

I struggled with my thru-hike. I felt unfit. I felt out of place and unprepared. I lacked a call to these places the ways others around me kept describing. But I was there and I wasn't a quitter. In re-reading this I can feel again the intense sweeping highs, both in elevation and emotion. I felt connected to the landscape, it is undeniably stunning, and I felt intensely connected to it both because I grew up romanticizing the Sierra, and because I was literally a part of the ecosystem as I walked along this trail. But the lows were just as frequent, especially in the beginning. I was exhausted, not just physically, but mentally and emotionally. I spent a lot of time telling myself I could keep going, and that I was capable. But my body screamed the opposite with each ache, my heart was heavy with a feeling of disconnect from those I love the most, namely my closest companion, my little dog. I wrote a lot about the criticism we received from others. Both about our actions and our appearance. I was told I was "sitting on the job" while waiting for Em to catch me on the trail. The woman thought she was funny, but it felt aggressive.

Others constantly asked why we carried the gear we carried. It seems like an innocuous question, but is rooted in a condescending, “you’d have more fun if you’d had more money to buy the good stuff.” One woman told us, “oh just get an REI credit card, you’ll get points and then pay it off immediately.” Clearly, she didn’t understand what it meant to be a graduate student in 2017.

I thought a lot about how people describe thru-hiking. I, of course, had read many hiking memoirs, blog posts, articles, and zines. I grew up idolizing John Muir. I believed that nature was truly the escape humanity needed. On day fourteen I wrote, “Being this self reliant is nice. But I don't think I need to prove it to myself again.”

I found something unique about the experience. I was aware of my own bias going in, I had longed to be in these mountains for most of my life. I had read about them, in their splendid glory. I find more comfort in the Sierra than I do anywhere I have been, including the home I spent my first 24 years in. There’s something to the jagged granite, sparkling in the sun, reflecting the light of storms, crashing with electric skies, the chaos that creates such beauty, that I’ve always found a deep sense of security in. Permanence.

No matter how much changes, in myself, or others, or other places I’ve been, these mountains stay the same. Time and again, over decades my family has come here and found comfort. But I recognize too the bias of the narrative of the American landscape. Muir called these very mountains the range of light. These mountains inspired the first protections leading to the National Park System. These mountains have been a place of spiritual awakening for many.

Muir often wrote about the Sierra as a cathedral. He believed that God had created beautiful places such as the Sierra for us to retreat to, finding spiritual guidance and solace.

I am not a religious person. I grew up in an a-religious household. We celebrated Christmas each year, but I was probably ten before I understood Christmas as a holiday that had anything to do with religion. It's a passive Christianity that is normalized, institutionalized, so much so that it doesn't feel like religion.

As I grew up, I found little comfort in institutionalized religion. When I reached college, I grew angry with it. And by the time I reached graduate school I came to find institutional religion to be problematic. As a folklorist, I see the beauty in difference of human practice. As an anthropologist I see the complexities of systems of power. And, I study American landscapes, a perfect example of a religious system justifying colonialism and oppression. But what about human practice?

When I hiked, I found myself falling into these cultural systems shaped by religious ideas. One such day, my life was in serious danger, I was just a few feet or a moment away from being struck by lightning. In a previous chapter I described our first encounter with lightning.

We crouched in our tent, three bodies, retreating to the same feeling I can only describe as the smallness a child feels in a room of unfamiliar adults having conversations you can't comprehend while seeking the safety of your parents. You have no sense of control, you don't understand what's happening, or what to do. You're scared and overwhelmed.

This time though, I wasn't experiencing this for the first time, but the third. I'd had two opportunities now to learn and I'd gained knowledge from these experiences. Though, this time we were on a steep mountainside. This time there was no place to stop. The trail was narrow. The options were to go back up to the top of the pass, the more dangerous place to be, or keep moving down, toward the storm.

We were running. Rocks on the trail were everywhere, my right ankle rolled nearly every time I put it down. It was pouring rain, and hail was scraping my cheeks. I actually thought it had broken skin. The wind meant visibility wasn't great. The clouds were darker each time I looked at them. And lightning was flashing frequently all around us.

We were in the middle of the storm, there was no escape. And then, we saw it. A flash of light just ahead of us. It was so close it felt like we should have been hit. We dropped our trekking poles immediately, arms up as though we'd been caught red-handed, poles hanging from our wrists by their straps. Em turned to me and said, "run or squat?"

It couldn't have been more than a minute between each strike, but with the boom of the thunder I yelled, "run."

We kept running down the switchback, feeling like we couldn't create any distance between ourselves and this pass, we ran faster than we had on the entire trail. We eventually made it to the tree line, set up camp, changed out of our soaking clothes and retreated to our sleeping bags. In my trail journal I wrote:

"Today I prayed more than I have in my entire life. I prayed as we approached the pass for the weather to change. I prayed I could get over the pass safely. I prayed I would finish this hike. I prayed to the universe to keep me safe because I'm not ready to die. I want to go home. I need to finish this hike to prove to myself I can, but I do not want to die.

"I told the mountains how much I respect them and how much I needed to pass through. I saw purple flowers and knew it was great grandma. They are everywhere but they manage to emerge exactly when I need to see them most.

“Today was exhausting. We are planning to keep moving forward but also trying to get moving sooner. We want to finish but aren’t willing to keep risking our lives. It’s tough. We’re so close but this weather is just too much to deal with. I stared the day thinking ‘hell yes I can do this.’ And I spent the rest of the day saying ‘please universe don’t kill me, I want to go home.’”

The near-death experience challenged my understanding of the world around me. I prayed, not to God, but to the universe, in an attempt to mitigate the stress of my near death. I found solace in flower I assumed to signs from my deceased great grandmother. I violated Leave No Trace ethics, stole one, pressed it in my journal and it remains on my refrigerator, a memory of my experience.

There is a looming sense of our fallibility as human beings. Often our inherent subjectivity removes the context of our actual existence. We are really just individuals in a human population of billions of people, a single population of animals among millions of other species of animals, living in various ecosystems on this planet.

Backpacking strips away the amenities of society, our shelter, resources, and protections. Thru-hiking makes the human individual vulnerable in ways that society has separated us from. Recognizing our inability to control the world around us drives a connection to a system larger than us. For some this is a more intimate connection to the natural world, recognizing weather patterns for example, for others this fosters a more spiritual worldview.

I came closer to death than I had ever been consciously aware of while on that thru-hike. In that way I felt closer to the landscape, my fellow hikers, and the experience. Broadly, I believe the experience of a thru-hike is romanticized because it is both mundane, walking long distances each day and sleeping, but unique and distinct, walking with all your

belongings on your back, in a time of immense physical stress. It is a test of mental, emotional, physical, and for some, spiritual strength.

The process by which we experience the world is dependent on our cultural beliefs and environment. Having grown up in an urban space, in a modern, industrialized and capitalistic environment I have many layers of separation from my experience of daily life and the world from which I sustain my existence. The origins of resources that I utilize in my day to day are distant, my life is separate from an untouched landscape in ways that make understanding my place in it more difficult.

Thru-hiking is transformative for those who did not grow up living off the land, those who live in landscapes that are drastically different from the ones they thru-hike in, for those looking for answers or seeking self-discovery. The experience is what we make of it. And through the cultural process of creating wilderness, outdoors, and nature, we have romanticized the idea, imbued it with the power to evoke self-discovery and transformation. Much of what we experience in these moments, the memories that last a lifetime, the moments that you can recall with great and vivid detail are enhanced by our cultural expectations. In a way, we perform what we have been taught is the appropriate thing to happen in that particular cultural place.

I found myself subscribing to the same narratives as those I had read. I enacted the performance of others, adventurers, explorers. I felt a connection to landscape that I cannot explain fully, but I also often explain it in the ways others have, Muir, Thoreau, Mary Austin, for example. I was taught what to do in the outdoors, how to feel, and what it all means.

When I finished my thru-hike, I wrote this in my notes, “this hike absolutely changed me, and maybe one day I will understand how.” I still believe this might be true. My experience perfectly articulates the intersections of exclusion and nature pilgrimage.

American Wilderness Thru-Hiking

Thru-hiking is the act of hiking long distance trails, typically 100+ miles, though typically much longer, from one terminus to another. These hikes require an immense amount of planning, training, and dedication. The process is arduous and strenuous both in preparing and completing such an activity. Thru-hiking is an elite form of backpacking. Backpacking, in recreation culture, implies hiking to a destination carrying all camping gear necessary to spend the night. For some backpacking is a means of camping in a more isolated or private space, while for others it is a means of traveling further distances than can be hiked in a day.

Long distance hiking is the most extreme form of backpacking, as one is typically gone for long periods of time on designated long trails. In the United States some of the most prominent long distance trails are the Appalachian Trail (AT) that reaches 2,189 miles from Georgia to Maine; the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) that is 2,654 miles from the Mexican border in California to the Canadian border in Washington; the Continental Divide Trail (CDT) which is 3,100 miles from the Canadian border in Montana to the Mexican border in New Mexico. The popularity of long-distance trails emerges out of the popularity of thru-hiking. These three trails, the AT, PCT, and CDT comprise a “triple crown” or the accomplishment of having completed these three north/south trails across the country.

The American Long Distance Hiking Association - West, awards those who have completed the feat annually, verifying completion and presenting an award. Though, this is not a regulated sport. Instead the American Long Distance Hiking Association - West is the only organization that recognizes the feat and awards the achievement. As of 2018, 396 hikers have been designated “triple crowners” since 1994.

The competitiveness of thru-hiking emerges out of the culture of conquest (Ray 2013). When long trails first began to pop up in the United States the completion of the entire trail was a rare occurrence. According to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy there has been a more than 800% increase in completion since the 1970s when a total of 785 people who completed at least 2,000 of the 2,189 miles of the trail. In 2017, three years short of the decade mark, there had already been 6,807 people to complete 2,000 miles. Remember, that 6,807 were the number of people to complete 2,000+ miles, that does not include those who attempted but did not complete or were hiking sections of the trail which can be rather long as well.

This increase in popularity can be seen on the PCT as well. While the PCT does not have reliable data before 2013, just the increase in the last five years is telling. The Pacific Crest Trail Association reports 1,879 permits in 2013 and 7,313 in 2018, almost four times as many in 5 years' time. Moreover, the 2,600-miler list also demonstrates a steep increase in the number of completions, in 2008 there were 102 completions reported. In 2018 there were 1,146 completions reported.

The CDT, a more strenuous, and technically difficult trail too shows a steep increase in popularity. According to the Continental Divide Trail Coalition, the first completion of the CDT was in 1972. It took until 2002 for there to be more than a handful of completions of the trail. By 2013 the completions were in the double digits, just barely at 11. And in 2018 a total of 75 people completed the trail.

An important note is that while completing any one of these trails counts as a long-distance hike, completing it in a single hike without breaks, leaving the trail, or taking alternative routes is considered a "thru-hike." The term denotes superiority, a long-distance hike is less regulated or defined, a more inclusive term. This distinction is critical in understanding where toxic trail culture comes from.

People cite the beauty, opportunity for exercise, and personal challenge as the top reasons they go outside. But the love of the outdoors, solitude, and peace are also often reported. In 526 responses to a survey question about motivation the most commonly used words were nature (157), love (86), outdoors (61), beauty (49), exercise/ workout (49), challenge (42), peace/peaceful (40), away (38), outside (35), and hiking (33) (see Figure 6). The survey responses were analyzed, and frequencies determined after words such as the, it, is, and, etc. were removed to determine more directly content of responses.

Through thematic coding of the survey questions regarding motivations, most can be attributed to three major categories, (1) challenge and growth, (2) self-discovery, and (3) cultural practice. Challenge and growth encompass both the physicality of hiking and the pursuit of betterment. This category included individuals who utilized long distance hiking as a form of exercise, physical challenge, and sport. But this also includes those who used long distance hiking as a more mentally and emotionally challenging action, to grow as an individual, try something new, or travel to a new place. This is different from the category of self-discovery as it is lighter, with less emotional depth.

The category of self-discovery includes those who are soul searching, perhaps without direction in life, or in a liminal phase. These individuals were often younger, many college-aged. There were also quite a few graduate students and young professionals in this category. These individuals are seeking to better understand themselves and connect with something larger.

Finally, cultural practice encompasses responses that are rooted in recreation as a tradition, or a learned behavior. These responses tended to include reference to family being motivation, having gone outdoors at a young age, or having a parent/parents who thought being outdoors was important. Some individuals mentioned that they were not necessarily motivated to hike long distances, it was just what they had “always done”. Some people were motivated by others who had “always done it.”

While some people cited religious motivations, those two could be filtered into one of the above categories. For example, those who felt they were communing with God while outdoors also mentioned connecting with a higher power. One interviewee explained their motivation as, “to know God.” I sorted these into the self-discovery category as many other also looked to connect to a higher power, to better understand themselves or the world around them. The references directly to God were few (6) compared to references to spirituality (12). Coding and word frequency analysis revealed no mentions of religion that did not use the term “God.”

Interviews were also coded thematically. One participant described the motivations they felt as an individual that also speak to the categories of others, when asked why they hike they explained, “the challenge and the beauty, at this point in my life it’s also social.”

Kristina, a 27-year-old white woman also shares multiple reasons for getting outside, “exercise, relaxation, making and then accomplishing a goal.”

Again, many individuals expressed the fitness component, though in interviews mental health was a more prominent theme. One interviewee explained, “I find hiking is interesting because it helps me clear my thoughts, aid in my observation skills, and help me reboot myself in a sense from a hard week or a mentally exhausting [day].”

Similarly, another category that emerges is simplicity. Interviewees describe thru-hiking as mediation, rhythmic, and cleansing:

“I want to experience life in the outdoors and enjoy the serenity and solitude that backcountry backpacking offers. I really love the simplicity of having what I need to survive on my back and appreciating the journey to wherever I’m headed. Day to day life becomes so monotonous. One thing I really loved about backpacking was that every day was a new adventure with new struggles and new highs and lows.”

25-year-old Matt Craig explains, “Wilderness offers less baggage than the city, simplicity I guess, so I seek it out as an escape of sorts.” Many individuals describe the outdoors as an escape from modern society. In one sense it feels as though individuals are finding the outdoors experience as in opposition of modern, everyday life. Though, the context and expression of these thoughts is rooted in a connection of the outdoors as a place of serenity and freedom rather than society being a place of stress and discomfort.

This theme is seated in the notion of the outdoors as cleansing as explained in previous chapters. People spend no time exploring what is bad about everyday life, or stressful. There is no real context as to what is needed to be escaped from. Instead, individuals contrast the outdoors to society generally, speaking to the romantic idea that nature, in and of itself, is freeing.

But many are aware that nature is not a complete escape, instead, it too holds mystery, danger, and risk. One interviewee explains, at times, it is stressful and exhausting to thru-hike. Alice, the friend who was confronted with the MAGA hat in the National Park spoke to this point, “when I think of nature I think of peacefulness,” she then explained the contradiction, “[even though] there are a lot of not peaceful things that happen there, but it is a getaway.” There is a perception of the outdoors in contrast to everyday life, an escape, a separation from the identity and responsibilities one holds on an average day.

Again, I will echo the importance of some of the identity categories that have been explored in previous chapters. As individuals experience the world through the social construction of various identities, simultaneously and in constant negotiation, in one instance the outdoors may be an escape, and just a moment later, having seen another’s hat revealing a political message, the experience changes from an escape, to a stressful and potentially unsafe experience.

Moreover, as in my experiences in the outdoors, they are wild, a place where humanity has not tamed or mitigated the threats to our survival. A 29-year-old female participant explained that the wilderness is a special place because, “it is in many ways inaccessibly. It is also inhospitable. It will take your life just as it is itself life. So in a way, it is something sacred and powerful.”

Another 29-year-old woman echoes, “Nature is a gift that the universe has granted us. It is both merciful and unforgiving. The wilderness is that part of nature that is outside of man's ‘reach,’ the part that makes us feel unsafe, but once we learn how to give into that feeling of insecurity, realizing that there is no such thing as true security, we learn to find peace.”

One participant describes going to Wilderness, “to experience that magic, to remember how small and yet how infinite I am and we all are.” What emerges out of my interview data is the complexities of the motivations of people. Of course, our motivations are as diverse as our identities and experiences. However, the most common theme in interviewee responses was self-discovery. As in the survey responses this speaks to those seeking answers or direction in life. Though, in this case there was more diversity in respondent identities rather than being focused on younger individuals. Again, these responses demonstrate a desire to better understand themselves, and connect with something larger.

One woman explained that her mother had died when she was young and she never had the opportunity to say goodbye. Her mother had taught her the best way to “get high” without drugs was outdoors. After her mother had passed, she decided to find sobriety. She explained, “I ended up getting sober and falling in love with nature and conquering mountains. I feel my mom with me when I am out in nature, it's how I have been able to truly say [goodbye] to her.”

This passage in particular is representative of the multiplicities found in most responses. Here, in particular, this woman speaks of the healing and connection she finds in nature, while also indirectly addressing the theme of conquest.

Conquest is extremely common, in particular with those who speak directly to motivations rooted in fitness and accomplishment. Often the conquest narrative is subtly referenced, people use terms like conquer, achieve, challenge, accomplish, to describe this relationship. Thru-hiking, while unregulated has absolutely been practiced as sport. For some this is as simple as utilizing the practice for personal physical health and fitness, for others it is competitive. Known colloquially as FKT, or fastest known time, thru-hiking has become an arena to demonstrate superiority. Though, these narratives of accomplishment and competition are often buried under more language about a love of nature. One survey response explains, “I love nature and being outdoors I like to challenge myself.”

Interviewee and professional thru-hiker, Heather “Anish” Anderson explained thru-hiking as kinetic meditation. In 2018 Anish hiked 251 days, 20 hours, and 10 minutes to complete the Appalachian Trail, the Pacific Crest Trail, and the Continental Divide Trail becoming the first woman to achieve a Triple Crown in a single calendar year. She hiked an average of 25 miles a day from March to November, completing 8,000 miles.

When I spoke with Anish, it was never her motivation to beat records, or focus on her gender. But, her dire need to keep hiking has motivated her to accomplish something no woman has done before. She is well known for her thru-hiking accomplishments and remains a target for others who hope to achieve their own FKT records.

Interestingly, one international survey response explained, “I’ve found Americans to be more braggy. But maybe that’s my interpretation of them just being really talkative.? Still quite braggy...” I had very few international responses to the survey. This one in

particular stood out. There was something to be said of an outside perspective to a particularly American practice.

Other Americans described requirements for thru-hiking to include things like “you have to intend to finish your [thru] hike no matter the struggle, unless you become injured. That’s my personal feeling.”

Another described requirements for thru-hikes to include, “adventure - exercise - experience/solitude - challenge/goal setting.”

The Exclusivity of Thru-Hiking and Trail Bros

The belief that thru-hiking is bound by rules or requirements has been the topic of much debate. There is a strict split in the long-distance hiking community. While many believe that hiking is an experience, one that cannot be bounded by requirements or expectations, other deem it a more rigid term, describing a particular experience of hiking from one terminus to another on a long-distance trail, a thru-hike. While there is nothing wrong with asserting one’s perspective, the belief that every person should be restricted to using a term only if they fulfill the arbitrary rules, enforced only by the elitist who publicly share them is exclusive and unfair.

The perfect example of this conflict manifest on social media. Writer and thru-hiker Carrot Quinn shared her experiences with a fellow hiker. Quinn described a confrontation in a public park in Portland with a man she had hiked part of the Pacific Crest Trail with that goes by the trail name Lint. He had attacked her online for years, dismissing her accomplishments, and calling her a liar. He felt that because she skipped 50 miles of the PCT that she had not completed a “thru-hike” though, as Quinn explains on her Instagram (@carrotquinn):

“When I hiked the PCT in 2013, for example, I skipped 50 miles. But 50 miles out of 2,660 seemed like not very many, so I still count it as a thru-hike. Then in 2014 I hiked the PCT again, again skipping 50 miles. And this year I re-hiked the 500 mile WA section. Have I thru-hiked the PCT twice? I say yes. This is because we each get to make our own rules about what a thru-hike is. Thru-hiking is not a regulated sport. There is no governing body. There's no-one out there with a clipboard and a stopwatch, watching you hike. Conversely, there are no awards, trophies, or podiums. Thru-hiking is meant to be a magical journey. It's just you and the trees and the talus and the bears, man.”

The two had been friends at one point, even hiked together, but that ended when Lint felt Quinn had been benefiting from lying about her experiences by calling her PCT hikes thru-hikes. The thru-hiking digital world exploded with two sides, that of people willing to be inclusive of varying experiences, and purists who found the experience of a thru-hike to be constrained to a more restrictive definition.

Lint took to his Instagram (@link_hikes) to respond, indirectly, to the situation. He begins, “Something I’ve seen a lot over the course of my thru-hiking experiences are people claiming the thru-hike achievement despite having skipped substantial sections of a route by hitching...” Then he brags, “I’ve succeeded in completing 13 thru-hikes from end to end” before explaining:

“but a large and underrated factor in that achievement was LUCK. Attempting a thru-hike is a huge undertaking, and the risk of failure is not only reality—it’s a likelihood. Judging by the numbers of people I’ve seen skip trail over the years, I’d speculate that only something like 20–25% of the people who attempt a thru-hike actually do get to walk the trail (minus official closures) in its entirety.”

Lint condescendingly implies that mental weakness is motivation to leave a trail, “Anything can happen in the months that you set aside for your hike; injury, death in the family, running out of money, mental weakness... just to name a few...”

He then flips the scenario to play victim, “Life happens, and it would foolish to think one is immune to fate and circumstances. I personally once aborted a thru-hike because a crazy guy wouldn’t leave me alone and kept skipping trail to catch me. Rather than pretend like I’d finished the hike, I was honest about quitting. Shit happens, amigos. Life ain’t fair....”

Finally, he attempts to allude to inclusion before echoing the same narrative of determination, exploration and, “grit.” He explains:

“Section hiking isn’t intrinsically less gratifying than thru-hiking, and thru-hiking doesn’t need to be put on a pedestal. Screw that elitist bullshit... but don’t pretend to be something you’re not... go ahead and make huge goals. Push your limits. Get beyond your comfort zone and see how much grit you really have... but maybe wait to broadcast your success to the world until it’s actually been achieved. Just sayin’.”

His response fueled an already festering split in the community. Those who had become friends with Lint supported him, liking his post, some posting things of a similar sentiment. Others, however, more in fact, supported Quinn. The space was created for a conversation on the effects of toxic masculinity outdoors, the same issues as framed in my chapter on manliness.

Kelly Katie (@thebackcountrycook) wrote a poignantly passionate piece articulating much of the same sentiments as fellow female hikers have articulated:

“I’ve met too many people who didn’t feel comfortable on the PCT. I’ve met too many people who left the PCT because of that discomfort, or never started because a bunch of uppity douchebags mocked them for asking questions online. I’ve met people who are scared to speak about their experiences on the trail for fear of being discredited, and I’ve met people who don’t think their experience is worth anything because they didn’t finish, or skipped the Sierra, or flip-flopped, or were taken off trail by an injury. And I’ve spoked to all of them about how scary it is to say anything, for fear of the bullying of a bunch of fuckboys in trail runners rabidly defending their safe space. They aren’t all men, they are anybody who looks a

new hiker up and down and decided to act tough or cool instead of helpful and kind. You know who you are, and you should be ashamed to be using your power to make the public feel unwelcome in THEIR land.”

She continues:

“FUCK. THAT. SHIT. Speak up. Speak loud. Demand change. We bemoan the lack of color on the trail, while pointedly ignoring how uncomfortable it is to enter spaces patrolled by a bunch of pretentious white dudes rabidly degrading the experience of other hikers. These people are desperate losers who have learned a cool trick and must repeat it endlessly to keep attention on themselves, and it’s high time they were put in check. Come at me bro. These panties seems to bunch up every time duded start pounding their chests over who’s a badass and who’s just a poser who didn’t work hard enough, and I’m done staying quiet for fear of reprisal. I’m a section hiker, an owner of public lands, and an advocate for diversity and inclusion on trail, and my voice matters.”

She speaks to the issue both on and off trail. The digital age has changed the ways communities form, and in the case of thru-hiking there are numerous online hiking pages, groups, forums, websites, and social media niches. Ultimately, she is directly connecting each of the categories of identity that I have explored in this work, describing the group of individuals who are enforcing an elitist and exclusive outdoors; she explains:

“Some of you might know me as that ‘insufferably loud woman with her panties in a bunch from the PCT facebook group,’ a title I wear with pride, despite it being handed to me by one of the infinitely douchey dudes who populate that group seemingly only to shit on anyone with a question or concern or a vagina. I’ve tried, though the nails-on-chalkboard whining of a bunch of shitty white dudes who somehow have the time off and financial security to not work for months on end, and pander their sweaty vacations as something more holy and real than just an arbitrary walk from one place to another, done again and again, as if to protect the sanctity of their manhood through the utterly pointless brutality of endless speed walking while wearing an expensive backpack. Those people are not my people. Most of the most prominent voices in the thru-hiker ‘community’ are not my people. They are not conservationists. They are not dedicated to protecting and preserving public lands. They are not interested in

contributing their time or energy or money to the parks and forests where they play their favorite sport. And they seem wholly concerned with self-promotion, shaming and degrading the accomplishments of other hikers, criticizing the public lands management agencies they leech off of as homeless, jobless, ‘athletes,’ alienating new hikers, and enforcing elitist, exclusionary, and totally arbitrary rules and regulations. It is as though they are screaming, with gusto and desperation, ‘MY PENIS IS HUGE. WORSHIP ME. I hiked 700 miles of the PCT this summer. I met some of the most kind-hearted, intelligent, caring, and all-around wonderful people I have ever met. Those are not the people whose voices are usually heard in discussions about thru-hiking, although I am insanely grateful to the people at the PCTA and the dedicated trail angels whose patience and empathy does much to balance out the endless bitching of the thru-hiker elite...’”

As explained by Kelly Kate (@thebackcountrycook), and as demonstrated by both Quinn and Lint’s posts there are two major categories of individuals in online long-distance hiking communities, the inclusive and the elitist. The elitist ensure exclusion through strict regulation of practice and experience in thru-hiking. The inclusive asks for acceptance, flexibility, understanding, and empathy.

The result of this online outburst was the term “trail bros.” The term “trail bro” emerges out of the “bro” culture, described by the Oxford dictionary as a subculture that is not defined consistently or concretely but related to a “fratty masculinity” predominantly white, associated with an “understated confidence that critics call arrogance.” Bro culture is often associated also with “mansplaining” or the practice of being condescending toward another by explaining things that either need not be explained, or that the person explaining does not fully understand. This is a microaggression, a term formed in references to men explaining things to women, but now applied colloquially when any person explains something due to an assumption of the other’s inability to understand a simple or well-known concept.

Trail bros emerge out of this culture. These individuals are condescending, arrogant, and rude. These trail bros are epitomized by Kelly Kate in describing:

“the nails-on-chalkboard whining of a bunch of shitty white dudes who somehow have the time off and financial security to not work for months on end, and pander their sweaty vacations as something more holy and real than just an arbitrary walk from one place to another, done again and again, as if to protect the sanctity of their manhood through the utterly pointless brutality of endless speed walking while wearing an expensive backpack.”

But, criticism of these people, and this culture is not without worry. Quinn has withheld information about Lint treating her poorly and aggressively. Quinn explains in a blog post titled, “My experience being bullied by Clint ‘Lint Hikes’ Bunting in the Long Distance Hiking Community” (2018) that she met Lint in 2013 on the PCT. She describes becoming friends with him. He opened up about his own anger management and alcoholism, she says he was in recovery at this time.

One day at work Lint began messaging her on social media. He asked if having a platform and audience meant one must do good. Quinn said no. Lint disagreed. She said they would have to agree to disagree but as Quinn explains, “he told me that I was a coward... He started calling me a bunch of names. I blocked him on facebook messenger” (Quinn 2018).

But it didn’t end there:

“Over the next few years, every time I crossed paths with him...he would insult me as well as whoever I was with, but I would say something joking back to him and go on my way. Every few months a bit of gossip would get back to me via the trail community grapevine, and I reached the general understand that he was trashing me to whomever would listen. What his beef with me was, exactly, was never quite clear, and also seemed to change depending on the day/season/his mood/who he was talking with.”

This began to affect Quinn's life, she stopped going to events, and people were beginning to shift away from her. She explains, "it was emotionally exhausting being iced by his friends, many of whom are incredibly visible in the trail community as well, and who also hold a great deal of social capital there" (2018).

She used a specific instance when she was necessarily rescued from the Hayduke trail to demonstrate his tactics. She explains:

"I chose not to write about the incident on my blog, instead saying that I had hitchhiked to safety... the reason I did this was not because I was ashamed to have been rescued (there's no shame in staying alive), but because the internet loves to tear down hikers who have been rescued, and it was no-one's place to judge me. I knew that once word got out to the larger trail community that I had been rescued, I would be bullied for it" (2018).

But the incident was publicly revealed. Lint and another hiker started a thread on Facebook to share in the information. They claimed to be letting everyone know that Quinn was a "fake hiker" despite having finished the hike without skipping miles, his later argument as to why Quinn was not a real hiker.

A friend of Quinn's messaged the men and the post was removed. Gossip continued by Quinn chose to avoid that circle of prominent hikers. But on November 11, 2017 the situation nearly became physical. While on a run in Forest Park in Portland she encountered Lint. They stopped to talk. He claimed to have regained his sobriety, blaming their previous conflicts on alcohol. He made a comment about not even remembering if they were friends or fighting. Quinn explained that he had called her many names publicly and said that he could apologize, and they could start over.

He then began by calling Quinn her old legal name, a name that she had decided to use at the age of 19, “as a way to distance [herself] from [her] abusive family, and to heal and develop as my own, autonomous person” (2018).

He claimed he could not apologize because things he said may have been true. He became more angry and told her, “if you were a man, we would fight... if you were a man, we would fight right now” (Quinn 2018). Quinn laughed it off and jogged away but admits to having been shaken by the incident.

By December 2, 2017 Lint was again trashing Quinn. He continued to call her by her old legal name and make jokes about sexual violence against her. Other prominent hikers, all men, told her to focus on the positive. These men argued that he was trying to get better, those hikers were all men (Quinn 2018). Those who were supportive and understanding were women. Quinn was shocked that Lint could be so publicly abusive and so many could be unbothered by it.

Quinn explains:

“The long-distance hiking community is rife with toxic-masculinity, and for the last decade Lint has found a safe space there. In the long-distance hiking community men, as long as they walk fast and carry a small pack, are seen as heroes, and any abusive behavior they might have is ignored, apologized for, covered up, or enabled. Their intentions are assumed to be good, in spite of whether or not their behavior is in line with this and what they themselves might say. Women, on the other hand, are torn down (with glee!) at the slightest perceived infraction” (2018).

Quinn explains that she rightfully fears Lint, and shares a statement from an ex-partner of Lint’s, Diana, in which she reveals over the course of their six-year relationships she suffered and witnessed animal cruelty, sexual assault, lies about his sexual health, physical violence and intimidation, and emotional and sexual abuse (Quinn 2018).

Both Quinn and Kelly Kate found that in sharing their perspective rather than being wholly attacked, they were instead joined by many others who had similar experiences.

Kelly Kate explains:

“HOLY CRAP. When I posted yesterday I expected to be trolled off the internet. Instead, I’ve had hundreds of people reach out to me to tell me about their experiences, and how relieved they are to know they aren’t alone. It’s been really heartbreaking for me to realize how deep these problems run, and how many people they’ve effected [sic]. Hundreds of people feel unsafe or unwelcome in public lands. Those lands do not belong to an elite group of pretentious hikers, they belong to each and every American citizen.”

And Quinn explains:

“You should hike the way that makes you feel good. Go forth and worship nature. Brag about it all you want, or don't. Period. And you know what you shouldn't do? Decide that your own style of obsessively hiking triple crown trails and always connecting your footsteps (but cutting corners in every other possible way) is better than every other style of hiking and use this to bully people because you're terribly insecure and tearing down others is the only thing that makes you feel better about yourself. That is called being a piece of shit trail bro, and you should probably avoid doing that” (2018)

The problem with trail bros is that they are constantly degrading others’ experiences, perspectives, and realities. The competitiveness dismisses the positive experience of connecting with nature. The toxic trail bro culture perpetuates a historically exclusive space. Moreover, as described in the aforementioned instance, and in many that have been shared with me, it does not stay on trail.

And it’s not exclusively women, or queer folk to feel this pressure. A white man I met while I was on the John Muir Trail was finishing the Pacific Crest Trail. The two trails overlap for much of the 211 miles of the JMT. He had completed almost the entire PCT, though was forced to skip the Sierra, the part of the trail that overlaps with the JMT due to the record snowfall that season. When he had met that portion of the trail it was very dangerous, and he had decided to skip it and come back. He explained, “I’ve hiked 2450

miles and it's not fun anymore. I'm ready to be done. At this point it feels like a job.” He felt the pressure to finish, to obsessively complete every inch of the trail rather than simply having hiked 2000 miles.

This man was overcome with the pressure to finish based on the restrictive, and biased idea of what it means to be successful in an unregulated sport. In this way, long distance hiking has transformed itself into thru-hiking, a practice that is socially regulated on social media, policed with brutal social shame, and a competitive sport in which the exclusive few are able to capitalize on an experience ingrained in American heritage.

Ultimately, the motivations cited in my survey and interviews can be generalized to be of two categories, competition and connection. Competition encompasses those who are interested in personal fitness, exercise, and challenging both themselves and others. Competition establishes a tangible and exact goal, whether it be to complete a thru-hike or simply hike better than they had before. Connection encompasses the personal experiences rich with the desire for solitude, serenity, personal growth (that is not connected to the physicality of hiking but instead is mental, emotional, or spiritual). Connection incorporates others in a sense of community rather than the opposition seen in competition.

These two categories operate in opposition to one another. In competition it is entirely individually focused, one person is achieving something, in connection one person is acknowledging a larger system, connecting to something outside themselves, finding a space that is absent of the anthropocentric view of humanity.

The competitive category is easily traced to the construction of the same categories on which both this nation and the notion of the wild was constructed: exclusion. Competition ensures some form of elitism through an accomplishment that is deemed credible. In the example of Carrot Quinn and Lint, Lint's perception that thru-hiking is any way

culturally defined is rooted in a colonial process by which systems of power are established to both police and normalize exclusive culture.

Lint is of an identity that has been privileged for generations based on assumptions of ability due to race and gender, that continues to exclude others by resisting flexibility in the cultural expectations of experience that were developed by the privileged few.

Carrot remains more focused on the experience. Carrot advocates for flexibility in expectations, longing instead for acceptance, community, and inclusion. A diversity of experience is only problematic to thru-hiking if one is asserting that a thru-hike is a thing of prestige. That prestige carries cultural capital that reinforces superiority and exclusivity. Should Carrot's call for inclusion be accepted broadly, Lint would lose his cultural capital, his exclusive title, and his elite experience.

But ultimately, the only thing that is lost is a system of exclusion that is harming others and refusing access to the public that owns public lands.

This exclusionary culture, the trail bro persona, and the toxic policing of the outdoors is an amalgamation of the settler colonial origins and continued perpetuation of the dominant narrative of personal discovery, individualism, and conquest in American culture. A cultural understanding of the outdoors as a place that is racialized, gendered, and in various other ways exclusive has been perpetuated by this type of surveillance. Those who push back at the expectation of the outdoor experience or identity are victims of the dominant power structures engaging in an attempt to reify their power.

John Muir's Part

Thru-hiking is, like all of our actions, a social performance. Long distance hiking recalls the colonial tradition of exploration and conquest. By strapping all that you need on your back and going out into the dangerous and mysterious outdoors, one is re-enacting colonial identities of the past.

Of the most prominent characters in modern environmental and outdoor politics, performance, and culture is John Muir. I've touched a bit on John Muir in previous chapters. Muir is celebrated as the Father of the National Park System. People revel in his stance on preservation rather than conservation. His image and quotes remain as relevant as ever, his popularity continues to grow.

Muir was a religious man. People have debated over the years about his religious identity, and of course seeing as Muir has been dead for over 100 years, their conclusions will remain conjecture. The only things that can be said clearly is that while John Muir may not have been an outwardly, or self-identified man of any particular institutional religion, he was a deeply spiritual man with a belief in God. He wrote frequently about God. He was raised in a deeply religious home as a boy, and many have argued it was this that influenced his perspectives on the outdoors. Donald Worster even argues that Muir was attempting to save Americans souls from materialism (Worster 2008).

Muir's perspective was one of a white male immigrant with both social and political capital. He was well known and liked during his life and after his death. He is still a beloved environmentalist, the "Father" of the National Park Service, an icon in outdoor culture, and the namesake of peaks, trails, and Wilderness Areas. His legacy remains one of positive influence. But, as I revealed in other chapters, Muir was, at best, complacent in the removal of native peoples from their ancestral lands. He fought diligently to protect the landscapes he felt were given to "us" by God to cherish, care for, and learn from. Though, devotion to these lands that he felt a deep reverence for seemingly excludes the

people who had lived on, cared for, and tended to them prior to colonization. He spoke of indigenous people as though they were animals, something to be “tamed” or tended to.

This is all critically important in the origins of long-distance hiking because it perceived that was Muir who ignited the American curiosity for public lands. Muir’s writings both encourage public visitation and demand federal protection of lands. He anthropomorphizes nature in ways that empower nature to teach, to guide, and to provide for those willing to engage with it. Muir poetically crafts narratives of his own personal journey, his betterment, self-discovery, and rejuvenation which, when published were and are read by millions. His perspective is one of, if not the most, dominant in writing about American landscape. The phrases he constructed to describe the importance of these places and the experiences one should expect remain on social media, in publications for federal agencies, on signs welcoming people, in the commercial outdoor industry. John Muir’s experience of the outdoors has shaped the dominant narrative of outdoor experience. Muir’s lived history has become the expectation.

It is critical that we acknowledge the amount of power and privilege Muir had and has today. Muir was a white male settler, an immigrant, heteronormative, a man who at least understood the world through the lens of Christian ideology, who carried social and political power both in his life and after his death. He is presented in the dominant narrative as the man who single-handedly saved Yosemite, created a federal public lands system, and remains the voice of reason for many environmental causes today. His writing inspired millions of Americans to care about protecting American landscapes. His words continue, today, to inspire many to think about our environment, to engage in recreation, and to instill the same values in future generations. But what is often not discussed is how his single story is also perpetuating exclusivity of experience.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian writer and storyteller, gave a TED talk called “The Danger of a Single Story” in which she describes how “impressionable and

vulnerable we are in the face of a story” (2009). Adichie explains that growing up in Nigeria she began reading at a young age. She was reading British and American children’s books. When she began writing as a child, she found that her characters were white, blue-eyed, drank ginger beer, played in the snow and celebrated how wonderful it was when the sun came out despite the fact that she didn’t know what ginger beer was and hadn’t experienced snow. She explains that because the literature she was reading was British and American it did not include characters that were similar to her, or that reflected her culture. It was not until later when she discovered African writers such as Chinua Achebe and Camara Laye that her perception of literature changed, she recognized that “people like me, girls with skin the color of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form ponytails, could also exist in literature.”

It is this point that is fundamental in understanding the problem with exclusivity in outdoor experience. Muir, among others like him, remains one of the most prominent voices in outdoor literature. His experiences become the experience that is expected and performed outdoors. It is with his single story that people come to understand what they can and should be doing outside.

His profoundly spiritual experiences, ones rooted in his own subjective and intersectional identity have become normalized as an expectation for everyone outside. It is in his footprints, with his influence that others continued. Muir’s experiential writing has perpetuated a single story of outdoor experience. His perspective is presented as the perspective, normalizing his lived reality while passively, but simultaneously identifying experiences that are not similar to non-normative.

But what is Muir’s experience? His writings centrally focus on the experience of the outdoors through his observations. He frequently described nature as an escape, a place one retreats to learn, grow, and be free, “Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their

own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn.” (Muir and Terry 1996: 180).

He criticized capitalism, “I am losing precious days. I am degenerating into a machine for making money. I am learning nothing in this trivial world of men. I must break away and get out into the mountains to learn the news” (Young 1915: 204).

He also spoke very directly to the transformative experience of gaining knowledge, experience, and enlightenment from the natural world. For example, one of Muir’s very popular quotes is, “The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness” (1938: 313) Another states, “In every walk with Nature one receives far more than he seeks” (1918).

Though, often his writing speaks more directly to the religious tone, and includes clear connections to spiritual transformation, replenishment, and the importance of retreating to natural spaces:

“Wander here a whole summer, if you can. Thousands of God's wild blessings will search you and soak you as if you were a sponge, and the big days will go by uncounted. If you are business-tangled, and so burdened by duty that only weeks can be got out of the heavy-laden year...give a month at least to this precious reserve. The time will not be taken from the sum of your life. Instead of shortening, it will indefinitely lengthen it and make you truly immortal. Nevermore will time seem short or long, and cares will never again fall heavily on you, but gently and kindly as gifts from heaven” (Muir 1901: 17).

His influence can be seen directly in the modern practices of long-distance hiking and thru-hiking. Muir encourages spending long periods of time in the outdoors, learning from the environment, and seeking rejuvenation and transformation. It is with this that I argue thru-hiking enacts a pilgrimage model.

Those who thru-hike are seeking that transformation described by Muir. Even I caught myself buying into the dominant narrative of transformation or acquisition of a new or better knowledge of myself when I wrote, “I feel simultaneously that I have learned nothing and everything about myself” after nearly three weeks in the woods.

There is something to be said for the human need for connection and the clear escapism that exists in long distance hiking culture. There is a rejection of modern society, urban spaces, capitalistic endeavors, but fundamentally, the majority of people use this hobby as an escape rather than a resistance. Most people live in urban spaces, contribute to and benefit from the capitalistic model. Moreover, this escapism is part of this larger system of privilege.

Environmental Privilege and Pilgrimage

Edward O. Wilson coined the term “biophilia” to describe “the urge to affiliate with other forms of life” (1984). This is a means of describing the urge of people to escape to natural landscapes. It is the biophilic tendencies of humans at the core of Richard Louv’s “nature-deficit disorder” in which he describes the lack of connection between human being, in particular children, to the outdoors as the leading cause in an increase in behavior problems (Louv 2005). Robert Michael Pyle’s *The Thunder Tree* (2011) also speaks to this issue. He articulates a loss of experiences through the growing urbanization of American society and the changes in landscapes.

Pyle though, articulates the importance of a radius of reach. He explains that the radius of reach is different for us all, but more so for groups that have less agency within the larger socio-cultural system. The young, the old, the disabled, or the poor have less of a radius of reach. It is through environmental privilege that a radius of reach is extended, that

there is more ability to engage in biophilic behavior, to escape the social expectation and policing of modern, and frequently, urban society.

But that experience is all still tied to issues of accessibility, representation, and social expectation. It is through environmental privilege that individuals are granted the ability to engage in nature pilgrimage.

Traditionally pilgrimage has been deeply religious. Only in the last decade or so has pilgrimage been rearticulated to be inclusive of more non-institutional spirituality or secular practices. Peter Jan Margry defines pilgrimage as, “a journey based on religious or spiritual inspiration, undertaken by individuals or groups, to a place that is regarded as more sacred or salutary than the environment of everyday life, to seek a transcendental encounter with a specific cult object for the purpose of acquiring spiritual, emotional or physical healing or benefit” (Margry 2008:17).

While pilgrimage has been understood for many years as a religiously motivated procession non-religious or spiritual pilgrimage is not increasingly recognized (Margry 2008). The contemporary study of non-religious, secular, or spiritual pilgrimage is important because at its core pilgrimage is, as Margry argues, a transcendence into the sacred, individually and collectively (Margry 2008: 17).

In terms of thru-hiking and long-distance hiking, I believe these practices to be nature pilgrimages. The individuals partaking in them are frequently motivated by a romanticization or reverence for the nature through which they walk. There is an expectation of transcendence or transformation.

For example, one survey response explains, “I think the process of being outside and the experience of outside a sense of clarity and a sense of fitting into the universe, the

mountain are my church, I am not religious, but the times I feel spiritual are when I am outside, very humbling, that feeling is beneficial for my mental health.”

Another states, “Pure bliss is achieved on the trail by simply staring at a birds feather patterns, a deadly river rushing, the night sky unfettered by light pollution, and the magnitude of the natural systems around you that keep the planet alive and functioning. Frustration although possible in these parts as I have experienced it firsthand, is very short lived because you realize very swiftly the privilege of being out here is unmatched and nothing should dampen the time you have here.”

These two individuals echo the sentiments of Muir. One speaks of fitting into the universe, the other mentions the pieces of nature and natural systems that Muir so frequently wrote of. One response clearly articulates a feeling of spirituality, the other of connection and privilege. It is this type of rhetoric for which I argue Muir has birthed the practice of nature pilgrimage. It is with his experience-based writing that individuals base their expectations of, and therefore, performance in, the outdoors.

The pilgrimage aspect is unique in that, as I mentioned previously, pilgrimage has traditionally been studied as a religiously motivated action. Though, in recent years the expansion of the definition to be inclusive of secular or non-religious pilgrimage has allowed for more examination of new of different ways that people engage in transcendence, transformation or experience the supernatural.

I utilize Margry’s definition in this case. He states, pilgrimage is, “a journey based on religious or spiritual inspiration, undertaken by individuals or groups, to a place that is regarded as more sacred or salutary than the environment of everyday life, to seek a transcendental encounter with a specific cult object for the purpose of acquiring spiritual, emotional or physical healing or benefit,” (Margry 2008: 17).

For those partaking in nature pilgrimages the natural environment, in opposition to the urban or modern environment, is a place that is special. There is a separation from everyday life. One participant explains that they go to Wilderness, “to experience that magic. To remember how small and yet how infinite I am and we all are [sic].”

The American Religious Landscape

The religious landscape in the United States is changing, the 2015 Pew Religion in America survey found that 22.8% of Americans identify as a religious “none.” Nones include those who identify as atheist, agnostic, spiritual but not religious, or have no religion. This trend is particularly high in the West, averaging 28%, though in Oregon (31%), Alaska (31%) and Washington (32%) more than one-third of the population identifying in the unchurched religious none categories (see Figure 7).

This is echoed in my data as well. Utilizing the same categories outline by the Pew survey on Religion in America, I asked individuals to self-identify. In my total data set of 646 responses 59.2% identified as spiritual

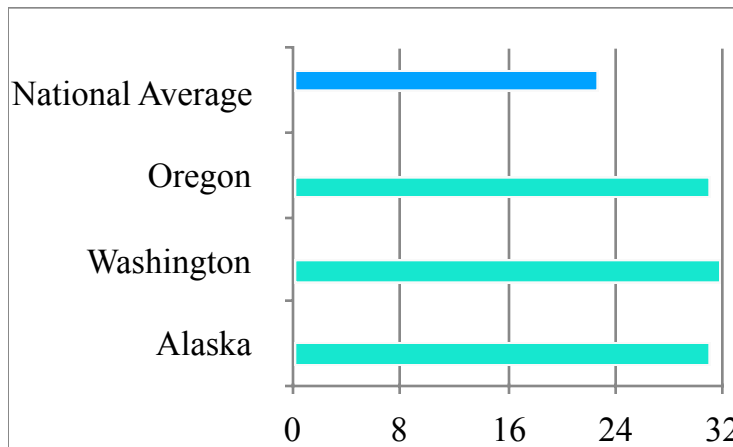


Figure 7: Percent of Population Who Identify as “Religious None”

“nones,” while 32.8% identified as Christian (Christian/Catholic), 4% were of non-Christian faiths (Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or Sikh), and 3.9% identified as Pagan or other (see Figure 8).

Furthermore, data collected in 2016 and 2018 suggests the majority of survey respondents consider themselves spiritual regardless of religious tradition. In 2018, 66.8% identified as spiritual, 30.1% did not. In 2016, 52.2% identified as spiritual, 35.3% did not, and 12.5% identified as somewhat.

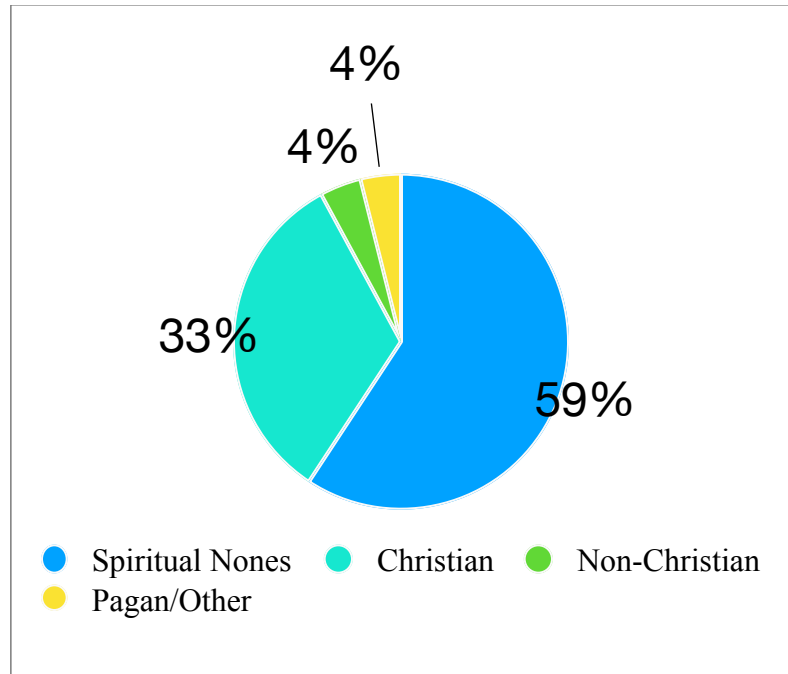


Figure 8: Survey Responses, Religious Identity

Interestingly, while the majority of individuals who responded to the survey identified as a religious nones, frequently people speak of the outdoors through a religious lens, for example, “It’s God’s creation. It is meant for us[,] to be revered and enjoyed.”

Another explains, “I do go to Church, not regularly, there are Sundays when we are training for something and my husband will say this is our church” referring to the outdoors. In other moments people use the language less directly, for example one person described how frequently they hike with, “religiously once a year at least.”

Some speak of the outdoors in vague reference to a religious space, “...the long views and quiet moments when I am out, hiking and backpacking, those are the chapel and reflective places.”

The recent work of Tanya Luhrmann (2012), Kerry Mitchell, and Bron Taylor explores American religiosity and spiritual behaviors. Luhrmann investigates the increase in Evangelism in America (2012). She finds that the individualistic emphasis of American

culture has paired well with a religion that promotes an individual's connection to a God. Luhrmann's research identifies the connection between American individualism and religion. While Luhrmann's work is rooted in Evangelism, American individualism may also be contributing to the rise in spiritual nones as individuals are rejecting institutional religion but maintain spirituality and religiosity in their lives.

For example, Bron Taylor's *Dark Green Religion* explores "green religions" those who hold nature as sacred (2010). Taylor examines various groups including radical environmentalists, surfers, new-agers, and other earth or nature based spiritualities. Taylor aims to better understand how environmentally centered individuals enact religious practice while rejecting religious or supernatural ideologies. Taylor's work is of particular relevance to the long-distance hiking community in that he is engaging with those who share an intimate relationship with nature in both discrete and holistic ways. In the same way that individuals write about connecting with the trail directly or with the larger ecosystem of which they are part, Taylor examines the relationships of surfers and radical environmentalists.

Though, it is the work of Kerry Mitchell (2016) that is the most directly related to the experience of long-distance hikers and spirituality. Mitchell explores processes by which the federal government manages National Parks to encourage spiritual experiences. Mitchell opens his book with a story similar to one I've experienced many times and described here, a recreationalist gesturing widely to a natural space and describing it as their "church." Mitchell describes the limitations of his work in that he is studying a community that is separated frequently by space and time.

Mitchell explores the ways the federal agency passively, and unconsciously chooses to engage in suggesting and managing for a spiritual experience. He explores the ways civic religion, proposed first by Rousseau and later directly in the American context by sociologist Robert Bellah in 1967, is enacted through expressions of American identity.

Bellah examines how collective destiny in the American collective identity operates in the same way as the institution of religion. While American identity is assumed to be rooted in a democracy that ensures separation of church and state, and is seemingly different from a religious practice, ultimately these two identities overlap to form social cohesion. Thus, celebrations of Memorial Day or Veteran's Day, while seemingly a-religious, are in fact, part of the social fabric of the nation founded with Christianity at its core.

Civic religion has been heavily criticized for generalizing model of citizenship; however, the term public religion has been useful in understanding the sanctity of public values, a sacredness of society, and "endowing America with a divinely sanctioned mission" (Mitchell 2016: 170). Moreover, Mitchell connects the work of Benedict Anderson (1983) on imagined communities to tie the notion of a public religion and a unified identity. By engaging in a social structure such as that of the United States, passively accepting the creation of a system of lands that one is expected to engage with in particular ways due to a social construction of behavior fostered in the development of a national identity from the time of initial colonization to now, individuals make assumptions about connections, motivations, and experiences outdoors.

Mitchell argues that the "fashioning of religious individualism proceeds under the conscious and sophisticated guidance of the state, and that these individualized experiences inform, in varying degrees, visitors' sense of allegiance and belonging to larger social entities" (2016: 192).

It is with this articulation of the American nation-state, American identity, and a cultural consciousness of the subculture of, National Park visitors for Mitchell, and long distance hikers for myself, that we can better grasp the ways exclusion operates.

As I've explained in previous chapters, much of the origins of American landscape are steeped in an understanding of land through a Christian worldview. The development of a spiritual experience outdoors has been perpetuated since American culture began to formulate. American outdoors was intended to be transformational, unique and unlike anything anyone had yet to encounter. It was through the lens of American exceptionalism, as a means of separating and asserting superiority over English roots, that American ideas of the outdoor experience emerge, tied inexplicably to the roots of colonists' worldview, one undoubtedly Christian.

The transformative aspect of the natural world is one that has been present since North America began to transform to an independent nation rather than colonies of England. Individuals utilized the narrative of their rugged tenacity and distinct ability to ensure that they were living a life different from that of their English counterparts. When Manifest Destiny was established and people began to explore more of North America, this narrative is cemented as a part of American identity. Those who travel West are pursuing God's intent, finding Eden-like paradise, and expanding the nation, transforming not only themselves but those who follow in their footsteps.

Muir's writing, in particular but not exclusively, engages with exploring new places, bettering oneself, and learning about the glorious natural world, one that God had created, one that would bless those who spent time in it.

I believe now, as modern and urban spaces dominate landscape that in an effort to return to American roots, express American heritage, and find spiritual release individuals are enacting a nature pilgrimage similar to that of explorers who came before them, the John Muirs of the world, and the voices that continue to dominate popular culture echoing the same tenements of the doctrine of the great outdoors.

The man who created a public lands system, Theodore Roosevelt, was an advocate of Church attendance and reading of the Bible. In an address in his home at Oyster Bay to the Long Island Bible Society in 1901 Roosevelt stated:

“Every thinking man, when he thinks, realizes what a very large number of people tend to forget, that the teachings of the Bible are so interwoven and entwined with our whole civic and social life that it would be literally—I do not mean figuratively, I mean literally—impossible for us to figure to ourselves what that life would be if these teachings were removed. We would lose almost all the standards by which we now judge both public and private morals; all the standards toward which we, with more or less of resolution, strive to raise ourselves. Almost every man who has by his lifework added to the sum of human achievement of which the race is proud, has based his lifework largely upon the teachings of the Bible...Among the greatest men a disproportionately large number have been diligent and close students of the Bible at first hand” (Reisner 1922: 306).

We must not forget that while we perceive our nation to be one in which religion and politics are separate, they are not. Moreover, we absolutely cannot deny the cultural construction of outdoor spaces. While we are enculturated to believe that the outdoors lies in opposition to the indoors and the humanity, truthfully, these are subjective and culturally constructed ideas.

I believe, that while many of the participants in both my survey and in interviews identified as religious nones, the reality is that they are enacting a religious tradition, a religious pilgrimage outdoors in the form of a long-distance hike. Nature pilgrimage, as I articulate, is a passive form of religious enactment, one in which the pilgrim is not necessarily conscious of the religiosity of it all.

While people may separate themselves from Christianity, and institutional religion as a whole, the pilgrimage quality of long-distance hiking is clear. Individuals and groups are in procession toward a spiritual engagement, transformation, or connection to the sacred. While some may clearly and consciously enact this pilgrimage through a different

religious lens, I argue that most who are claiming a-religious identities are passively engaging in a Christian tradition.

By seeking purity, transformation, and spiritual cleansing, individuals are connecting their experience back to the frameworks built by men such as Muir and Roosevelt, who very clearly and publicly stated their worldviews were situated around a Christian ideology.

While some may argue this is an issue of semantics, I see a concrete connection between the foundation of the American public land system and the Christian worldview, perpetuated by systems of power and domination such as colonialism, imperialism, racism, sexism, and classism.

Nature pilgrimage reifies environmental exclusion based on the construction of a political system which ensures a hierarchy of identities. In this way, I argue that recreation is a colonial practice, an enactment of American heritage that ensures the perpetuation of systems of oppression and exclusion justified through social policing.

Recreation as a Colonial Practice

Recreation is a colonial practice in that the colonizers, in this case settlers, continue to occupy, regulate, maintain, and benefit from these spaces. American public lands are, hypothetically, available to the public. Though, recognizing that recreation emerges out of a biased narrative of American exceptionalism, the Frontier Myth, and rugged individualism highlights the ways public lands become exclusive spaces.

Recreation is a biased to ensure environmental exclusion. Recreation is geared toward predominately white cis-gendered, heteronormative men who are abled bodied,

physically fit, and economically privileged. These individuals are given more access through social processes of inclusion and representation. These spaces were crafted for white men, created through legal statutes that ensure the spaces remain accessible for their enjoyment. The voices of white men were the ones crafting the language of the laws which created and protect these spaces, they are the same voices that have written about, and therefore constructed the social imaginary which influences our expectations and experiences, as well as driving our performances in these spaces. These individuals are the representation we see in media, advertisements, films, and social media. These are the voices that continue to patrol online forums and ensure the exclusion of others in their legally constructed safe space.

As time passes and more people begin to engage with American landscapes there has been a new sense of competition and conquest. Lands are regulated by users to ensure exclusivity. One interviewee explained:

“Life on the trail is slower. There are less distractions and more time to meditate on any given topic. Emotionally, I was a wreck on the trail. Every day I struggled with feelings of inadequacy, fearing that I would not finish what I came out to accomplish. I experienced daily highs and lows. I probably had about three or four ‘meltdowns’ throughout our 22-day journey, meaning I broke down crying. The thought of quitting was always in the back of my mind, though it was not a clear ideation, more like a nagging thought. In ordinary life, I have mental struggles against myself too, but they are usually not regarding fears about not getting myself through my day!”

There is a need to prove oneself. How and why? Public lands are free to all Americans. Public lands are intended to be for anyone to go and enjoy themselves. There are no laws or regulations that state one must hike a certain number of miles a day, at any particular pace. There is no rule that you cannot cry. “Finishing” as a goal requires an adoption of the belief one hike a certain part of earth that has been cleared in a footpath so that one can easily pass through areas of nature.

Thru-hiking has developed out of the culture fostered by Muir to explore and engage, out of the work of Transcendentalist who lived in opposition to society, engaging with landscape, out of the politics of the manly Roosevelt. Thru-hiking has become a sport, one that is highly competitive, quantifiable, and policed by authoritarian elitists. Thru-hiking has merged two worlds, that of the competitive and contemplative. Thru-hiking presents as a place for spiritual growth, self-discovery, and freedom, but the toxic trail bro culture that has manifest out of the competitiveness of conquest has fostered even more exclusivity to what should be a public space.

Moreover, the nature pilgrimage is a part of American identity that continues to grow in popularity. A means of endorsing problematic Christian frameworks on which settlers of this nation used to create a system of government, and therefore power, to monopolize power. Environmentalism, recreation, and public lands emerge from a Eugenic fueled panic about purity and progress.

The dominant narrative of American exceptionalism utilizes American conquest of the West as evidence of superiority. American tenacity is part of our heritage and we are taught there is no better way to enact our American heritage than to connect to the landscape explored by our ancestors. We lack the context of removal, genocide, exclusion, oppression, and murder.

We must recognize the ways that conquest and competition have perpetuated an exclusive space. It is critical that environmental privilege be acknowledged and dismantled to encourage equitable access to the necessities of life both from humans and the larger ecosystem.

But it is not easy. In my hike I also battled with the two experiences, both being competitive and trying to enact a pilgrimage of those environmental heroes before me, John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, despite recognizing how inherently

problematic that was, I caught myself doing it, frequently. Feeling as though I was connecting to a trail that was part of my heritage, as a white person, an environmentalist, a recreationalist. But I simultaneously sought to better understand ways to break down the very system I was privileged to have access to. I recognized that I was surrounded by predominantly white people. I was shocked to see how many women were hiking in pairs or small groups. But I was reminded by men and other women that I wasn't expected to be there. I have struggled with balancing understanding the problematic systems that have constructed the seemingly innocuous system of public lands with the expectations of our heritage which assures our identities should be connected to these landscapes, that our lived realities are a result of our ability or investment of labor.

I did not finish the John Muir Trail. I, like Carrot, skipped a small portion. I too feared sharing my story due to the threat of being told my experience was invalid, that my research was no good, that I was incapable because I was a woman, unprepared, or generally not good enough. But I refused that narrative. I decided to be honest about my experiences, share not the expected narrative, but my truth, to create new space for others to also try. I do not believe there is failure in a hike, only an outcome different from the one expected. Ending the trail early is not failure. Hiking a long trail in sections is no less valid than hiking it straight thru. Skipping sections for safety reasons, or health issues does not make one weak. Instead of a universal expectation, or standard, we must instead recognize the diversity of experiences are valid. There is no wrong way to be outside, only a wrong perception that outdoor experience is or should be universal. That universalization is inherently exclusive. We must recognize that the American wilderness concept and experience are rooted in oppressive systems of exclusion that manifest in cultural expectations of experience which allow these systems to endure.

I both struggle to acknowledge the ways that I have been environmentally privileged, that I have been granted the opportunity in my life to engage with pristine landscapes and have had my experiences accepted and encouraged because the narrative of American

wilderness heritage fit my personal experience. Simultaneously, I recognize the subtle ways my body and ability as been policed. Because I am a woman, I can better recognize the ways parts of my identity have been utilized to exclude me, and in what ways other aspects of identity can also be policed. I can recognize that I will never experience the ways that bodies that are not white are excluded or oppressed, or the intersections of other underrepresented groups that have endured systematic subordination. But I can recognize my vision is only a part of a larger truth, and that we must accept a diversity of perspectives to truly grasp the realities of experience outdoors and work toward equity and inclusion.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

“Every culture has a relationship with the environment, and often these relationships are based on geography and history. The forest has the opportunity to be inclusive of different ways that people relate to the natural world beyond the ‘white wilderness’ model that’s so prevalent in public lands culture, market, messaging, and programming.” (Parker 2018: 67)

“When we see representations of ourselves in the world, whether the experiences be small or large, incredible or mundane, fun or difficult or both, it makes us feel as though we can do those things, too.” (Vanessa 2018).

The American outdoors is a critical aspect of American heritage. The pillars of our society stand firmly on landscape as a means of situating our identity and actions. Our performance of nationality is linked to settler colonialism, and the performance of various iterations of the rugged individualist, pioneer, or explorer.

In a romanticized view, it’s wonderful. We can escape to a land free of cultural constraints and social policing to commune, again, with the ecosystem from which we emerged. We can nature bathe and reconnect. We can blissfully and peacefully reflect on the immense power and stunning beauty of the natural world, while leaning inward, learning about ourselves simultaneously, or perhaps in response to our outwards inquisition. But—and this is a big but—that ignored the dominant systems of exclusion and oppression. This view requires many layers of privilege and access that not every American has.

As I have explained, and is echoed by Vanessa here:

“we live in a racist homophobic transphobic fatphobic classist fucked up patriarchal society. To think we can run away to the woods – a place that is touted as ‘America’s Playground’ but in actuality is only accessible to those with the right color skin, the right amount of money, the right physical shape – and somehow escape the oppressions that are wound tightly into the fabric of American life and have a utopian community where everyone feels safe is ignorant

at best, toxic at worst. Most of the language we use to describe our ‘playground,’ which truthfully is stolen land from Native American tribes, is racist: talking about ‘bagging peaks’ or ‘conquering mountains’ is as much part of the problem as anything else. It’s not about just one bad man or a couple of jerks, it’s about the entire culture. We all have work to do” (2018).

Because our understanding of national identity is so ingrained in the cultural construction of landscape, we must not fall prey to accepting the artificial dichotomy of nature and culture, or society and outdoor spaces. Instead we must disentangle the enmeshed lived realities of those who are screaming in resistance and opposition from the dominant narrative.

First and foremost, we must name the problem. We need to speak the words white supremacy, settler colonialism, sexism, racism, patriarchy, heteronormative, ableist, classist, xenophobic. We must say them out loud, in the spaces we are told to be politically correct, in conversations where no one else will, loudly and clearly. If we do not acknowledge the systems of power that have maintained the exclusive access and systematic oppression and disenfranchisement, we cannot alter them.

In my time as the Youth Engagement Strategy Program Manager for the Willamette National Forest I worked daily within an agency built by the very pillars of exclusion that I was attempting to dismantle daily.

As I have outlined in this work, the federal government of the United States came to fruition only through the process of settler colonialism, and patriarchy. The Forest Service emerges out of Eugenicist concern of overpopulation, purity, and expansion of the superior race. Moreover, the United States Forest Service ultimately answers to the President of the United States, and during my tenure in this position, that was Donald Trump.

The Willamette Supervisor's Office, where I worked in in the Springfield Interagency Office. This office shares space with branches of the United States Military and Bureau of Land Management. The building is cold and sterile. An odd smell permeates the stucco walls into the stark white halls. One must have a badge to enter the building. To get to my office I had to scan in three times.

Walking down the hall it is clear where the forest people are, Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service employees occupy one half of the second floor, the long hall direct you toward them seeing as it is lined with trees and chairs. There is a discernible difference between the lands management side of the hall and the military side. The joke that often the plants were added to our side of the hall to soothe our nature craving sensitivities. Though, what I find more compelling is the many images of the Willamette's history on the walls, as I once told my supervisor who was reading the captions on the framed images, a bunch of old white men. She laughed. But it is true. The hall begins with our offices, lined with chairs and trees, images of the white settlers who established and protected the forest reserve that would become the National Forest, before the trees end and the military images begin. It's a poetic representation of the imperialist conquest that allowed for American exceptionalism to sprout. And as I walk to my desk, I can see President Trump's face, peeking just to the left of my cubicle on the wall with images of the hierarchy of leadership for Forest Service, Regional Forester Glenn Casamassa, Forest Chief Vicki Christianson, USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue, Vice President Mike Pence, and President Donald Trump.

These images are in a row between our Forest Supervisor and the Deputy Forest Supervisor, the direct authority for the Willamette, people who are vocal about the importance of inclusion and accessibility. But, no matter how engaged and dedicated our direct supervisors may be, and mine were extremely invested in the interest of equity and accessibility, ultimately, the Forest Service remains a federal agency subject to the direction of the nation's leader.

Our building is representative of the sterile, cold, and inaccessible assumptions of a federal agency. One of the most complicated frustrations of Forest Service employees is that people are unaware of what the Forest Service is, or that the National Park Service is different. But, in my experience working for the Forest Service, and in my time as a recreationalist, I understand why people are confused.

Federal agencies are confusing and inaccessible to the public. The Forest Service is an agency dedicated to conservation, meaning there is less curation of an experience when in a National Forest, fewer people to control the experience than in a National Park.

All of these pieces are critical in understanding that while I worked each day with an equity lens, completing work to increase accessibility and inclusion, and no matter how supported and encouraged I was by my direct supervisors and their leadership, I was still paddling up-creek. I was met with resistance frequently as federal agency must remain a-political in their work, despite working directly on political issues. More than once I had to articulate that politics is not simply bipartisan, but any relationship with power.

We worked frequently on vocabulary choices, often our joke was “it is about packaging” because truly it is. How does one elevate the voices of those who are underrepresented and underserved, without making others feel unacknowledged, or worse to blame? How can we include those whose voices are frequently amplified without making them feel attacked, closing them off to the very work that we need them to engage with?

Community Engagement Strategies

The Youth Engagement Strategy Program Manager position is an internship through the USDA Resource Assistants Program, known as RAP. The Willamette National Forest

partnered with Northwest Youth Corps to fund the position. As Youth Engagement Strategy Program Manager, I was tasked with supporting the Willamette in identifying a strategy for engaging underrepresented and underserved youth and community groups, focusing on expanding diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in programs, creating educational content and products, coordinating events and activities, and identifying and supporting new partnership opportunities

I grounded my work theoretically utilizing the framework of this research project, primarily, theory on experience and cultural trauma, ecological othering, environmental privilege, American settler colonialism, and the deconstruction of nature and wilderness.

The approach to this applied project was rooted in meeting people where they are. I conducted informational interviews both in a semi-structured and conversational format. It was a snowball sample of staff and target community partners. Some community partners have been engaged with the Willamette for many years, other partnerships were new. Moreover, the high level of turnover, both due to interns moving on, and Forest Service staff moving frequently there are also many partners that have been more engaged in some years but not others.

The Willamette and Northwest Youth Corps have partnered on the Outdoor Ambassador program for seven years, there have been six ambassadors. Outdoor Ambassadors works with local community groups to co-create outdoor experiences. Trips have included biking, hiking, snowshoeing, rafting, and trips to cultural and historic sites. The goal being to foster positive, inclusive, and accessible participation and leadership outdoors.

Co-creation of the trip is aimed to allow for adjustments to meet people where they are. There is no right way to recreate. Rather than attempting to force an assimilation to dominant outdoor culture, people are able to tell us what is most comfortable and desired for them.

The goals of Outdoor Ambassadors, and the Willamette's Communications and Community Engagement team is to create more equitable access to public lands, and ensure people feel more included in our programs. We aim to make public lands, both in visitation and employment, representative of the diversity of this nation.

Outdoor Ambassadors, and more specifically, the Willamette National Forest, hope to build and maintain reciprocal relationships with community partners by delivering informed and adaptive content on conservation, culture and environment to engage new groups and underrepresented populations on public lands.

In writing the Youth Engagement Strategy I was tasked with laying out steps on how to move toward more equitable and accessible public lands. Ultimately, it is through a four-step process that equity work is done. (1) Evaluate, where is the organization or agency? For the Willamette there was a legacy of engagement with issues of representation and inclusion to be built on. In other organizations there may not be, and that's okay. (2) what considerations should be taken into account? In this project I took special consideration of the history and culture of the state of Oregon, and cities of Eugene, Corvallis and Salem, and towns where there are ranger stations, McKenzie Bridge, Sweet Home, Detroit, and Oakridge/Westfir. These places have particular histories which have affected the ways people engage with landscape and one another.

With this information comes the next step (3) development, what programs can begin or expand? How does this work grow through the development of materials, programs, and support? And finally, (4) growth, how can this work continue? In what ways will progress be evaluated and the strategy adapted to ensure continued progress to move toward true growth?

My position was tasked with 6 objectives: (1) planning, coordinating and delivering youth and community engagement in both urban and rural spaces; (2) write the Youth and Community Engagement Strategy for the Willamette National Forest that is adaptive and integrated into the work happening both with community partners and Willamette staff, as well as help with social media development to expand audience; (3) review existing youth and community engagement programs to improve relevance and adaptability; (4) work to develop and strengthen partnerships with historically underrepresented and underserved communities. To facilitate this work, I spoke directly with community organizations, attended their events to create a reciprocal relationship, and maintained a connection with leaders of these organizations. We attended events and made visits to classrooms. This ensures that we are not only showing up for them when we plan a trip, but when they are working within the community. Finally, (5) I assisted our Youth and Community Engagement Coordinator in supporting the Outdoor Ambassador Program. This means facilitating meetings with community partners, tracking interviews, references, and resources. As well as logging our outings with the NatureWatch Interpretation and Conservation Education database which is utilized in meeting targets and securing funding. Finally, (6) I was expected to match all of my work with the USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan and leadership priorities and collaborate with forest service staff to ensure implementation of a positive and inclusive environment that lends itself to employment retention.

With this set of objectives, I created deliverable products. The goal of my position was primarily the Youth Engagement Strategy. I chose to write both a shorter and publicly accessible Youth Engagement Strategy that includes an overview of the strategy as well as a list of our partners and a Youth Engagement Strategy Report, the report is intended for our internal audience, matching each of our goals with the USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan, National Goals, Regional Goals, and our Youth Engagement Goals. I also included more context on the methodology and historical considerations here. The aim of the report is to be transparent in all considerations made and be clear in the ways the

strategy achieves goals set out by higher levels of management. I was able to ground the document with equity at its core by addressing specific historical and demographic concerns, identifying key partners and relationships.

Our Youth Engagement Strategy has three components, (1) initial exposure, (2) stewardship development, and (3) employment. In other iterations this was made into a pyramid. I chose to create this Venn diagram instead to articulate that while these three components can, and often do overlap, they also operate separately and can be entirely separate from one another. This allows for more inclusion for diverse populations. Some may only engage in initial exposure but never develop a stewardship ethic, or perhaps find stewardship to be problematic due to its origins in a settler colonialist model. Others may become employees without having engaged in initial exposure or stewardship development. In my tenure in this position I have helped to redefine stewardship for the Willamette. And ultimately, the three components of our strategy are related but can be exclusive of one another. I outline in the strategy a program description, context, an overview of the strategy, a section on tribal relations, best practices, our seasonal timeline, and partners.

Another product I created is a special places pamphlet that emphasizes accessibility. The pamphlet lists five special locations on the Willamette that are ADA, family friendly, or good stretch your leg hikes. The intent was to create a guide to be used in community engagement events, a guide for those who are new to the area, unfamiliar with the forest, or unsure where the necessary accommodations may be. The pamphlet includes directions, amenities, and other accessibility information.

I also assisted in the Willamette's first public lands job fair in October of 2018. The job fair was shared with our community partners and provided resume feedback, access to a computer lab to apply through USAJobs and hiring managers in each department so that applicants to our seasonal positions could complete the entire process with help. We also

invited our partners, Bureau of Land Management, Eugene Recreation, and Northwest Youth Corps. Those who RSVPed were also provided a variety of materials including step by step instruction on how to apply to USAJobs, sample resumes, job listings, and tips and tricks. The public lands job fair provides guidance in the often complicated and opaque process of applying to a federal position.

Moreover, podcast episodes have been a passion project of mine. I wanted to revise the forest history to be more inclusive. The current forest history is nearly 30 years old and written for a natural resource audience. Rather than re-writing the history in a dense book I decided to work on creating new ways to access the history. I have chosen some of the most popular or interesting stories on the Willamette to highlight achievements on forest as well include some narratives that have been absent, for example the work of the Triple Nickels an all African American smoke-jumping battalion and the contributions of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The Triple Nickels, for example, highlight contributions of African Americans during WWII in a state that was retained exclusion laws in the state constitution and high membership levels in racist terrorist organization such as the Ku Klux Klan.

I have also worked with the other Resource Assistants in the Region to create a social media initiative through our partnership with Northwest Youth Corps. Working for the federal government often means shifting between acting as an a-political representative of a federal agency and engaging with the real and complex politics of public lands. In order to facilitate conversations on the political issues related to access and equity on public land we decided to formulate a separate space for this work. We are working to launch a blog to encourage conversations with partners and allies in this work, as well as an Instagram account to feature the work of Resource Assistants (RAs) in Region 6. This project is intended to be carried over with new RAs and act as a means of formulating continuity as turnover is a problem with short term internships. I have penned blog posts on topics such as the artificial nature/culture divide, the gender exclusivity in the

definition of Wilderness, and the exclusivity of recreation. These blog posts are aimed at a general audience and intended to create new spaces for dialogue with partners and the public. This project is in the development stage and awaiting approval for the launch.

Finally, I have created many educational resources such as materials for World Cafes, Diverse Outdoor Hero packets, social media posts honoring the legacy and achievements of individuals for features during history months, and a log of resources for employees to better understand equity work on public lands. Things as simple as curated social media posts are incredibly useful to be shared. Employees are often interested in being more inclusive and increasing representation of underrepresented groups but are fearful, feel they lack the tact, authority, or knowledge to do so. These materials remain easily accessible for those both in the Willamette directly, and to many across the Pacific Northwest Region.

Limitations and the Need for Further Work

This work is inherently limited by my own positionality. I am a heteronormative, cis-gendered, educated white woman. I can only approach this work through this lens and work toward better understanding others who do not hold the same privilege that I do.

Moreover, equity work is never done. This research was broad in scope, even with narrowing the focus regionally to the West. One could study individual parks, be them local, state, or national, and compile as much or more data to speak to the issues of accessibility and inclusion.

In direct relation to my internship with the Willamette, despite the work I conducted over the near year long period, and the over 6-year history of employing an intern dedicated to community engagement, barriers still remain. First and foremost, I would advocate for a

full-time position. A person who in title, duties, and practice engages in issues of equity and accessibility.

There is no one size fits all approach to equity. This work is a process that must be constant. Concrete and transparent goals must be established and progress evaluated.

To challenge these large systems, seemingly inherent in our identity, embodied in our practice, we must identify them clearly, dismantle them continuously, bit by bit, until we can no longer. It's easier said than done, but this work is a process, one that must continue. We absolutely must continue to probe at our culture, disentangle the inherent from the culturally constructed and grasp the realities of our colonial past and present to move toward true equity on public lands.

“All outdoor experiences are unique, and valid.” -Ruby McConnell

APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Age:

Gender Identity:

Race/Ethnicity:

Income:

Home:

Religious Identity:

Gender Identity:

Trail Hiked:

Length of hike:

Section or thru-hike?

-What motivated you to take this trip?

-What is your knowledge of this trail?

-What is your relationship with nature?

-What is wilderness to you? What does the term wilderness mean to you?

-What makes wilderness sites special to you?

-Why do you travel to the wilderness?

-Describe your emotions and states of being on the trail and how they compare with “ordinary life.”

-Do you consider yourself spiritual?

-If so where do you go and what do you do to practice or express your spirituality?

-Have you met people along the trail? Talked to them? Had similar experiences? Describe them.

FOR WOMEN (this will only be asked if woman is chosen in gender identity portion):

-Do you hike alone? If so, do you feel comfortable doing so?

-Do people question or worry about hiking alone?

-Do you feel your gender identity affects your interaction with nature or wild? If so how?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Age:

Race:

Hometown:

Occupation

Religious Identity:

Gender Identity:

How would you like to be referred to (name, pseudonym, a participant):

- 1) How frequently do you hike and/or backpack? Why?
- 2) How are you able to hike and/or backpack? (i.e. do you use vacation time for your job? Do you utilize breaks off school? Is it a daily practice you schedule?)
- 3) What motivated you to hike?
- 4) How prepared are you typically when hiking and/or backpacking? (i.e. do you spend time mapping out your trip? Do you plan meals? Do you read guidebooks?)
- 5) What is your relationship with hiking?
- 6) Please describe some words and concepts that you associate with hiking
- 7) What is nature/wilderness to you?
- 8) What do the terms nature and wilderness mean to you?
- 9) What makes wilderness sites special to you if you consider them special?
- 10) Why do you travel to the wilderness?
- 11) Describe your emotions and states of being on the trail and how they compare with "ordinary life."
- 12) Do you consider yourself spiritual? If so where do you go and what do you do to practice or express your spirituality?
- 13) Do you hike alone? If so, do you feel comfortable? If not, why not?

- 14) Do people worry or question you about hiking alone?
- 15) Do you feel your religious identity affects (positively or negatively) you interactions with nature or the wild? If so how?
- 16) Do you feel your gender identity affects (positively or negatively) your interactions with nature or the wild? If so how?
- 17) Do you feel your ethnic or racial identity in any way (positively or negatively) alters your interaction or ability to interact with nature or the wild?
- 18) Do you believe there is any aspect of your identity that alters (positively or negatively) your interaction with nature or the wild?
- 19) Have you met people along the trail? Talked to them? Had similar experiences? Describe them.
- 20) If there was one thing about your experience you want me to know, what would that be?

Willamette National Forest Youth Engagement Strategy

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Willamette National Forest recognizes the importance of making public lands truly public, engaging young people in diverse ways as a means of investing in the future of both our forest and communities. The Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) is an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to reaching thousands of children, youth, families, and communities. These efforts stretch across many initiatives including our partnership with Northwest Youth Corps in Outdoor Ambassadors, Conservation Education, Volunteering and Partnerships, 21st Century Service Corps, Youth Conservation Corps and our newly launched Every Kid in a Park initiative (EKiP). This program aims to make public lands accessible and relevant to the diverse and dynamic populations of Oregon. With three clearly identified foci (1) initial exposure experiences to build comfort and accessibility, (2) stewardship and land ethic development, (3) and workforce development we aim to foster an experience of the Willamette as a place for education, community, personal and career development, and purposeful change.

CONTEXT

This Youth Engagement Strategy comes at a moment in which we recognize the importance of engaging diverse audiences and connecting all people to their public lands. It is for this reason that we are engaging in particular ways, prioritizing both partners and experiences in an effort to move toward more accessible and equitable public lands. While the state of Oregon is comprised of ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse peoples, the use of our public lands remains predominately white. It is projected that by 2044 the United States will be a majority-minority nation. In a recent study Flores et al. (2018) found that Region 6, while comprised of 28.8% local minority populations, only 9.1% of forest visitors were of an underrepresented group. While Region 6 has done great work engaging diverse populations in this past, this work must continue as we push toward closing the inequity gap between percentage of minority populations and minority forest visitation.

It is critical that we acknowledge equity work does not happen overnight. Working towards a more accessible outdoors is a process that requires constant engagement with issues of representation, inclusivity, implicit bias, and power. This process will require self-reflection, evaluation, and constant reworking to ensure we are adapting to current concerns and conditions. This will be a process.

WILLAMETTE YES STRATEGY



This strategy is not inherently cyclical. While ideally an individual will move through all three components, it is not necessary. Rather, these categories are options not requirements. For example, a person may come on an Outdoor Ambassadors trip for initial exposure, fall in love with the woods, join a Northwest Youth Corps crew, and join the Forest Service as an employee. But some may not need initial exposure. Others may not be interested in stewardship. The visual of a Venn diagram allows for the categories to overlap or stand alone. There is no hierarchy, pathway, or requirement, simply options.

OVERVIEW

The core of this program is in our emphasis on Initial Exposure where we provide direct engagement with public lands through unique outdoor experiences and conservation education. These outings are co-designed with our community partners to ensure the group's comfort and ability levels are respected and that the experience is one of meaning and substance. Our partnership with Northwest Youth Corps on Outdoor Ambassadors has afforded us the ability to provide transportation, a critical barrier for many underserved and underrepresented communities in and around the Willamette. Our programs include: Outdoor Ambassadors outings, Explorers' Camp and Outdoor School, community events, and classroom visits.

Stewardship development creates paid or volunteer opportunities for young people to get direct experience and develop skills to become the future stewards of these lands. During these projects they use teamwork and critical thinking to accomplish various public land

projects. These students gain knowledge of tools, environment, and work experience in gratifying and important work.

Finally, Career Development is a logical outcome for those who thrive in stewardship. The goal is to create a pathway that allows for the recruitment of diverse and talented individuals who bring new and innovative approaches to land management to ensure continued accessibility and engagement. Our efforts are focused primarily on youth from our community partners to ensure we support and encourage their continued development. To recruit and retain a talented workforce we engage youth in networking opportunities, provide mentorship through the application process, and obtain feedback on the process. In 2018 in the Willamette's first Public Lands Job Fair we hosted 72 community members and partners as potential applicants. Ultimately, we want a workforce that is representative of the diversity in the United States.

TRIBAL RELATIONS

“Our commitment at the Forest Service is to work with tribal partners to achieve healthy and resilient landscapes both now and for generations to come. In doing so, we will move towards fulfilling our treaty obligations, meet our trust responsibilities, and find new opportunities to work together in shared stewardship [...] our commitment is to be honest, genuine, and transparent in working toward mutually satisfactory resolutions.” USDA Forest Service Tribal Relations Strategic Plan Fiscal Year 2019–2022

In engaging tribal youth, we must recognize tribes as sovereign nations who may find it difficult to desire employment with the United States federal government due to historical political distress. For this reason, we must take special care when engaging with tribal youth to respect their sovereignty.

BEST PRACTICES

Our best practices are often learned from our community partners and the people we serve.

For this reason, the first best practice, and the most important, is to **listen to the people we are engaging**. Collaboration and co-development of programming is an invaluable way to ensure that people will enjoy an experience and continue to engage.

Moreover, **show up for partners**. Don't simply expect them to come to our events, support their events too.

To encourage a more diverse population and create a more inclusive forest we must be **intentional**. Social media is a great way to acknowledge the partnerships we have, but it must be representative of our relationships and reality. Social media should also be recognized as a means of outreach and engagement.

While this is a youth engagement strategy, we must be inclusive of all ages.

Incorporating families and communities is a great way to reach more people and build a sustainable relationship of people to land. Children cannot take themselves to the forest, but families can go together.

One of the most critical things we can and do **provide is transportation and resources** and this absolutely must continue. The most frequently cited barriers are the basic necessities (1) getting there and (2) having the right gear. Partnerships with Northwest Youth Corps and Eugene Recreation have afforded us the opportunity to provide these things. This is an absolutely invaluable aspect of creating accessibility for our communities.

We should **consider options for stewardship that are not only physical labor**. The Forest service offers many careers that do not require physical labor and that should be represented in opportunities for stewardship as well.

When engaging with tribal youth, look for ways to work **in collaboration with tribal elders and tribal government**. Restoration projects have proven useful in engaging in collaborative work that allows for the employment of tribal youth.

SEASONAL TIMELINE

Spring: Smokey Fire Prevention School Talks (Mar/Apr), Sweet Home Outdoor School
Summer: Girls in the Woods (Jul), Chainsaw Art Festival, MRRD (Jul) Explorer's Camp (Aug), Oregon State Fair (Aug/Sept)
Fall: Public Lands Job Fair (Dependent on Hiring Window), Trapper Creek Outdoor School (MF), NICE Reporting deadline (Oct), Play in the Rain Day (Nov)
Winter: Year-End Youth Engagement Reporting

OUR PARTNERS

Federal Partners

Northwest Youth Corps, Migrant Education Program, Lane Education Service District, Youth in Nature Partnership, South Santiam Watershed Council, Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council

Community Partners

Eugene Recreation, Miller Integrated Nature Experience, NAACP, Ophelia's Place, Centro Latino Americano, Cornerstone Housing, A Family for Every Child, Downtown Languages, Chemawa Indian School, University of Oregon Native American Student Union, Fairfield Elementary

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Downtown Languages, Chemawa Indian School, University of Oregon Native American Student Union, Migrant Education Program, Lane Education Service District, Youth in Nature Partnership, Fairfield Elementary, South Santiam Watershed Council, Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council

Willamette National Forest Youth Engagement Strategy Report

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Willamette National Forest recognizes the importance of making public lands truly public, engaging young people in diverse ways as a means of investing in the future of both our forest and communities [SP2, SP4, NP3, NP4, NP5, RP6]. The Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) is an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to reaching thousands of children, youth, families, and communities. These efforts stretch across many initiatives including our partnership with Northwest Youth Corps in Outdoor Ambassadors, Conservation Education, Volunteering and Partnerships, 21st Century Service Corps, Youth Conservation Corps and our newly launched Every Kid in a Park initiative (EKiP). This program aims to make public lands accessible and relevant to the diverse and dynamic populations of Oregon. With three clearly identified foci (1) initial exposure experiences to build comfort and accessibility [SP1, NP3, NP4, NP5, RP4, RP6, ISY3, ISY4], (2) stewardship and land ethic development [SP4, NP1, RP6, ISY1, ISY2, ISY3, ISY4], (3) and workforce development [SP2, NP5, RP6, ISY2], we aim to foster an experience of the Willamette as a place for education, community, personal and career development, and purposeful change.

*Strategic Plan (SP), National Priorities (NP), and Regional Priorities (RP) as well as Strategic Goals and Outcomes of the 2015 USDA Forest Service Integrated Strategy for Youth (ISY) this program meets can be found in brackets, see Appendix A

CONTEXT

This Youth Engagement Strategy comes at a moment in which we recognize the importance of engaging diverse audiences and connecting all people to their public lands. It is for this reason that we are engaging in particular ways, prioritizing both partners and experiences in an effort to move toward more accessible and equitable public lands. While the state of Oregon is comprised of ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse peoples, the use of our public lands remains predominately white. It is projected that by 2044 the United States will be a majority-minority nation. In a recent study Flores et al. (2018) found that Region 6, while comprised of 28.8% local minority populations, only 9.1% of forest visitors were of an underrepresented group. While Region 6 has done great work engaging diverse populations in this past, this work must continue as we push toward closing the inequity gap between percentage of minority populations and minority forest visitation.

It is critical that we acknowledge equity work does not happen overnight. Working towards a more accessible outdoors is a process that requires constant engagement with issues of representation, inclusivity, implicit bias, and power. This process will require self-reflection, evaluation, and constant reworking to ensure we are adapting to current concerns and conditions. This will be a process.

METHODOLOGY

To complete a review of the current Youth and Community Engagement I have completed several semi-structured interviews with both community partners and Willamette staff. These interviews were conducted in two ways (1) community partners were met with the intention of discussing previous outings. The relationships with community partners affects the types of interviews conducted. Some contacts were new to their role and could not speak to the relationship with the Willamette, while others have been the point of contact for many years. These interviews were semi-structured around what the relationships has been in the past and how it can be better fostered in the future. (2) Staff interviews were more centered on their contributions to Youth and Community Engagement. Here, District Rangers were asked to share a list of key players to contact. Staff interviews were focused on the engagement work they do, how they do it, and how the Supervisor’s Office can better support their needs.

Interview data was paired with demographic data collected both for the state of Oregon as a whole, and for the local communities surrounding the four districts. This data is representative of the populations we serve.

Racial demographics prove to be a critical aspect of this work. The table below demonstrates the increase in non-white populations in the counties the Willamette serves. Moreover, since the 1970s there has been a large increase in minority groups. In 1970 97.2% of the Oregon population was white. By 2010 that had shifted with only 83.6% being white. While an increase in diversity by 14% seems large, the reality is that nearly 7/8ths of the state remains white. Diverse populations are increasing but they remain the overwhelming minority. It is for this reason that particular community partners were targeted. For example, NAACP, Centro Latino Americano, the Migrant Education Program, among others, were targeted as communities that the forest should pay special attention to in an effort for more equitable access.

COUNTY (primary counties in bold)	2000, % population non-white	2016, % population non-white	Rural/Suburban/Urban
Lane	11%	17%	Suburban
Linn	9%	14%	Suburban
Marion	23%	33%	Suburban
Deschutes	7%	12%	Suburban
Douglas	8%	11%	Rural
Clackamas	11%	17%	Suburban
Jefferson	35%	40%	Rural

Table 1: Percent of county population that is non-white in counties on Willamette

There is often a perception that if people are not outside it is because they do not want to be. However, research has shown that it is not that simple. There are many barriers, culturally, politically, economically, socially, and historically, that have limited peoples’ interactions with the outdoors, and public lands.

Historical Considerations

Another critical aspect of the methodology is recognizing the historical particularity of the state of Oregon, and the Willamette. The Willamette must recognize that some peoples are carrying centuries of cultural trauma. The formation of the United States by colonists forever altered both the peoples and landscape of North America. This too happened in Oregon, and the Willamette Valley.

Slavery and colonization have created a cultural history. We cannot deny the effects of these systems, no matter how distant they may seem, because our culture is what shapes our understanding of the world, and if for generations the outdoors has not been a safe place for you to be, you likely won't go there.

While those who work for the Forest Service recognize that it is only one of many land management agencies, others do not. Simply because things did not happen on the Willamette does not mean the woods are not frightening, threatening, or unwelcoming to people.

Oregon, in particular is a place where racial tensions were heightened. For example, Oregon entered the nation as a free state but did so with laws that excluded non-white bodies. Slavery was outlawed, and black people were not allowed in the state. This was enforced with a lash law. This expanded to other populations, for example in the 1860s, Oregon passed a laws that meant Black and Asian folks had to pay a tax to be in the state, and could not marry a white person”

Oregon did not ratify the fourteenth amendment, the amendment that ensures equal protection and rights of former slaves, or the fifteenth amendment, which granted African American men the right to vote. It was not until 2001 that the language that exclusion language was removed from the state constitution.

Indigenous populations too were attacked when white European settlers moved to the West. Indigenous populations were forced to reservations. Oregon had its own trail of tears, as settlers and gold miners arrived tribal lands was becoming infringed on. Soon, villages were burned and the Rogue River War began in 1855. Tribes were hunted in an effort to exterminate them. Remaining tribes were pushed to a reservation during a particularly harsh winter in 1856 known today as the Siletz. Many walked barefoot through snow, at least four people died. Later that year the Molalas and Kalapuyas were removed from the Willamette valley to what is now known as the Grand Ronde.

For Hispanic and Latinx communities the Willamette has often been a place for work. In the early 1940s, through the Braceros program created during World War II, many agricultural workers were brought to the United States, from Mexico, to work for Willamette Valley farmers. These people were willing to work for low wages for an opportunity for a better life in America, but were also provided no basic labor rights. They were exploited and vulnerable. This has continued for decades. This is a critical aspect to recognize, forestry workers in Oregon have faced a lack of safety training, proper water and food, rest, and compensation. Again, while this might not happen on our

forest, this is something we must consider when asking people to engage in stewardship, or recruiting for hiring.

These types of situations should be acknowledge in doing this work. We cannot deny the events that came before us. By acknowledging that not all people were treated equally, and that not every person had access to the same resources (including life experiences), we can move toward a more inclusive space. Often, simply acknowledging something such as the racist history of the state will mediate tensions, allow others to feel heard and understood, and create a more level place to begin working toward a relationship with a community.

We must ask ourselves, what can I learn from this person? What part of their experience is different from mine? How can I recognize that difference respectfully? How has that difference changed the ways they interact with the world? How can I help to ensure our differences are not a hindrance?

OVERVIEW

The core of this program is in our emphasis on Initial Exposure where we provide direct engagement with public lands through unique outdoor experiences and conservation education. These outings are co-designed with our community partners to ensure the group's comfort and ability levels are respected and that the experience is one of meaning and substance. Our partnership with Northwest Youth Corps on Outdoor Ambassadors has afforded us the ability to provide transportation, a critical barrier for many underserved and underrepresented communities in and around the Willamette. Our programs include: Outdoor Ambassadors outings, Explorers' Camp and Outdoor School, community events, and classroom visits.

Stewardship development creates paid or volunteer opportunities for young people to get direct experience and develop skills to become the future stewards of these lands. During these projects they use teamwork and critical thinking to accomplish various public land projects. These students gain knowledge of tools, environment, and work experience in gratifying and important work.

Finally, Career Development is a logical outcome for those who thrive in stewardship. The goal is to create a pathway that allows for the recruitment of diverse and talented individuals who bring new and innovative approaches to land management to ensure continued accessibility and engagement. Our efforts are focused primarily on youth from our community partners to ensure we support and encourage their continued development. To recruit and retain a talented workforce we engage youth in networking opportunities, provide mentorship through the application process, and obtain feedback on the process. In 2018 in the Willamette's first Public Lands Job Fair we hosted 72 community members and partners as potential applicants.



This strategy is not inherently cyclical. While ideally an individual will move through all three components, it is not necessary. Rather, these categories are options not requirements. For example, a person may come on an Outdoor Ambassadors trip for initial exposure, fall in love with the woods, join a Northwest Youth Corps crew, and join the Forest Service as an employee. But some may not need initial exposure. Others may not be interested in stewardship. The visual of a Venn diagram allows for the categories to overlap or stand alone. There is no hierarchy, pathway, or requirement, simply options.

TRIBAL RELATIONS

“Our commitment at the Forest Service is to work with tribal partners to achieve healthy and resilient landscapes both now and for generations to come. In doing so, we will move towards fulfilling our treaty obligations, meet our trust responsibilities, and find new opportunities to work together in shared stewardship [...] our commitment is to be honest, genuine, and transparent in working toward mutually satisfactory resolutions.” USDA Forest Service Tribal Relations Strategic Plan Fiscal Year 2019-2022

In engaging tribal youth we must recognize tribes as sovereign nations who may find it difficult to desire employment with the United States federal government due to historical political distress. For this reason we must take special care when engaging with tribal youth to respect their sovereignty.

BEST PRACTICES

Our best practices are often learned from our community partners and the people we serve.

For this reason, the first best practice, and the most important, is to **listen to the people we are engaging**. Collaboration and co-development of programming is an invaluable way to ensure that people will enjoy an experience and continue to engage.

Moreover, **show up for partners**. Don't simply expect them to come to our events, support their events too.

To encourage a more diverse population and create a more inclusive forest we must be **intentional**. Social media is a great way to acknowledge the partnerships we have, but it must be representative of our relationships and reality. Social media should also be recognized as a means of outreach and engagement.

While this is a youth engagement strategy, we must be inclusive of all ages. **Incorporating families and communities** is a great way to reach more people and build a sustainable relationship of people to land. Children cannot take themselves to the forest, but families can go together.

One of the most critical things we can and do **provide is transportation and resources** and this absolutely must continue. The most frequently cited barriers are the basic necessities (1) getting there and (2) having the right gear. Partnerships with Northwest Youth Corps and Eugene Recreation have afforded us the opportunity to provide these things. This is an absolutely invaluable aspect of creating accessibility for our communities.

We should **consider options for stewardship that are not only physical labor**. The Forest service offers many careers that do not require physical labor and that should be represented in opportunities for stewardship as well.

When engaging with tribal youth, look for ways to work **in collaboration with tribal elders and tribal government**. Restoration projects have proven useful in engaging in collaborative work that allows for the employment of tribal youth.

SEASONAL TIMELINE

Fall: Public Lands Job Fair (Dependent on Hiring Window), Trapper Creek Outdoor School (MF), NICE Reporting deadline (Oct), Play in the Rain Day (Nov)

Winter: Year-End Youth Engagement Reporting, Funding Applications Due (Date Decided by Regional Office)

Spring: Smokey Fire Prevention School Talks (Mar/Apr), Santiam STEWARDS Outdoor School ,SH (Mar)

Summer: Girls in the Woods (Jul), Chainsaw Art Festival, MRRD (Jul) Explorer's Camp (Aug), Oregon State Fair (Aug/Sept)

OUR PARTNERS

Federal Partners

Northwest Youth Corps, Migrant Education Program, Lane Education Service District, Youth in Nature Partnership, South Santiam Watershed Council, Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council

Community Partners

Eugene Recreation, Miller Integrated Nature Experience, NAACP, Ophelia's Place, Centro Latino Americano, Cornerstone Housing, A Family for Every Child, Downtown Languages, Chemawa Indian School, University of Oregon Native American Student Union, Fairfield Elementary

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APPENDIX A

National, Regional, and Forest Priorities

Forest Service Strategic Plan: FY 2015-2020 [SP]

- (1) GOAL: Sustain our Nation's Forests and Grasslands
 - Strategic Objective A: Foster resilient, adaptive ecosystems to mitigate climate change
 - Strategic Objective B: Mitigate wildfire risk
 - Strategic Objective C: Conserve open space

- (2) GOAL: Deliver Benefits to the Public
 - Strategic Objective D: Provide abundant clean water
 - Strategic Objective E: Strengthen communities
 - Strategic Objective F: Connect people to the outdoors

- (3) Apply knowledge globally
 - Strategic Objective G: Advance knowledge
 - Strategic Objective H: Transfer technology and applications
 - Strategic Objective I: Exchange natural resource expertise

- (4) Excel as a high performing agency
 - Management Objective A: Recruit a diverse workforce
 - Management Objective B: Promote an inclusive culture
 - Management Objective C: Attract and retain top employees

National Priorities [NP]

"Five National Priorities built on legacy, guide agency forward" Tony Tooke, Oct. 27, 2017

- (1) Uplifting and empowering our employees through a respectful, safe working environment
- (2) Being good neighbors and providing excellent customer service
- (3) Promoting shared stewardship by increasing partnerships and volunteerism
- (4) Improving the condition of forest and grasslands
- (5) Enhancing recreation opportunities, improving access, and sustaining infrastructure

Regional Priorities [RP]

- (1) Ecosystem Restoration
- (2) Wildland Fire Management
- (3) Sustainable Recreation
- (4) Infrastructure
- (5) Forest plan revision, planning, and monitoring
- (6) High performing region (Business ops, and valuing people and places)

APPENDIX B

Strategic Goals and Outcomes from the USDA Forest Service Integrated Strategy for Youth (2015)

- (1) **Emphasize Partnerships and Collaboration:** Strengthen existing partnerships and build new ones that reach all America's youth. Engage youth in conservation education, service, and employment opportunities
- (2) **Ensure Conservation Service and Career Pathways:** Develop and nurture opportunities for all youth to engage in conservation service and to investigate career opportunities in natural resource management.
- (3) **Provide High-Quality, Contemporary Conservation Education:** Build knowledge about natural resources, conservation and stewardship of our Nation's forests and grasslands by developing and implementing effective, standard-base, contemporary conservation education programs that reach all America's youth.
- (4) **Build Connections with Nature:** Build connections with nature through outdoor recreation opportunities, and providing place-based experiences in nature.
- (5) **Build Capacity for Youth Engagement:** Build capacity within the Forest Service and with our partners to plan, support, implement, evaluate and integrate youth engagement opportunities across America.

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Resources for Further Reading

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