CROSS-CULTURAL ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION IN YOUTH OUTDOOR EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This study explores Kenyan parent's values and beliefs about nature, and how they perceive the role of nature in their child's development. Further, this study investigates the barriers to accessing outdoor experiential education for this Kenyan community living in Lane County, Oregon, and how summer camp staff are responding to the lack of diversity. The purpose of this study was to provide a deeper understanding of accessibility to youth outdoor experiential education, perceptions of barriers, and opportunities for mitigation of those barriers in the context of summer camps. Recommendations are made for creating a more inclusive environment for outdoor experiential education.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

Chapter Page

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Project Overview

This study explores Kenyan parent's values and beliefs about nature, how they perceive the role of nature in their child's development, and the barriers to accessing outdoor experiential education for this Kenyan community living in Lane County, Oregon. Further, this study investigates how summer camps are responding to the lack of diversity. The purpose of this study was to provide a deeper understanding of accessibility to youth outdoor experiential education in the context of summer camps. This study was designed to elicit narratives from members of the Kenyan community to study their values and beliefs about nature and their perceptions of barriers and opportunities for mitigation. Further, this study intended to study narratives of summer camp staff to glean their experiences and perceptions of inclusion and accessibility in outdoor experiential education. This study also sought to obtain information to make recommendations on creating a more inclusive environment for outdoor experiential education.

Positionality, The Researcher

As the researcher of this study, I understand that I bring my own values and experiences to all aspects of this work. As an individual who is not of Kenyan descent, I recognize that I step into this research with a considerable amount of privilege. I recognize that I have the power to initiate confidential conversations

about personal thoughts and experiences to “benefit”; this recognition feeds my intention to uplift the voices of my participants in scholarly literature.

My experience as a first-generation Indian American informs my understanding of the research problem and question. As an adult, I recognize that nature had a transformative effect on myself as a child, therefore confirming my belief in nature deficit disorder. As a first-generation Indian American, spending time in nature with kids from other backgrounds provided an early sense of community and wellbeing through opportunities to learn, engage, and connect on a deeper level. As an artist, nature has the capacity to inspire wonder and creativity. As a concerned citizen, nature provides the opportunity to enhance environmental connection and stewardship among the youth, as time in nature sets children up with a foundation to be active and informed students of environmental education.

Project Context and Objective

Experiential education and outdoor experiences are highly valuable for adults and youth. This thesis studies how to increase accessibility to outdoor experiential education opportunities to diverse and underserved populations in Lane County, Oregon, USA, specifically to children of parents from Kenya. This study is relevant to the discussion of the value of outdoor experiences among youth in reducing “nature deficit disorder” (Louv, 2005) which is a nonclinical term that describes how children’s reduced time and exposure to the outdoors affects their well-being and behavior. Despite widespread perceptions that children’s

reduced connection with nature has detrimental consequences, there is a gap in the research on how to promote access for underrepresented populations. This research will help us gain an understanding of the current barriers to outdoor education, and to create recommendations to make programs more accessible and welcoming in order to promote environmental stewardship among youth. The purpose of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of accessibility to youth outdoor experiential education in the context of summer camps. This study explores, connects, and compares narratives from both Kenyan parents and summer camp staff in order to study parent perceptions of barriers and opportunities for enhancements and staff experiences and perceptions of inclusion and accessibility in outdoor experiential education.

Research Questions

- What are Kenyan parent's values and beliefs about nature, and how do they perceive the role of nature in their child's development?
- What do parents and staff perceive as the barriers to accessing outdoor experiential education to diverse populations?
- How are camps responding to the lack of diversity?

Thesis Statement

There is a need for outdoor experiential practices that reflect the variation of beliefs about nature and environment. While Kenyan parents value nature and appreciate camp as a means for child learning and development, there is a

fundamental difference from Americans in the way Kenyan parents engage with nature. In order to incorporate African and Indigenous environmental values and further honor non-Euro Western ways of being outdoors, there is a need to re-evaluate the wilderness narrative used in outdoor experiential education. Further, there needs to be a shift towards understanding summer camps as a means to facilitate cross-cultural interactions and communication both in summer camp practice and in community understanding. Lastly, outdoor spaces ought to be redefined and incorporated into mainstream American culture as places to facilitate dialogue, discussion, and conflict resolution for youth.

Definition of Terms

Nature: In this study, "nature" refers to a place of natural wildness and an environment where there is an abundance of biodiversity.

Accessibility: When discussing accessibility to spaces such as outdoor education, this study refers to the quality of being easy to obtain or use, and the quality of being easily understood or appreciated.

Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD): Coined by Richard Louv (2005), this NDD is a nonclinical term that describes how children's well-being and behavior is affected by reduced time and exposure to the outdoors.

Outdoor Experiential Education (OEE): This term refers to experiential education, a process of acquiring knowledge, skills, and value through direct experience, specifically conducted in an outdoor environment. Further, outdoor experiential education or outdoor adventure refers to educational situations that take place in a wilderness/outdoor setting and have an element of adventure or challenge used as a method to educate through direct experience (Warren, 2005.)

I. **Summer Camp:** Summer camp and OEE will be used interchangeably throughout this study, as summer camp is the quintessential example of outdoor experiential education.

Underrepresentation: I am referring to families of color, lower income, displacement, or unemployed or unhoused families.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Nature plays a critical role in the lives of humans. It is an omnipresent force that all humans have experience and exposure to, whether formal or not. Outdoor experiences, and outdoor experiential education, however, require more effort in order to engage. Research suggests that outdoor experiential education (OEE) and environment- based education has a transformative effect on child, youth, and adult development (Browne, 2019.) The purpose of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of accessibility to youth outdoor experiential and environmental education in the context of summer camps for Kenyan communities living in Lane County, Oregon. This study will elicit narratives from parents of the Kenyan community to study their perceptions of barriers and opportunities for enhancement. Further, this study will explore narratives of summer camp staff to glean their experiences and perceptions of inclusion and accessibility in outdoor experiential education. This interdisciplinary study hopes to obtain information about alternative pedagogies to create an inclusive environment for outdoor experiential education, therefore it engages with several important bodies of scholarly literature including literature on nature deficit disorder and critiques, literature on the benefits of outdoor experiential education, literature on barriers to outdoor experiential education, literature on western constructions of wilderness and pro-environmental values, knowledge, and behavior, literature on environmental education and intersectionality, literature on

African environmentalism, literature on Kenyan environmental justice and the call for environmental education, and literature on environmental education and post-colonial theory.

Nature Deficit Disorder

The field of environmental education received a tremendous boost with Richard Louv. Richard Louv discusses the decreased exposure of children to nature in American society and how this "nature-deficit disorder" harms children and society in his book, Last Child in The Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder. This book represents an intersection between environmental education, eco-psychology, child development, and American culture studies that may promote a new dialogue between researchers and practitioners.

Louv elaborates on the increasing divide between youth and the natural world, and how this impacts humans at an environmental, social, psychological, and spiritual level. Louv asserts that contact with nature is necessary for healthy child, and adult, development. Environmental psychologists champion increasing children's experiences of nature and Louv's theory of nature-deficit disorder, which asserts that nature is essential for physical and emotional health and development of children. Louv proceeds to explain how nature-deficit disorder can be recognized and reversed on an individual and societal level through exposing children to outdoor educational experiences.

Unfortunately, society is sending a message that replaces joy from solitude and nature with danger and strangeness. The discouragement of natural play is aided by urban house development. At the time his book was released, 47 million Americans lived in homes ruled by associations that imposed rules on tenants, and these rules often restricted or banned outdoor play. Open, forested spaces have been gradually disappearing across America. Not only are open forested areas disappearing, but natural play is often explicitly discouraged by parents and housing associations. According to Louv, “A widening circle of researchers believes that the loss of natural habitation, or the disconnection from nature even when it is available, has enormous implications for human health and child development. They say the quality of exposure to nature affects our health at an almost cellular level (Louv, 2005.)” Louv proposes that environment-based education is an antidote to nature deficit disorder explaining, “The basic idea is to use the surrounding community, including nature, as the preferred classroom.” Louv calls for the expansion of camps and outdoor education based on the restorative power of nature, and even ventures a call for “camp revival.” The benefits of camp extend beyond the immediate interaction with nature to a positive rise in a sense of purpose, self-esteem, and body image.

Critiques of Nature Deficit Disorder

Despite its place on the New York times best seller list, *Last Child in the Woods* has been criticized for promoting Euro-Western assumptions about what counts as normal childhood experiences of nature. This concept will be explored further

in later sections on this literature review under “Western Constructions of Nature.”

As a scholarly critic of Richard Louv’s nature-deficit-disorder, Robert Fletcher (2017) uses a political ecology framework to condemn environmental education, the antidote to nature deficit disorder, of paradoxically reinforcing the separation of humans and nature. Political ecology scholars call attention to the political and economic structures that perpetuate environmental degradation and natural resource usage.

Fletcher asserts that framing nature as a place “to go to” or “to be invited to” creates a spatial divide which reinforces the physical separation between humans and nature, rather than a connection. In this sense, nature deficit disorder fundamentally implies that nature is a separate entity from humans even in its advocacy to overcome separation.

Fletcher declares that nature deficit disorder and connection with nature (CWN) is based on a neoliberal framework - one that places onus of environmental preservation on individuals, rather than the political and economic structures of environmental degradation. According to Fletcher, connection with nature does not contribute to rectifying the destruction of the environment. Fletcher further asserts that Louv’s call to action contributes to environmental degradation and does not assist with environmental preservation by encouraging higher usage of

natural areas without explicitly providing readers with a detailed and responsible way to interact with the environment.

Fletcher asserts that the concept of nature is most relevant in post-industrial societies, and that nature deficit disorder promotes a culturally specific sense of nature. Fletcher acknowledges how the concept of nature is complex, lengthy, and historical. Fletcher recognizes that in many cultures, humans are considered to be part of nature which calls into question the cultural assumptions of nature deficit disorder. This idea is relevant to the Results and Discussion chapters of this study.

Fletcher explores practices to mitigate the paradox of environmental education and calls for a “greater interrogation” of the concept of nature and “the political-economic structures driving environmental degradation” (2017). To progress towards the political ecology of environmental education, Fletcher recommends eliminating the term “nature” due to its implied separation between humans and the natural space. Further, this article recommends environmental education address the political-economic systems that negatively impact both natural environments and that marginalize social groups and address issues that are missing from the nature deficit disorder conversation such as culture, race, and poverty. An additional method of conceiving of nature in a non-binary way from a political ecology education perspective, as put forth by Meek (2017), is to employ a critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2003) framework which is

characterized by both decolonization and re-inhabitation of environmental education (Meek, 2017.)

While the critiques of nature deficit disorder provide significant and critical perspectives, they do not, at any point, mitigate or contest the health benefits of nature, or outdoor experiential education, which are assumed and addressed in this study. This study does align with the critiques in problematizing the constructed separation between humans and nature, and the Euro Western dominant definition of nature. Regardless of the critiques, I contend that the construct of nature deficit disorder serves to highlight the value of outdoor experiential education, and to call attention to the undeniable fact that children today are spending less time outdoors than previous generations. For that reason, I would like to expand upon Louv's theory of nature deficit disorder in my exploration of diversity and accessibility to outdoor experiential education. Because of its overall influential position in popular and scholarly narratives surrounding outdoor experiential education, I am using Louv as a keystone source to explore the value of nature and outdoor experiences for children, and that accessibility to outdoor experiences is a right for all children. However, while Louv recommended outdoor education more generally, he did not recommend specific programmatic solutions, and subsequent work has been explored by scholars, and therefore I will next turn to subsequent literature addressing the role of the benefits of outdoor experiential education and environmental education.

Benefits of Outdoor Experiential Education & Environmental Education

Outdoor experiences have immense capacity to facilitate socialization, discussion, and dialogue among people. Browne et al. (2019), state that summer camps are one of the most popular outdoor experiential education contexts in the United States. The article uses a case study analysis to study the themes of inclusion, equity, and accessibility across three summer camps. Brown et al. use a social justice framework to describe how summer camps in the United States act as a powerful force in socializing the youth and providing a context for social liberation which consequently demands a need for further accessibility and inclusion. The article suggests that while individuals are initially socialized through time in the home and the culture in which they were born, institutions such as schools and camps expand their social system and act as a mechanism for socialization. Unfortunately, the history of summer camp has not always prioritized inclusion and diversity. Browne et. al (2019) explore the history of summer camps in the United States and claim that early summer camps were built to promote cultural ideals, notably the White, masculine, nationalistic ideals of order, discipline, and self-reliance. This historical context is critical to our ability to consider if and how camp can become truly accessible and inclusive of all. Early camps for girls are perhaps the best example of that historical intention that camp is a context for positive social change as camps were historically organized around strict gender binaries and segregation, with most programs built around overt masculine ideals. The first attempt of inclusion, equity, and access in camp

settings was focused on gender. These inclusive measures have since extended beyond gender to include racial, ethnic, and cultural inclusion. Today, 94% of camps in the US offer scholarships, totaling, on average, US $85,000 per camp in scholarships each year, with an average of 22% of each camp's population receiving a scholarship (ACA, 2018). However, there has been little research to date investigating how successful these efforts have been, or whether additional kinds of efforts are needed. I aim to study how to increase access to summer camps for diverse populations, and how to promote inclusion in the summer camp setting.

Summer camps serve as a developmental opportunity for youth to engage with new and diverse experiences and people. This is confirmed by Bowers et al. (2019), who study outdoor adventure camps and positive youth engagement. Findings highlight implications for socially just and culturally inclusive outdoor adventure programming aimed at diverse urban youth, such as "pre-camp communication, information, and activities to prepare youth and adult participants for this type of adventure (2019)." Results indicated that urban youth from all racial and ethnic backgrounds grew in social competencies and self-improvement capacities, youth reported a sense of belonging and reported positive relationships among peers, staff, and engagement with activities. Many youths also reported growing in their connection to nature as a consequence of participating in the outdoor adventure camp. Youth thought camp was a positive and worthwhile experience, reflecting key attributes of the positive youth

development (PYD) setting. Overall, the outdoor adventure camp provided a challenging and engaging growth environment for youth. Bowers et al.'s findings align with Richard Louv's theory of nature deficit disorder, as the authors confirm that youth benefit from experiences with the outdoors, including for racially and ethnically diverse youth. I would like to expand upon this study that confirms the value of outdoor experiences for diverse youth and explore how to increase access to outdoor experiential education for the Kenyan population living in Lane County, Oregon.

In addition, summer camps have demonstrated benefits that make inclusion and access to them important for academic and career success. For example, they have the capacity to prepare youth for academic and workplace readiness. Wilson et. al (2018) identified key learning outcomes former campers learned at camp that may be applicable to academic and workplace readiness, as well as the mechanisms that support this learning. They define academic readiness as the reading, writing, mathematics, interpersonal, leadership skills necessary for an academic environment. Workplace readiness is described as the academic and life skills necessary to maintain employment. Higher employment rates and wages are more common among youth with academic and workplace readiness as put forth by the National Research Council. Wilson et al. conducted a qualitative research study to examine the impacts of camp on youth, as well as campers' long-term learning outcomes from camp that are applicable to academic and workplace readiness. The results showed that summer camps

seem well-suited to teach relationship skills, teamwork, how to live with peers, self-confidence, organization, responsibility, independence, perseverance, career orientation, and emotion regulation. The mechanisms at camp that help support campers' learning of these outcomes included experiential learning, camp schedules, counselors, communal living, safe and supportive environments, and diversity of people. It is important to understand how outcomes are fostered in a camp setting, as summer camp may bolster its role in preparing youth with the skills necessary to succeed in academics and the workplace with intentional programming. Wilson et al. emphasize that summer camp can be an important setting for youth to learn valuable skills that are beneficial for them to succeed in academics and professional life. I hope to expand on their work to seek out how summer camp can be more accessible, therefore increasing access to workplace and academic readiness for diverse youth, including East African diaspora members.

There is an array of literature that demonstrates the value and importance of outdoor experiential education on positive youth development. The significant lack of participation in outdoor experiential education from historically excluded and underrepresented youth indicates a need for research that elicits narratives on the perceptions of barriers from these populations, as well as methods for sustainable and accountable inclusion practices.

Barriers to Outdoor Experiential Education (OEE)

In most institutions, barriers to diversity and inclusion include relationships of power, representation, identity, and values; these same factors have been shown to be critical for outdoor experiential education. Bond Rogers et al. (2019) surveyed members of the Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education (AORE) on their current perceptions and experiences of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I). The study focused on current D&I programming in higher education outdoor programs and barriers to inclusion for underrepresented populations. This study discovered that one of the predominant barriers that participants identified was a lack of funding, staffing, and time to offer D&I programming in addition to regular programming. The most successful D&I practices included collaboration with other programs on campus with a D&I focus, and building relationships with groups and organizations that have diversity and inclusion as their sole focus. The least successful practices included marketing recruitment of diverse student populations, especially in leadership because diversity in leadership is not currently being advertised, and outdoor experiences are typically marketed towards middle- and upper-class European Americans. D&I training was not particularly successful either, as approximately half of directors and assistant directors have not led or received D&I training. Barriers to accessibility include a lack of resources such as funding, staff, and time to prioritize D&I, or the belief that D&I is not a necessary professional development.

While this research study gives insight into the perceptions and experiences of outdoor educators, more in-depth research needs to be conducted with outdoor

educators of underrepresented populations, particularly people of color. Through qualitative study with underrepresented populations, both leaders and participants, the outdoor field can better understand how to be more inclusive in policy and practice. This knowledge can develop a roadmap to how underrepresented populations can attain outdoor leadership positions and increase the number of these much-needed role models. Findings and implications of the study will contribute to scholarship and practice around D&I in the field of outdoor education.

Western Constructions of Wilderness

The concept of wilderness has a complex and lengthy history as previously mentioned by Fletcher (2017). Robert Nash explores the history and concept of wilderness in the United States of America in his book. Wilderness in the American Mind. Robert Nash (1967) asserts that wilderness is an idea, emotion, or mood rather than a material object or space; it is a subjective experience based on individuality that is difficult to define (Nash, 1967.) Nash does, however, recognize that historically in America, wilderness is treated as a material space encompassed by ecological and biological boundaries. Nash notes that the term wilderness historically referred to places “of wild beasts” and implied being “lost”; this is contrary to the idea of the wilderness as a place that is collaboratively imagined by and connected with humans. Fundamentally, Nash attributes wilderness in American culture to be understood as a place that is

distinct from civilization and any life – human or otherwise- in “the wilderness” were also considered “wild”.

In an effort to examine the proposition that wilderness is a social construction valued among US-born White citizens, Johnson et al (2004) conducted a study by comparing wilderness values among immigrant participants, US-born minority participants, and US-born White participants. Results indicated that immigrant participants and US-born Asian and Latino participants are less likely to indicate value for wilderness sites, whereas US-born Black participants were less likely to indicate values associated with visitation but were as likely as US-born White participants to indicate value for continued existence of wilderness. The authors note that Black Americans are less likely than White Americans to engage in nature-based recreational activities and while this needs to be explored more deeply, they shared that Black-Americans were also” more likely to cite internal constraints related to feelings of discomfort in the wild, desire for outdoor recreation places with more people. and concern for personal safety in the wild. This idea will be explored in later sections of this thesis. Further, the authors assert that it is possible the wilderness narrative is not popular across cultural groups as various traditional societies may be displaced by the designation of certain areas as wilderness.

The following year, Johnson et al (2005) conducted a study to examine whether participation in nature-based activities increases acculturation for Mexican and

Chinese ethnic groups living in the United States. Ultimately, this study found that Chinese immigrants were more likely to participate in nature activities and acculturate more quickly, and the authors attribute this to labor status in the United States for Chinese and Mexican groups. They found that Mexican immigrants tended to be labor immigrants while Chinese immigrants tended to be professional immigrants.

The authors intended to raise awareness among environmental professionals to the way nature may be perceived diversely across cultural groups, and the importance of nature when acculturating immigrants to the United States. Johnson et al. assert that the rate of acculturation is dependent on “education level, occupational skills, wealth, exposure to mainstream American culture before entry into the US, and receptivity of the immigrant population by the host society”. Further, they state that differences in outdoor recreation behavior may be related to structural factors such as “language barriers, lack of discretionary funds, lack of appropriate settings or information about outdoor recreation resources, or perceived discrimination.”

The authors assert that participation in nature activities is itself an indicator of acceptance of “core American beliefs about nature and the environment.” For example, the idea of “officially designated wilderness” symbolizes American heritage and distinct American character. The origins of wilderness appreciation trace back to the ideas of transcendentalism with famous authors such as Ralph

Waldo Emerson and John Muir. The ideas of nature-based recreation versus nature-based sustenance may not be present in all cultural groups. Further, American nature-based recreation typically involves individualistic expression which may not be a dominant narrative in all cultural groups.

I intend to expand upon Johnson et al's research of wilderness as an American and socially constructed idea to study the perceptions of values of nature and outdoor experiential education among Kenyan immigrants living in the United States in Lane County, Oregon.

Western Assumptions of Pro-Environmental Values, Knowledge, & Behavior

Head et al., (2019) examine the ways in which environmental values, knowledge, and behavior (EVKB) are influenced by ethnicity and migration. This emergent literature review article suggests that researchers must broaden their conception of "pro-environmental behaviors" and delve into a deeper understanding of how acculturation and structural processes inform environmental thinking and practice to develop culturally appropriate research questions and methodologies in the field of environmental scholarship.

Head et. al., comprehensively track emergent literature on whether EVKB is influenced (or not) by migration and ethnicity, drawing from both quantitative and qualitative research. Head et al., (2019) examine scholarship grounded in

environmental psychology and sociology to understand and measure environmental values. While this literature has increasingly engaged with issues of ethnicity and migration, there has been much less examination of what ‘environment’ means, and ethnicity is hardly mentioned as a variable when studying EVKB. Two recent studies (2013 and 2016) from New Zealand, a country with recent heavy migration, compared the environmental values of immigrants and native-born residents. While one study found immigrants and natives have similar EVKB in regard to nature, another study found that immigrants actually had higher EVKB, with a description of “closer links to the natural environment.” The authors acknowledged complications occur when accounting for ethnicity and migration, such as broad-scale comparisons and accounting for generational change.

The article critically examines western assumptions and logic in research designs and methods and encourages a broadened conceptualization of EVKB. Head et al. uncover five embedded assumptions about the environment in quantitative EVKB research. Firstly, commonly used environmental indicators assume a level of affluence also known as the “affluence hypothesis”. Wealth and consumerism are often equated with pro-environmental behavior such as buying “green products" or measuring the amount of driving and flying, which assumes the ability to drive or fly. This assumption highlights that pro-environmental is often equated with capitalist consumerism, and eco-friendly products and technology. A second assumption is that modernization is necessary for pro-environmental

behaviors, therefore assuming economic growth and environmental protection are always correlated, which is not true. Another primary assumption in environmental research is that migrants must conform to the national norms of the host country. The assumption is that migrants must have the same preference for the natural environment as the native-born residents or else they do not care about the environment. For example, an assumption that a low usage of national parks and conservation areas by migrants implies they do not care about conservation efforts. A fourth assumption is that environmental practices are weaker in the Majority world than the Minority world. A final assumption put forth in this paper is that environmental scholarship and research often assumes a functioning liberal democracy ready to respond to, or shape, public opinion, as evidenced by the frequent reference to policy recommendations.

Unfortunately, the authors do not put forth alternatives to these assumptions, however they reiterate the need to broaden the conceptualization of EVKB and what constitutes “pro-environmental” behaviors by considering current wealth and power structures in place. Building upon western assumptions in logic and research design, the article discusses the process of acculturation as having disruptive or solidifying potential in capturing migrant EVKB.

Acculturation is a “complex, nonlinear, and variable process.” Migrants bring their preferences with them to the host country and build a sense of belonging through the environment. Acculturation, therefore, is the process of adjusting to a new set

of social norms. The article examines the process of change in migrant households using social practice theory and puts forth the concepts of carriage, integration and disintegration, and transferal. These concepts combine and add complexity to understandings of acculturation with regards to EVKB. Carriage is when migrants continue old processes in their new environment (for example, taking bucket baths.) Integration and disintegration are when migrants orient their values in a new context (for example, the preference to dry clothes naturally instead of in a dryer) and transferal is the active transmission of practices across generations (for example, food preparation). The processes of integration, disintegration, and transferal have the potential for (environmental) change through the engagement with different environmental norms. The article calls on scholarship to explore the process of acculturation in contributing to or hindering EVKB.

Head et al. identify three particular ways that emerging literature, much of which has a qualitative bent, is broadening the conceptualization of the environment in EVKB. Several studies have aimed to broaden the practices that constitute “pro-environmental” by studying food systems of ethnic migrants, use of gardens and public spaces, and seeking to understand the non-environmental reasons why people do environmentally beneficial things. The authors argue convincingly that the wilderness imaginary is a western conception, and environmental attitudes are shaped by lived experiences. Therefore, by applying an ethnicity lens, one will find that environmental indicators are culturally loaded (Braun and Sylla

Traore, 2015). Ethnicity has a fluid definition to include race, ancestry, heritage, nationality, cultural norms, and modes of living.

Head et al. provide a compelling case of how western ontologies have dominated what constitutes nature or the environment, and postcolonial scholarship has called for a consideration on how environmental knowledge is influenced by ethnicity, economics, and lived experiences. Head et. al. confirm that research has not sufficiently researched how ethnicity and migration influence environmental values, knowledge, and behavior. Further, research has been dominated by Western thought on what is defined as the environment and sustainable practices. The authors call upon qualitative study to research and track change, or lack of, EVKB for ethnically diverse populations. The authors recommend that scholarship ought to include minority voices, practices, and perceptions of environmental knowledge, values, and behaviors, and the definition of the environment itself. Western EVKB acts as the universalized norm, however scholarship needs to broaden the conception of the environment, and include minority voices, practices, and perceptions of environmental knowledge. Further, Head et al., provide recommendations to rethink current environmental scholarship research methodology and implications. They recommend using qualitative methods to inform surveys of diverse environmental practices, follow-up on quantitative trends from surveys with qualitative analysis, and call on the need for more case studies. Head et al. hope that environmental

scholarship will tap into the capacity of migrants to contribute to current environmental thinking and scholarship.

Head et al. examine quantitative literature on EVKB, primarily surveys, and have made several recommendations regarding the relationship between EVKB and ethnicity and migration. Firstly, scholarship ought to broaden the conceptualization of what constitutes pro-environmental behavior. Further, there is a need to explore the process of acculturation as a solidifying or disruptive force in regard to EVKB, and scholarship also ought to address methodological challenges and important considerations for future research. The authors present a compelling case that scholarship ought to include minority voices, practices, and perceptions of environmental knowledge, values, and behaviors, and the definition of environment itself. Head et al. have based their conclusion primarily on research conducted on migrants in New Zealand, there is a gap with respect to Africans in North America. I intend to use the framework presented in this article to address perceptions of the environment and the benefits of outdoor experiential education for East African immigrants in North America.

Environmental Education & Intersectionality

Scholars across disciplines grapple with issues of intersectionality, including scholars of environmental education. Maina-Okori et. al., (2018) grapple with issues of intersectionality in a critical literature review through examining literature in ecofeminism, queer pedagogy, and indigenous/decolonizing

perspectives. The authors explore how intersectional identities (for example: class, race, sexuality, gender, and ability) are addressed (or failed to be addressed) in environmental education, and consequently describe the need for an intersectional approach to address disparities in environmental education programs. This examination brings important attention to the parallels of oppression in various forms and calls on intersectionality to act as a fusing process between multiple dimensions of social relations.

Initially, the authors examined how colonial impacts on communities have influenced environmental education. The authors provide a compelling example of how East African communities encounter social and environmental issues that are formed due to the interconnections between colonialism, capitalism, and related social and environmental crises. These issues are further exacerbated by the colonial prescriptions of what was, and continues to be, taught in schools, how it is taught, and why it is taught. Unfortunately, the article does not provide specific insight into these teachings, and merely informs the reader that it is problematic. The authors provide a compelling case that East African people have departed from historically sustainable lifestyles to embody more individualistic and consumerist tendencies and thus have contributed to unprecedented environmental and social chaos. In Kenya, for example, matriarchal societies were dismantled by colonial structures that shifted gender roles to women staying confined to their homes and while men moved to the cities to look for paid work.

The article proceeds to critically examine ecofeminism. Ecofeminism recognizes and makes linkages between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature (Shiva, 2010), and suggests that although women are often more likely to be involved in environmental protection, they are underrepresented in decision-making processes. Ecofeminism focuses on the relationship between gender and ecological justice; and cautions against romanticizing nature and perpetuating current hierarchical relationships. Building upon ecofeminism, scholarship on queer pedagogy calls for deeper examination of dominant identities within environmental education research, therefore challenging heteronormative assumptions about identities and allowing for better inclusion of all voices. This is relevant to the field of outdoor education as this is a male-dominated field and the involvement of women has often led to women being labeled as lesbians regardless of their sexual orientation. This aggression perpetuates non-heterosexual sexual orientation as derogatory, and failure to address such aggressions perpetuates oppression and forces women and men toward “socially acceptable” categories and roles of heteronormativity. Queer pedagogy also challenges the assumption of physician ability in environmental education and further questions global capitalism and neoliberalism values. Therefore, the authors argue convincingly that queer pedagogy is able to disrupt gender, physical ability, and socioeconomic expectations in order to allow for more authentic expressions of environmental educators and learners. The article also examines scholarship surrounding indigenous and decolonizing perspectives,

and finds that pedagogy is intricately connected to place, which includes not only geographic territory but also the inhabitants of that territory. The authors conclude that place-based education can help learners reflect on the histories of their neighborhoods to foster better relations with Indigenous peoples and the land; the histories, knowledge, and experiences of Indigenous peoples, including women, need to be incorporated in teaching and research in environmental education.

Maina-Okori emphasizes how work in environmental justice has expanded to consider broader, intersectional concepts such as who is welcomed and feels safe on the land based on gender, sexuality, race, ability, or other social categories. Some scholars have suggested that, in order to address these environmental injustices, people of color (including women of color) need to be included in decision-making processes. Land-based education emphasizes the need to situate environmental education within students' surroundings, holding explicit conversations on the oppressions that have been located in those places (Braun, Hall, Holmes, and Kirk, 2021). African women (and other Indigenous women) often are in tune with their land through knowledge that has been passed down through several generations, and they argue that such Indigenous knowledge should be taught in schools. Further, they purport that students should learn about the contradictory nature of Western and Indigenous knowledge systems and how the two can be reconciled to contribute to sustainable practices. From a colonial perspective, land and the colonized

(mostly Indigenous peoples) are considered part of nature and consequently objects and commodities of capitalism. As an alternative, Maina-Okori suggests drawing from an African-centered approach to a place that “promotes an integrative view of nature and people that stresses interrelation and interconnection with the land and its histories”. Maina-Okori et al. make a compelling case that teaching and learning from the environment involves learning with all the senses and fostering a deep understanding of the intersection of all forms of oppression whether directed against humans or the natural environment generally.

Maina-Okori et al. discuss how an intersectional approach is able to address disparities in environmental and sustainability education. Maina-Okori et al. call for a broadening of environmental education to include Black feminist and Indigenous approaches, a refocus on social justice and Indigenous knowledge systems that address sovereignty and entail a land-based approach to education. As such, we need to value Indigenous peoples as authentic knowledge holders and producers and explicitly draw on Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing in our work. The authors argue that the goal is collaboration. Maina-Okori et. al. concludes with stating that unfortunately in today’s society, almost all transactions are subjected to a cost-benefit analysis as a dominant way of thinking. The authors urge for scholarship to examine the social, ecological, and economic issues that can help to inform a critical and inclusive conceptualization of environmental education to reveal equitable and sustainable solutions. The

authors warn that environmental education runs the risk of perpetuating dominant ideologies and further marginalizing and silencing diverse voices and issues if this is not made a priority within environmental education and environmental justice work. The article concludes powerfully by stating that intersectional activist-oriented research can and will play a critical role in helping to develop strategies for students, educators, and community partners to gain agency in making a difference in their own and others' lives

Maina-Okori set out to find how intersectionality is addressed in environmental education. They identify scholarship surrounding environmental education as having omitted voices of women, people with disabilities, sexual minorities, indigenous communities, and non-Western people. The authors encourage researchers to be mindful of their "pedagogical blind spots" and to incorporate indigenous perspectives in environmental education. The authors describe issues of environmental education in the context of East Africa and indigenous communities in the USA, but they do not specifically discuss Africans in North America. I hope to build on this framework to include the voices of East African immigrants in the discussion of environmental education, and further, inquire about the benefits and barriers to outdoor experiential education. Through this endeavor, I intend to contribute to the work being done in environmental justice to broaden the intersectional concepts of who is welcomed and feels safe on land, and how to include underrepresented voices. Even further, I hope to shine light upon East African knowledge of land that has been passed down through

generations that contradict Western assumptions of nature in order to contribute to reconciliation and sustainable practices.

African Environmentalism

African environmentalism also includes protecting not only indigenous species, but indigenous spirit. There is an interdependence with the natural world and humans which challenges the nature and culture binary imposed by colonialism. Caminero-Santangelo (2014) asserts that African environmentalism encompasses a return to traditional knowledge and a reconnection with land. Caminero-Santangelo explores global environmental justice and political ecology to explain how Africa may be thought of as different from other parts of the world due to its history with imperialism and current relationship with globalization. The book explores literary texts from various African writers from Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa including Ken Saro-Wiwa and Wangari Maathai. The book displays how African writing encompasses multi voiced, open approaches to environmental consciousness and writing. Environmental justice in Africa extends beyond protecting the pastoral narrative to encompass a social transformation towards meeting human needs and enhancing the quality of life for people. Regionalism and ethics of place ought to be considered when discussing environmental justice in Africa.

Kenyan Environmental Justice: A Call for Environmental Education

The way nature and the outdoors are thought of varies by person, place, and culture. Culture and home country become an important component when studying access and barriers to outdoor experiential education and environmental education (which are treated as interchangeable for the purpose of this study) for African and East African immigrants and diaspora members living in North America, specifically in Oregon, USA. Before one can try to understand the barriers for East African community members to participate in outdoor or environmental education, one must first seek to understand perceptions and experiences of environmental justice.

Willett (2015) describes environmental justice as the connection between structural inequalities and environmental degradation. While environmental justice literature and scholarship is vast, it mostly centers on developed countries. This phenomenological and ethnographic study takes place in Jam City which is a community in Nairobi, Kenya. The study explains how a lack of resources perpetuates injustice and contributes to disparate harms. The study concludes with the recommendation of increasing focus on environmental justice in curriculum, research, and practice. Willett explains how victims of environmental injustice are typically victims of other injustices as well. These marginalized communities, however, do not often have a voice in the dialogue of environmental risks and hazards. In the context of Kenya, 40 million people live in poverty, and it has one of the highest population growth rates in the world. Kenya's environment has been abused since colonization, due to the quest for

natural resources and the implementation of export-systems. Clean water and solid waste management continue to be issues for urban and rural Kenyans today. This study used an Advisory Board as their sample population, consisting of poor Kenyans who have been affected by environmental problems. The members were young men from the Kamba ethnic group who are the fifth largest ethnic group in Kenya. The Kamba face exclusion and marginalization on a daily basis in Kenya. The data was collected through phenomenological and ethnographic methods including field notes, ethnographic interactions, observations, and formal semi-structured interviews on the topic of environmental degradation. The data was further coded for qualitative themes. Pertinent themes included flash flooding, secondary effects of environmental degradation, and underlying forces of power. The study calls upon social work and community leadership to support an environmental justice movement. Willett contributes to the scholarship on environmental justice in an international context and establishes that lacking resources perpetuates environmental degradation and environmental justice can be promoted through focusing on environmental education. This article proves significant because environmental education is important both in the context of Kenya but also in the context of the USA and should be promoted holistically.

Environmental Education and Post-Colonial Theory

Definitions of the environment vary by time, place, and culture. As noted above, the narrative of what constitutes the environment has been dominated by

Western thought. African perceptions of the environment have been described to include people, place, and spirit. Building upon Caminero-Santangelo's call for a reconnection with land (from home country), Kayira (2015) studies how environmental education can contribute to this reconnection with land, and further makes recommendations on how to improve environmental education in (southern) Africa based on removing Western assumptions and ways of knowing in regard to the natural environment (Kayira, 2015.) Kayira presents an extensive literature review of existing research in environmental education in Southern African contexts that have grounded their work in a postcolonial theoretical framework. The author highlights the value of non-Western ways of knowing, as education systems continue to be grounded by Western viewpoints. The article provides a potent history of how colonialism in Africa continually justified the subjugation of the Indigenous peoples, as European countries partitioned the continent of Africa with little or no consideration to the preservation of ethnic, social, religious, cultural or political unity of the affected regions and peoples in the 1880s. One of the implications for education was that colonial education undermined traditional societies, and shifted values from African communal customs to Western individualism. Traditional African education encompassed African humanism, The concept of African humanism is rooted in lived dependencies and traditional values of mutual respect for one's fellow kinsmen, and it is embedded in the sub-Saharan African worldview of Ubuntu. Ubuntu/uMunthu values interdependence and community and is found in proverbs from various African communities. Kayira makes a convincing argument

that environmental education ought to be grounded in ancient African traditions such as Ubuntu/uMunthu. The author admits that Indigenizing African education systems has its own set of problems such as only including taboo or negative Indigenous practices, therefore further contributing to subjugation of Indigenous knowledge. Further, Kayira acknowledges that Indigenous knowledge is dynamic, contextual, and embedded in cumulative experiences of people and should not be treated as static. The paper discusses the implications of postcolonial theory and environmental education. Postcolonial theory focuses on rethinking structural barriers based in Western ideologies that are assumed to be universal, and challenges dominant, Western ways of seeing. Postcolonial theory calls for rejecting practices of power that divide into binaries such as superior and inferior. Postcolonial theory allows space for disenfranchised and marginalized groups to produce alternatives to dominant discourses, and even allow for liberation from colonial imposition. The author warns against universalizing history and experiences in postcolonial endeavors and suggests allowing for a new space for new possibilities. Kayira reviews studies conducted in southern Africa that are grounded in a postcolonial framework Through their review, the authors uncovered that Indigenous knowing is marginalized in most African education systems, however a third space that combines Indigenous knowing and Eurocentric science can be created to integrate worldviews and knowledge. The author warns that English as a dominant mode of communication can suppress cultural knowledge and tradition, institutions appropriate and displace Indigenous knowledges,

Western nations continue to impose their cultural and economic standards on developing countries, therefore contributing to the marginalizing voices of African community members. African humanism and indigenous knowledge are able to act as pillars to a postcolonial analysis of environmental education in Southern Africa. Scholars in southern Africa are trying to reverse the relationship between education and Indigenous ways of knowing. Kayira asserts that there is a need for postcolonial framing for environmental education in southern Africa as a counter-hegemonic frame of analysis. The author warns of the danger of a single story and calls on the need for more research with postcolonial frames. I hope to contribute to the scholarship combining Indigenous knowing and Eurocentric science.

Conclusion

The benefits of nature and outdoor education are undeniable, and all people ought to have access to such opportunities. Unfortunately, African voices have been excluded from academic research and scholarship. With my research project, I hope to interject the current academic narrative to include voices of East Africans about their definitions and perceptions of the environment. My study operates on the basis that environmental education and research should not be dominated by Western viewpoints. I intend to avoid this pitfall through seeking to uplift the voices of East African community members to share their perspectives and experiences with the environment. Further, I hope to analyze

information put forth by members of the East African community to provide recommendations to scholarship regarding culturally responsive methods to environmental education.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

To answer my research questions, I conducted ten semi-structured interviews; five with Kenyan parents living in Lane County, Oregon who are part of the immigrant and diaspora community, and five summer camp staff members from Camp Fire Wilani.

This study was designed to elicit narratives from parents to understand and compare their values and beliefs about nature and their perceptions of barriers and opportunities for mitigation of those barriers. This study focused on Kenyan immigrants due to Kenya's history of environmentalism. The Greenbelt Movement, based in Nairobi, Kenya, was founded by Wangari Maathai in 1977 - Wangari Maathai has empowered communities in Kenya - and at a global level - to plant trees, learn how to govern themselves, and become engaged with civic and environmental education (Maathai, 2003). Further, this study intended to study narratives of summer camp staff to glean their experiences and perceptions of inclusion and accessibility in outdoor experiential education. This study is ground-breaking and makes original contribution because no previous research has combined summer camp staff and immigrant parent perspectives. This study will provide rich qualitative insight by introducing immigrant parent perspectives into the scholarly literature. Further, this study will use the original insights gained from the interviews to make recommendations for creating a more inclusive environment for outdoor experiential education based on

qualitative evidence and through challenging dominant western constructions of nature.

This study employs a post-colonial theoretical framework, and a social justice methodological framework. As Creswell (2015) notes, a social justice design framework advocates advancing the needs of a marginalized group (Creswell, 2015.) This study could also be classified as a phenomenology study, as described by Creswell, for it is “an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group” (Creswell, 2015). The fundamental goal for phenomenological research is for participants to first-handedly describe the nature of a phenomenon (or multiple phenomena) that they are experiencing. According to Maxwell (2013), phenomenology has roots in psychology, education, and philosophy to extract the “purest” form of the participant’s first-hand experience (Maxwell, 2013.) This approach allowed the voices and experiences of East African parents to be conveyed in scholarly and academic literature.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted during June 2020 and October 2020 in Lane County, in the state of Oregon. The research was qualitative in nature based on semi-structured interviews in which the researcher collected, analyzed, and interpreted data.

Sampling and Recruitment

Qualitative sampling is when the researcher purposefully selects participants who can best provide insight into the central phenomenon that is being explored (Creswell, 2015.) This study was approved to conduct virtual research by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Oregon from May 2020-June 2021. I obtained written and oral Informed Consent from each participant before the interview began. Each interview was one-on-one and lasted anywhere from forty-five minutes to one hour. All identities have been anonymized and strict confidentiality has been maintained throughout the entire process.

Primary Data Collection

East African parent participants were recruited using purposive sampling with snowball starts through networks I developed from my professional experience with the East African community in Eugene, Oregon. All participants spoke English, and the researcher did not require any translation services. I asked the participants a set of predetermined questions (see Appendix for list of questions) but also allowed them space to focus on specific items that they felt passionate about. Kenyan parent demographics are provided below:

Parent/Age/# Kids/ Age(s)

Mama Lulu - Age 41 - Two children (11 and 17)

Mama Waridi - Age 32 - One child (7)

Baba Fungo - Age 55 - Two children (22 and 25)

Baba Rahimu - Age 33 - One Child (2)

Mama Johari - Age 28 - One child (1)

During Spring 2020, I virtually interned with Camp Fire Wilani. During this internship, I developed staff training materials, as well as a curriculum for a “teen camp” for campers ages 13-17. No interviews were conducted with campers, nor with any other minors, but my firsthand experiences at camp provide valuable information regarding inclusion practices as they are implemented in camp programming. It was through this internship that I was able to establish relationships with summer camp staff from Camp Fire. The first step in interviewing summer camp staff was obtaining permission from the Director of Camp Fire Wilani. After obtaining permission from the Director of Camp Fire, I reached out to summer camp staff via email to schedule a virtual interview over Zoom. Camp Counselor demographics are provided below:

Name/Age:

Camp Counselor Sunshine - Age 29

Camp Counselor Soil - Age 28

Camp Counselor River - Age 23

Camp Counselor Fern - Age 24

Camp Counselor Berry - Age 26

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed, and then coded for themes in an iterative process. Initial analysis was based on responses to direct interview questions (for example: parent experiences in nature, value of nature for children, accessibility, barriers, and inclusion. Additional themes arose inductively through repeated readings of the transcripts and listening to interview recordings (see appendix for themes.) The researcher used Dedoose to organize themes and find patterns. The researcher chose to present findings in narrative form in order to give as much voice as possible to the participants, using direct quotes whenever possible.

Potential Limitations of Study

Study was limited to the small size of the sample. Due to the coronavirus pandemic and restrictions imposed by the IRB, it was uncharacteristically difficult to recruit a broader population that was willing and able to participate in this virtual study. Another aspect is that due to the coronavirus pandemic, I was unable to establish firm and sturdy community relationships with the broader East African community in Eugene prior to conducting this research study.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH RESULTS

Reported Findings: Kenyan Parents

Parents were asked about their experience in nature, whether formal or informal. They were asked if they have memories of spending time in nature with their family growing up, and if they learned anything from this time spent in nature. They were asked about what happens when a child spends time in nature, and what they think happens if a child does not get to spend time in nature. They were asked if they would send their children to summer camp, and if they had any concerns or reservations about sending their children to camp. They were asked what they hope will happen if they send their child to summer camp. They were asked if summer camp is accessible to them, and what could make it even more accessible. They were asked if they think their children spending time in nature is good for their African culture and what changes they hope to see young people make for the environment.

Parent Experiences in Nature Growing Up/in Kenya

Parents were asked if they could tell the researcher about their experiences in nature, whether formal or informal. They were also asked if they had any memories of spending time in nature with their family when they were growing up, and if they learned anything from this time spent in nature. The following themes emerged as important in the parent participants' discussions of their experiences in nature in Kenya while they were growing up: Agriculture, Chores,

and Living in Nature in Unity/ Nature as Identity and Indigenous Knowledge/ Adventure, Exploration, Wildlife, and Safaris. I will explore each below, illustrated by relevant excerpts from the transcripts. (More complete excerpts are available in the appendix for context.)

I. Agriculture, Chores, and Living in Nature in Unity

Parents chose to describe their experiences of agriculture and chores when asked to describe their time spent in nature growing up. They describe nature as a place where they lived, rather than somewhere they needed to seek. Parents commented upon the sense of unity and connection they used to feel when they spent time in nature growing up in Kenya. Further, parents equated time spent in nature as time spent learning valuable life skills.

Mama Johari shares her memories of doing chores and work in the village at her grandmother's house, "Moments when I was growing up, we spent time in the village which is again eight and a half hours from the city, with my grandparents. And a lot of being in the village means you spend a lot of time in nature because there is not a lot of, there is no, at that point there was no electricity so what are you doing inside? That is what my grandparents would say because there is no TV, no radio, there is nothing really to keep you indoors. Cooking was outside. And there are a lot of chores to do so for example, we were required to go to the garden and plant crops or harvest or do something or herd the animals. Just continue to do activities outside which were regarded as work, housework. So,

for me a lot of that helped me. I like to compare it to camping because I learned a lot of life skills outside like how to start a fire, how to get water from the river and bring it back home, how I herd animals, how to kill chickens and stuff like that for food. So, you get something from the farm all the way to the table. It's not like you go to the supermarket and buy something. So that was one of the most important skills that I learned from spending time in nature. And then the values. I think again this is something I would compare to being outdoors in the United States but even more because I was learning a lot more from being in nature because everything had a lesson to learn, going to the garden you are learning how to work the land and you seeing are plants grow from just seeds all the way to these big trees or fruitful plants on your table, you are carrying water for miles or two or four to bring it home so you learn how to appreciate water and how important water is. So, you don't waste it. Yes, there is unity. We would walk in a group of five to ten kids, and you are carrying water in these cans, we call them jerry cans. And you would sing all the way from the well to the house and just sing a kind of group with a sense of unity and togetherness. And at the end of the day you kind of feel accomplished because you have done a day's work and seen the fruits of that work by being put on the table and you are rewarded at the end of the day with good food and when it is time to relax, everybody is sitting around the fire, singing songs and rejoicing at the end of the day, dancing or just that sense of accomplishment for that day. So, it kind of taught me how to live day by day. And take each day for what it was."

Mama Johari was raised in an urban area, and therefore she considered nature to be visiting her grandmother in the village. Mama Johari emphasizes the sense of unity and togetherness she experienced during these visits, as well as the life skills she developed through agricultural practices.

Baba Fungo shared stories of running around in the village and playing with other kids when asked to describe his time spent in nature as a child. He explained the simplicity of the availability and ubiquity of nature when he was growing up in Kenya, “Nature was there. It was right there. So, it wasn't like we were planning to go places unless we were going to a national game park as a school or church trip. Nature was where we lived. It wasn’t something we had to make special arrangements to do.”

Baba Rahimu shares his experience with nature in Kenya, and how this was an integral part of his upbringing as he spent a great deal of time playing in the natural environment as a child, and his father owned a safari business. “I actually have a lot of experience with that because back in Kenya, I grew up in the countryside. Basically, everything from herding cattle to swimming to playing with my friends in natural settings and things like that. Those are all parts of who I was in Kenya.”

Baba Fungo and Baba Rahimu both emphasize how nature was not a place they needed to make special arrangements to go to, but nature was simply where

they were, providing a clear counterexample to Nash's definition of wilderness mentioned in Chapter Two.

II. Nature as Identity and Indigenous Knowledge

Mama Waridi recalls memories of learning African indigenous knowledge of plants, animals while spending time in nature as a child, "If I was to remember back traditionally, the African community were so protective of their environment. They had sacred trees, sacred plants, plants that you cannot cut, and trees that were special. They had religious meaning and stuff. I feel like those are things that are going away with modernization and stuff. I feel like we need to go back a little where we appreciate our trees more. Being an African, I remember we used to use herbs for medicine and those are some of the things that are fading away. They are fading away. Because I remember for example people like my grandfather would give us this tree when we got sick and stuff, it was being passed from one generation to another. The chain broke. I don't think my brother knows which tree it was, but my dad knows. So, they used to pass it down, it was like a family tree. They will pass it from one generation to another. But because of modernization and urbanization, some of these things are fading away."

Mama Waridi emphasizes the importance of sacred plants as sacred knowledge, and how these practices are declining due to modernization and urbanization of natural spaces in Kenya.

Mama Lulu explains how nature is a part of who she is, “I come from Kenya, and I grew up in a certain environment, you know? Surrounded by nature, lots of nature, and I love it. I love nature.” In this statement, Mama Lulu implies her love of nature is a result of the environment she grew up in. She did not expand more upon this, as she continued on to her experiences in nature in the United States, particularly in the state of Oregon.

III. Adventure, Exploration, Wildlife, and Safaris

Mama Waridi associates her time spent in nature as a child with adventure and curiosity - such as exploring wildlife while visiting Lake Nakuru National Park. Mama Waridi described her time in nature as a child with her family in Kenya, “Oh. Kenya happens to be a very nice place that has so much nature in it. And there are so many nice trees, indigenous trees, there is a variety of animals and stuff. So, I think almost all the time during summer or during long holidays we would travel to the park. We would go to places like Lake Nakuru National Park to see animals like the flamingos. We would also go to the beach. I have camped a few times when I was in high school, I was a scout, so I went camping with the girls. And yeah, it was fun. Yeah, the times we went to Lake Nakuru we would go as a family. I think Lake Nakuru was like our place. We would go most of the time and it was close to our home. So, we would go together, look at the animals and stuff, take pictures, eat out, and it was so much fun. We would look forward to those days when we would go to Lake Nakuru National Park. And we kept on monitoring the level of the water. Lake Nakuru National Park is in the Rift Valley.

I don't know if you know what a rift valley is, it's the longest rift valley in the world. So, Lake Nakuru is just on the rift valley, and we would go to check how the water has gone, like because of global warming and stuff. The water keeps drying up and stuff like that. So, we would be like, ‘Last time when we were here, this place had water but now it does not’ So it was a fun moment and seeing animals. Looking at buffalos, I remember when we were just crossing and then we would see things like giraffes, we would feed them. And then we had an experience with baboons and monkeys. Like at the entrance of the park they show you baboons and monkeys in the trees so if you are not careful, they can grab something from you. So, I remember there was this day that we were just in the car waiting to get in, and then I accidentally opened the window, and I was holding something. I can't remember if it was a banana or what it was, before I knew it, it was gone. So those are like crazy nice moments.”

In this excerpt, Mama Waridi is describing time spent in nature as times when she traveled with her family to a place, therefore making special arrangements to go into nature, for recreation. She describes these experiences as filled with adventure and exploration which is similar to the western concept of visiting nature. This quote also emphasizes that nature was not only used for agricultural practices, but some Kenyan parents embraced visiting designated “natural areas” in Kenya.

Baba Rahimu's father owned a safari business which was an integral part of his upbringing as a child, "My family back in Kenya actually owns a safari business, so nature is a part of my livelihood. Basically, my daddy made money in the natural environment, and that is how we survived in my home. So, nature has been a part of me big time. Nature is really something that is very close and dear to me. Like I said, it's been economically beneficial to me, and it is something that I like for serenity and beauty." Baba Rahimu emphasizes here that nature was used for the livelihood of his family and was an integral part of their survival.

Parent Experiences in Nature in USA

Two prominent themes emerged as important in the parent participants' discussions of their experiences in nature in Oregon: Fresh Air, Beauty, and Exploration of Nature and To Camp or Not to Camp. I will explore each below, illustrated by relevant excerpts from the transcripts. (More complete excerpts are available in the appendix for context.)

I. Fresh Air, Beauty, and Exploration of Nature

Each parent described the sense of beauty, freshness, and abundance they experienced in nature when they came to Oregon. It is important to note that these Kenyan parents are coming to a very different environment than their home country which may contribute to their sense of wonder.

Mama Johari shares her experiences in nature since coming to Oregon and expands on the beautiful hikes she has been on, “The first hike I did was, I think up Spencer's Butte. I think it was such a Zen moment for me. I hiked the two-hour hike, and it was strenuous, but it was such a Zen moment when I got to the top because after all this hard work of trying to get to the top, and then the view was just gorgeous. Watching the sunset was amazing. The fresh air up there, the air is so far different than the way it is down below. So, I felt immersed in the nature and one with nature at that point which was amazing. Then it kind of encouraged me to go on more hikes. So, I hiked the Blue Pool and I hiked Silver Falls, another long hike. So, I have kind of enjoyed that kind of experience being in the trees and walking around the riverside to this beautiful destination.”

Mama Johari emphasizes that she has never felt before what she felt when she came hiked in the United States, and this encouraged her to seek out more experiences in nature in the United States.

Mama Waridi explains how her relationship with nature changed in the United States, as she became more aware of the abundance and beauty of nature rather than taking it for granted. She explains, “Until I came here, I couldn't imagine having a tree or plant inside my house. Unless it's a flower. But I see here people are taking plants, having them close to their bed, it looks so special. I feel like that is something that we grow up with in the environment and we grow up with nature, and it's part of us and we forget that it is so special. We forget

that it does something for us in our lives, we just take it for granted. Yeah, and I think when you see other people appreciating it, you are like okay these are things I just assume. I don't know whether I am communicating. But sometimes you have things with you, and you forget that they are even there. They are so natural. I think that is one thing people back at home don't have. We live in nature so much that we forget that it is there."

Mama Waridi emphasizes that her perceptions of habits of nature changed when she came to the United States, and she developed a deeper sense of reverence, awareness, and appreciation for nature.

Baba Rahimu shares how he enjoys recreational time in nature, and has a special liking for the National Parks, "When I came to the United States, I did a lot of hiking when I was in Ohio. I did mountain biking in Ohio too and I also did lots of road tripping. I've driven from Ohio to Seattle three times. And so every time I drive like that, I stop at Yellowstone or I stop at places that are cool and environmentally friendly."

Baba Rahimu, whose father owns a safari business, describes his experiences of adventure and exploration in nature when he came to the United States; his perception of spending time in nature includes adventure and exploration both in Kenya and in the United States.

Mama Lulu shares her love for nature in the United States “Here I live in Eugene; I love the greenery. I love the feeling of being surrounded by trees and flowers, especially in the spring, even though I get allergies. That is another thing that is new to me in the United States. I have never had allergies before in my life but here every spring when the flowers bloom, I get allergies. I hate winter because I don't see green. It is only grey. So, when I see green, I get excited, but I get a pollen allergy. I have a very bad pollen allergy. So yeah, I love green, and I love nature.”

Mama Lulu shares that she enjoys spending time in nature and the natural environment in Lane County, Oregon, even though she has allergies for the first time in her life.

II. To Camp or Not to Camp

Kenyan parents in this study were divided on the topic of camping outdoors. Only one parent, Mama Waridi, had been camping before.

Baba Fungo shares how he and his family enjoy spending time in nature together, “One of things we love as a family here in Oregon is to hike. We don't like camping for some reason as a family. Nobody likes it. My son goes sometimes. I think all of us want to go on a day trip and come back. I have tried, I have gone to Crater Lake and the Sisters and walked up and down. We go to

Mount Pisgah and Spencer Butte.” While this family does not prefer to spend a whole night in the wilderness, they enjoy taking trips together into nature.

Mama Lulu loves nature but does not love camping, “When I came here, I couldn't even imagine going camping. To do what? I can't even imagine the need or the joy of camping. I have never tried it and I don't see it. Why should I go and pitch a tent, and then sleep on the ground in that tent? And then cook food with this little stove and look for some sticks to cook food? And then have mosquito bites and use repellent? No. it is not my way of having fun. I would rather take my walks every day and enjoy nature for what it is but not stay outdoors, you know? I wouldn't mind going to visit somewhere like a river or cottage, but I would live in a cottage, not in a camp, outside in a tent.”

Baba Fungo and Mama Waridi are willing to spend the day in nature and go on hikes, however they are highly disinterested in spending the night outdoors.
On the contrary, Mama Waridi shares how she enjoys camping, “I think I am more of an outdoor kind of person so even in Eugene, I have gone camping at Cottage Grove. So, yeah. And I appreciate nature, I appreciate the trees, the nice scent.” Mama Waridi’s openness to camping is an example of acculturation and integration mentioned in Chapter Two by Head et al.

Parent Perceptions on the Value of Nature for Children

Parents discuss what they believe the value of nature is for children and why spending time in nature is important. The following themes emerged as important in the parent participants' discussions of why nature is important for children: learning and maturation, calming and regulation of the emotions, health and socialization. I will explore each below, illustrated by relevant excerpts from the transcripts. (More complete excerpts are available in the appendix for context.)

I. Learning and Maturation

Parents believe that a great deal of learning and maturation occurs when a child spends time in nature.

Mama Johari shares how a child experiences deep learning and appreciation from spending time in nature, "Oh man. A child experiences a lot of learning, a lot of appreciation, a lot of discipline, in the outdoors. Because as much as nature is beautiful, anything can kill you out there. There are cliffs, trees falling, fires, wildlife. So, you learn how to be cautious first of all. You learn how to use all your senses with nature, and I think that develops an appreciation for it. So, I think awareness, a child gets more aware. They get more grounded naturally because you have to respect nature in order for it to respect you back. So, they get that sense of appreciation for the outdoors."

Here, Mama Johari emphasizes survival skills and environmental appreciation.

Baba Fungo explains how spending time in nature is pivotal for learning and appreciation of nature. “So, I think it's a really big deal that kids grow up to know how things get to the table and to the store. That's one thing. It's ignorance to grow to a certain age without having the respect of how these things get to the store and get to the table. They might look down on the work done by farmers if they don't know how hard farming is. I used to wake up at four in the morning to help in the daily farm before going to school. Kids are missing out on that and the hard work that farming is. And also, how rewarding it is to grow your own food. I can just go to the garden and get a tomato and eat it right now. They will never know the beauty of that and the beauty of achieving something like that...Kids can just learn how to fix things like if they are riding a bike and it breaks down in the middle of nowhere, you are forced to try to fix it yourself rather than having somebody else do this for you. So, I think kids getting their hands dirty gives them an idea that they can fix stuff, right? I know that whenever we go hiking, my kids used to carry a backpack that had everything in it. They would have a knife, a pair of scissors, bandages, food, water, all these things, over prepared. Once we started going out more, that anxiety about going out and what to do if something happened eventually went away. So, it is actually a great experience if kids can learn on their own how things grow, and appreciate the environment more and take care of it. They can see how it's changing. You don't know what your community needs or it is changing if you don't go out.”

Baba Fungo emphasizes the importance of children spending time in nature to develop knowledge and reverence for agricultural practices. On the contrary, Baba Fungo emphasizes that a lack of time in nature can result in ignorance.

Baba Rahimu explains how spending time in nature is about freedom for children, as well as deeper learning, “I think that as a kid you don't think much about them, to be honest with you. It's just the time. It's more freedom, you are not told to stop running into things and you can just do what you want to do. So, it's freedom, right? But as an adult and looking back, kind of retrospectively, I know that there is just something therapeutic about being outside, about exercising you know because you are outside and running, you are literally running the whole time. There's also that, I said, freedom, and that is very important because there is just a field and you can play for acres and acres and miles and just play as long as you keep focus on the time and the responsibilities that you have and then you can run as much as you want. I think that like I said before there is that element of freedom. So that child has a lot of space to play so the space concept. The space concept that there is just so much more space outside. I think also covid is teaching us the importance of the freshness of the air and there is just more circulation outside. The air is free and fresher outside. And I think every space has a different lesson for everybody. So being outside, they make connections. For example, if they see a plane outside then they can make the connection that that is the plane that they saw in their book. They will see that the sky is blue. So, they will see the lessons of nature outside that they

are learning in their book or seeing in the computer. So of course, there is a lot that you can go down the road and point at you know and think that they learn."

Baba Rahimu emphasizes his desire for his child to experience freedom of movement and play in the outdoors, as well as develop the ability to connect lessons from school with the natural environment.

II. Health, Calming, and Regulation of Emotions

Parents described how nature has various benefits for both physical and mental health for children.

Mama Waridi shares how spending time in nature has calming effects on children, and it is also a part of her identity, "I think it's calming, like I don't know. Like in other words I usually say that it is a moment of serendipity."

Mama Lulu discusses how nature is vital to wellness, "Yes, it is very vital, it is very important. Nature gives us so much. So much. There is so much in the natural universe that speaks to us. And speaks to us in terms of health. I love it. That's why I love Eugene. When I take walks in the evening, I love the trees. It's like the leaves are just talking to me and saying, "Be peaceful. Be peaceful." and that's one thing that I love. I believe that the universe speaks to us through the trees, I believe that these trees have a message that is therapeutic. It is important to take advantage of that."

Mama Waridi and Mama Lulu both emphasize mental and emotional health benefits of nature.

Baba Fungo explains how spending time in nature is pivotal for awareness and for physical and mental health, “I also feel like my experience in the US has been that kids' health is affected mentally and physically by just sitting in the house and not able to exercise. One of the things is that you never saw a kid that was obese in Kenya except in the urban areas.”

Baba Fungo, while addressing mental health benefits, also acknowledges the physical benefits of time spent in nature for children.

III. Socialization

Parents describe how spending time in nature promotes socialization among their children and their peers and is particularly beneficial for immigrant children. This idea is also supported by Head et al.’s theory of acculturation mentioned in Chapter Two (Head, 2019.)

Baba Fungo explains how spending time in nature is pivotal for socialization and environmental awareness. “The other thing that is true too is that kids learn how to interact with others, strangers, and the land. If you are not out here looking at what has changed, then you have no appreciation of taking care of nature. If you are out here and you are able to play with the other kids and then you realize you

can't play with other kids because it's too hot or too wet or the area is taken up by development. For example, in Kenya kids would play but all of a sudden, the open field is being grabbed by someone who wants to develop the place. Without that experience, kids won't fight for open spaces because they don't care. It's not a big deal for them...Learning how to interact with others and playing outside with the other kids gave me the idea that we stopped looking at them as different. We realized we are all kids. We all get hungry the same way. We used to share our food, that sharing outside was special."

Baba Rahimu discusses how spending time in nature is important for socialization. "But then if the space is like a jungle gym or something like that, then there is socialization, you know? In the family system, there are only four of us in this home but when we go outside, and her friends are playing outside then she has more friends to play with so there is that socialization aspect."

Baba Fungo and Baba Rahimu emphasize that spending time in nature and playing with other children in nature promotes socialization outside of the home, which is supported by Browne et al. who assert that outdoor experiences have immense capacity to facilitate socialization (Browne, 2019.)

Parent Preferences and Hopes for Summer Camp

Parents were asked if they would send their children to summer camp, and what they hope happens if they do choose to send their child to summer camp. Three

parents said they would absolutely send their child, one parent said they would possibly send their child, and one parent said they would absolutely not send their child. The following themes emerged as important in the parent participants' discussions of their preferences of sending their child to summer camp and what they hope happens if they send their child to camp: Community, Environmental Appreciation, Development, and Independence, and Protection from Discrimination. While these themes are similar to parent's values of nature, these themes are more specific to summer camp and their child. I will explore each below, illustrated by relevant excerpts from the transcripts. (More complete excerpts are available in the appendix for context.)

I. Community

Parents hope that their children will develop a sense of community among their peers at summer camp. Parents in this study shared that they used to spend time with others in nature when they were growing up, and this transfers to the desire for their children to experience community in nature as well.

Mama Johari was hesitant on whether she would or would not send her child to camp, although she recognizes the benefits. When asked if she would send her children to summer camp, Mama Johari said, "I would have to ask other parents because most parents that I have experienced here in the US have sent their kids to summer camps. So I guess it is a crucial part of their kids' learning. It also helps the kid make community with his friends because he is out with his peers,

they learn to spend time together and explore together as peers rather than being under constant supervision of parents. So, I think it's a good opportunity for a child to experience summer camp. I mean I would want my son to experience that, so I am not the parent who is the overbearing mom to the boy, very protective. So, letting him loose, which is what my parents did, they let go of us during the holidays, and they gave us to our grandparents and let us explore on our own."

Baba Rahimu said, "I think just to socialize and have a good time. So, you know, they have some physical engagement of course I know that is a default, they have activities for them and maybe some sort of skill, a new skill. Let's say this summer camp have swimming lessons or some skill. Painting, piano lessons, I don't know. Something cool that she can come and say to daddy I learned how to do this. That will be exciting as well. But from a parent's perspective, not thinking as a scholar, and it's important to be aware of the difference. As a parent I think her safety and not being looked down upon are my biggest concerns. Everything else is neither here nor there, she is a baby, and she is going to play, you know, whatever."

Both Mama Johari and Baba Rahimu highlight that they want their children to socialize with their peers, and to have fun.

II. Environmental Appreciation and Independence

While Kenyan parents in this study share that they want their children to experience community and socialization, they also share that they hope their child builds environmental appreciation and that spending time in nature fosters a sense of independence. In the example below, Mama Johari connects building an appreciation of nature with building a sense of discipline.

Mama Johari shares, “I want him to be independent and have that socialization. I would hope that he learns something, he learns survival skills out in nature, that he would learn how to use all his senses to communicate and how to trust people around him and trust himself. I would hope that he appreciates nature more and that he comes back with a sense of discipline just from experiencing the outdoors.”

When asked if she would send her child to summer camp Mama Waridi said, “Of course.” When asked what she hopes happens when a child attends camp she said, “I want her to experience nature. I want her to appreciate what she sees. I think by sending her to a summer camp, which is something back at home, it happens on school field trips. I think when she interacts with people of her age, she will learn so much. Then when I just interact with her, and I take her out and she sees the environment, I might not know everything. But when she interacts with other people, and there are so many people from different backgrounds and families, there will be so much for her to learn. And I think most of the summer camps, there is usually a voice of authority. Someone who is more informed

about where they are going and stuff like that. So she will learn more than when she is with me. I think if they appreciate nature more, they will appreciate nature more. And they learn not to take things for granted. Like, in my country we have a problem of deforestation. People are cutting down trees. I think if they went out and learned more about the environment and saw how beautiful the environment is and how it helps our community or the world or the globe in general, they will appreciate trees more and they won't cut them down. I want them to harden up. I want them to be independent and I think that is one way of teaching them independence because they will be away from you. They are going to learn how to be on their own."

Mama Waridi shares that by spending time in nature, she hopes her child develops her own individual sense of environmental justice and appreciation. Mama Waridi therefore implies that spending time in nature as a child contributes to future behaviors of environmental protection thus lending support to Louv's nature-deficit-disorder theory (Louv, 2005.)

Mama Lulu said "Yes, they can. My kids are different, they are more different than I because they have grown up here. So, they don't mind the outdoors. My son is out right now on a bike, and he will go to the river with his friends to swim. I don't even swim in the river, but they love it. Compared to me, they love it. They don't mind at all. That's why I am saying that it is cultural. Yeah, especially when it comes to things like camping, I like sending my kids off to camp because they

make friends. I always hope that he has a story to tell. I always hope he will tell us. I am always asking, “What did you watch? What did you see? Mama Lulu begins addressing her concerns and reservations of sending her children to camp when she touches upon the whiteness of camp, and how she wants her children to have multicultural experiences.

Parent Concerns and Reservations of Summer Camp

Parents were asked if they had any concerns or reservations about sending their child to camp, what challenges they thought their child might face, and how they anticipated working with their child to confront those challenges before, during, or after camp. The following themes emerged as important in the parent participants’ discussions of their concerns and reservations about sending their child to camp: concern of homesickness, fear of nature and wildlife, and fear of discrimination, bias, and racism. I will explore each below, illustrated by relevant excerpts from the transcripts. (More complete excerpts are available in the appendix for context.)

I. Concern of homesickness

Another common concern that was revealed throughout the interviews was the worry that children might feel homesick or neglected if they sent them to summer camp.

Mama Johari shared her concerns, “Challenges? Again, this is just, I don't even know if he will have these challenges at all because naturally kids just thrive when they are independent, and they succeed and thrive in situations when they are away from their parents. But some kids don't. They want to be around their parents, and they want the company and supervision of their parents. So, I don't know if he will feel lonely or neglected or feel like I am sending him away and don't want to spend time with him.”

Mama Waridi shares that she is concerned her child will miss her home when she is at camp, “Feeling scared because maybe she is away from her mother and home. So I can just encourage her because I feel like going out of your way and going out with your friends and going away from home will make her more independent.”

II. Fear of Nature and Wildlife

Despite the many positive benefits that parents attributed to outdoor experiences for their children, the parents did not romanticize the wilderness and they also perceived the risks and dangers associated with spending time in the natural environment.

Mama Johari shares, “Just again the unknown. Being out in nature, there are things that can happen that you just can't expect. I think that's why you have to

sign a waiver or something. Because whatever happens in nature, you can't really predict.”

Mama Waridi said her concerns or reservations about sending her child to camp are wildlife and dangers of the outdoors. She said, “ I think of some of the challenges like the ones I've told you about, attacked by wild animals and insects...I will just tell her to be careful but she needs that experience to grow up. Back at home, there are so many snakes! It's a hot country so there are snakes. And it can be unsafe. And I think that's one of the reasons people will be reluctant to send their kids out to summer camp. Because there are wild animals, wild insects like safari ants, there are snakes everywhere. So it can be scary. I used to live in a place that was next to a forest and the forest had monkeys. My baby was four and these things used to freak her out. She would cry. She would cry. They run after her, so she is taller than them, but you know monkeys want to play but she doesn't know they want to play, and they are just chasing her. They really scare her, and she would come home so stressed out and traumatized. She would tell me that she doesn't want to go there because there are so many monkeys. So, I want her to enjoy the experience, not to be traumatized.”

Both Mama Johari and Mama Waridi share that they do not want their child to be traumatized by the outdoors. In addition to the fears of wildlife, often based on very real personal experiences, there was also concern about risks originating in other humans, also often based on very real personal experiences.

III. Fear of Discrimination, Bias, and Racism

Parents in this study hope that their child is protected from discrimination if they attend camp, and are highly concerned about the presence of discrimination, bias, and racism against their children, and the capacity for summer camp personnel to mitigate these situations.

Baba Fungo chose not to send his children to camp for he felt that he could not protect his children from discrimination if they were far away from him, particularly discrimination against immigrants. He hopes that diversity is acknowledged, embraced, and incorporated in the summer camp setting. Baba Fungo, who did not send his children to summer camp, said that his biggest reservations were the lack of diversity in summer camp. He said, “In those kinds of summer camps, I hope that diversity is acknowledged. Sometimes I feel that in these kinds of things, there is a move to make everyone uniform and gloss over the differences of background and race. I think the differences need to be embraced. I think my kids need to go to camp where the fact that they are African is acknowledged, and maybe even incorporated in having young people know diversity. I don’t think not talking about things helps me. Conformity hurts immigrant or minority people. You are told that you should be like this rather than who you are. I would also not want a camp with just immigrant kids because that is advancing separateness. I want kids to go to a mixed camp where these diversities can be celebrated, acknowledged, and incorporated.”

Baba Rahimu attributes his concerns of sending his child to summer camp to a combination of factors: racism against African Americans in the United States, the possibility of African tokenism, and the (in)ability for a (teenage) summer camp counselor to deal with situations of racism, bias, or discrimination.

Baba Rahimu, who acknowledged the importance of summer camp in socialization, shared that his biggest concern was the possibility of his child being discriminated against. “My biggest reservation is being discriminated against. And so, studies have shown repeatedly that black children are punished more, are put in time out more, and thought of delinquents and every bad thing. ADHD, they are put on medications and things like that. So, my biggest reservation is that she goes to camp and when people are taking turns jumping over a pool, I don't know just guessing something, she gets the last chance to jump or before her turn comes, they go to the next activity. Or when she is doing it, she is not being supervised. Especially because the age of camp counselors is that age, I'm sorry to say, but teenagers are just not smart sometimes. And most of them are biased and not even know they are being biased. And it's a problem that I think as a parent I would just be staying up all night and thinking about my baby being in camp and being discriminated against. I also know about tokenism; I don't want her to be tokenized. So, for example they are talking about jumping rope and somebody would say to her like you know this because you are from Africa, something like that. Things that really just sit poorly with me. I know that I am

going into these serious matters because oftentimes as a minority, we don't care about structures and how many stones are there. I don't care how many stones are there, they will play, they are babies, and they will have a good time. They will provide opportunities for them to play, that's not the problem. The problem for me comes from an emotional perspective or a bias perspective, that is where the meat is. I will not stay up late because there are not enough monkey bars. If she is outside, she will have fun, I know who she is. I know the camp always does a good job of having balloons, water sprays, things like that. The part that I think is a problem is, there is a teenage counselor, not knowing how to handle a racist situation, as a supervisor, not knowing how to handle a situation where my kid has been discriminated against. Those are my problems."

Mama Lulu, who has sent her child to summer camp, acknowledges that Lane County is very white and summer camps can be very exclusionary. Mama Lulu shares, "He didn't go to camp this year, he went last year. He didn't go to camp because we went somewhere. And another thing that my son told me is that there is a lot of classism in camps. And there are those groups. There are those kids that group together, there is a lot of grouping. It is very exclusionary. Now another thing like what you mentioned before, another thing about the camps here is that you know Eugene is very white. So last year I took him to camp, and I noticed he is the only black boy in the camp. Or maybe there were two...there were only two black boys in the camp. Of course, that is not comfortable for me, I wish camps were more inclusive you know. That's a problem in Eugene, it is

really really really white. It's so white. Everything is so white. Most experiences here are white, and I want my children to have multicultural experiences. But since Africans are a minority, come to think of it, it would be good for the African communities to organize their own outdoor camps where we teach our children their cultural heritage. We can do storytelling and oral evenings and storytelling so that they know where they come from, and they are proud of their ancestors. It would be a good initiative." Mama Lulu shares that she would be interested in African communities organizing their own summer camps to celebrate their cultural heritage and its unique relationship with the outdoors. The idea of this kind of shift in the culture of summer camp will be discussed in the next chapter.

Parent Perceptions of Accessibility to Summer Camp

Parents were asked if summer camp felt accessible for them, meaning did they feel like there is an emotional and physical ability for their child to attend camp. The following themes emerged as important in the parent participants' discussions of accessibility to summer camp: Diverse Staffing, Community Networks, and Information Availability. I will explore each below, illustrated by relevant excerpts from the transcripts. (More complete excerpts are available in the appendix for context.)

I. Diverse Staffing

Kenyan parents are more likely to send their child to camp if there is diversity among summer camp staff. For example, both Baba Rahimu and Baba Fungo

stated they would prefer to send their child to a summer camp with counselors from minority or historically excluded populations. They prioritized racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity.

In order to make camp more accessible Baba Fungo recommended, “Acknowledging or having staff there that are sensitive to diversity. That's a big deal for me. People who embrace diversity. Immigrant camp counselors, or there is some acknowledgement of people who are multilingual. At the same time, any racial diversity. That's a big deal. In a place like Oregon, it is very much dominantly white. But there are people who are not white in Oregon and it's a good thing to have those people in the recruitment of students attending and in the staff. That sounds like are we going to make it all representative? Not really. But talking about equity versus equality, you do want to make an effort towards affirmative action. A deliberate effort to get some equity, not just equality”.

Baba Rahimu said, “On top of that, those issues of diversity, equity, and that kind of stuff. It is important for me, and I think it's important for my child as well. So, for example there needs to be a counselor of minority status because I truly believe that minorities tend to see things differently. I honestly think that my biggest reservations are not physical and not intellectual because she is smart, and I know she is physically capable.”

II. Community Networks

Kenyan parents reported that they were more likely to encourage their child to attend a summer camp if someone they knew other parents who were sending their kids to the same camp or had sent their child to the camp previously. In other words, a personal connection, rather than the abstract idea of “camp” and its presumed benefits, was most important to their decision. In order to choose a camp, Kenyan parents in this study shared that they would ask for recommendations from people that they already know.

Mama Johari points out that she does not feel the need to send her child to summer camp every summer, as there are plenty of people to do activities in nature with, and she feels that there are plenty of opportunities in proximity to her. However, she does see some unique benefits of camp that would complement nature opportunities that are closer to home. Mama Johari shared, “But I feel like I would do summer camp every other year. That way I could explore the outdoors with him too. He can learn from me. In the way of transportation or proximity. It's pretty close, everything is close by. And then I have family or friends that also appreciate the outdoors, so it's easy to get people ready to go outside to walk or go hike or let's go to the ocean and relax, let's go to a park. So there is a community to do it with.”

Mama Lulu acquired referrals for summer camps from members of the African community in Lane County, conducted due diligence, and intentionally looked for camps that seemed multicultural. Mama Lulu explained, “So I look at what other

parents are saying. Sometimes I get referrals from other parents. When I came here, I found an African community that is strong and I will ask them what camps they have sent their kids to, which ones they liked and didn't like, and then I will go look at their reviews, pictures, and videos. I will see what values they stand for, and yeah, I have to vet. I really vet the camp because I think I am very overprotective when it comes to my children. I am overprotective. So, I really vet the camps that they go to. My sons play basketball and sometimes they have basketball camps, so we are like family with the basketball team and other players. We have people from different backgrounds, that one is good. The basketball camps are multicultural."

Consistent with the recognition that camp had unique benefits but also posed risks, parents were careful in their choice of camp, even after they had made the decision to consider it for their child.

III. Information Availability

This availability and transparency of information is a necessary element of accessibility for Kenyan parents in this study. Kenyan parents require information about the camp and all people involved are easily accessible, accurate, and accountable. In order for summer camp to feel accessible, Mama Waridi must have vital information about the camp. Mama Waridi said, "But I still need to know who will be in charge. I have questions. who will be in charge, I want to know what they do, what their history is, I want my child to feel safe. I also need

to know who the kids are going there. I would maybe ask the organizers. So, what type of people are being invited? I need to know their demographics. I don't want my kid to interact with bullies. I hate to say it. I don't want her to interact with people who might corrupt her. First I need to know where they are going, is the place safe? Like if it is back at home, there are places where there are elephants and places that have wild animals. I want to know if my kid is safe."

Baba Rahimu said, "I would have to do a lot of research about the camp. Like I told you, while I believe there are a lot of good people in the United States, there are also many twisted people in the United States. There are stories about summer camps just being a cesspool of badness and counselors are terrible people and things like that. I would have to really do my research and intensive research, but I think because I am a father now, my perspectives of trusting people have changed. And also, really there is just a lot in the news so i am just really not trusting of situations like that. So, I just think that from a parent's perspective, maybe when they get older my perspective will change, but I just feel like I will have to do intensive research about the facility. I think it really needs to be like a watertight structure. A watertight, maybe airtight, I don't know which word to use. An airtight structure whereby there is a lot of supervision and accountabilities. So, there are camp counselors but there are people who are looking at the camp counselors at a regular rate. So it can't just be 17 year old's and 18 year old's looking after babies the whole time, right? There are the camp counselors but then there are senior people, and the senior people need to be

hands on, also I need to be able to show up anytime I want because there's nothing to hide. So, what is the problem? I can show up anytime I want. I can see my baby and make sure she is okay. Now these things might change down the road as they become more adult but those are just the ideas I'm thinking right now.

Mama Lulu elaborated on the need for research, especially pertaining to race and possible discrimination, but stressed how that alone was not enough, and she needed to also speak with staff firsthand about her concerns, "And anyway before my son goes off to camp, I really have to vet the camp. I have to do my research about the camp and look at the reviews, and then I will call the office and I'll talk to them, and I'll tell them yes my son is coming and he is not white, he is black. He is a black boy and I just want him to feel at home and welcome and included, not excluded. And I don't want him to feel sympathy, we don't want sympathy. I just want him to feel like he is an equal like the rest, not to be judged by the color of his skin. And they have to give me that assurance. And so if he goes to camp then yeah. I have to make sure he is having fun. And my son is open, if he is having a problem then he will let me know."

Summer Camp, Camping, and Culture

For the parents in this study, the idea of nature was not divorced from the human dimension, especially the cultural aspects of their experiences and identities, and their relationships with nature, not just nature in the abstract. Each parent shared

their individual perspective on how their culture influences their connection to nature, and if they believe summer camp can connect their children to their culture.

Mama Johari believes East Africans need exposure to nature when they arrive here in order to develop an interest, and to see other East Africans in the outdoors. Mama Johari contrasted her experiences in nature in Oregon to her experiences in Kenya and shared that they are incomparable. She said, “I have not had the same experience before. I would compare that to a safari so driving through the national parks and wildlife reserves. It's hours and hours of just savannah land, green grass, and you are in a car, you can't really get out, because there is danger of wildlife but it kind of gives you that feeling of being one with nature even though you are in a car. I think that's the closest I have been. I wouldn't even say it's anything close to actually walking, you know? Feeling the breeze and being in the trees, I wouldn't compare it. Yes, it's not the same. I guarantee I have never felt what I felt when I hiked here in the us. The air is clean and fresher. The sounds, the birds, all these natural elements come to play and I guarantee I never experienced that before. So when East Africans came here, I would say they need exposure and people here and natives here need to create opportunities for us to explore the lands and explore nature here. My sister and I were pretty excited to be one with the outdoors, but not many East Africans are enthusiastic about taking long walks or hiking or going on these long hikes. They just want to sit home and stay indoors. For example, my dad

hates the cold. If it drops a certain level, he is not going to get out of the house. He won't go outside. Whereas for us, we will gear up, put on wool socks and extra layers and a jacket, and go outside. So, people have that sense of relaxation differently. So it would require self-motivation and a sense of exploration to experience the outdoors. I feel like for a lot of people and East Africans that come here, it just requires a sense of exposure to outdoor spaces. For me, within the first week of being here, I was already hiking and driving with family and friends to these outdoor spaces. So, like the second I landed in Oregon, they really wanted to show me mountains, waterfalls, and oceans. They were really enthusiastic about sharing their outdoor experiences with me, and that also aided my love for the outdoors here. Considering how cooped up we are in the cities in East Africa with limited access to nature because a lot of the outdoor spaces are safari lands which are reserves and protected for wildlife. And the beautiful places to hike are really far away and require a lot of money. So, I really would never have hiked anything because it's just a lot of effort and a lot of money. We don't want to spend our money doing those things. We went on many walks in the city but that is not a nature walk because you are walking on the road to people's houses, it's not experiencing the walks we have here in the trees with the breeze."

Emphasizing the interrelatedness of nature and culture, Mama Waridi shared how she would like to see a return to reverence for African indigenous knowledge and practices. She said, "If I was to remember back traditionally, the African

community were so protective of their environment. They had sacred trees, sacred plants, plants that you cannot cut, and trees that were special. They had religious meaning and stuff. I feel like those are things that are going away with modernization and stuff. I feel like we need to go back a little where we appreciate our trees more. Being an African, I remember we used to use herbs for medicine and those are some of the things that are fading away. They are fading away. Because I remember for example people like my grandfather would give us this tree when we got sick and stuff, it was being passed from one generation to another. The chain broke. I don't think my brother knows which tree it was, but my dad knows. So, they used to pass it down, it was like a family tree. They will pass it from one generation to another. But because of modernization and urbanization, some of these things are fading away." Mama Waridi's explanation draws parallels to African Environmentalism mentioned in Chapter Two through her implied desire for a return to traditional knowledge and a reconnection with land

Baba Fungo would like to see diversity and culture to be embraced in summer camp settings, rather than conformity or avoiding differences. Baba Fungo shares that diversity needs to be acknowledged and embraced in order for children to be able to connect to culture in summer camps. Baba Fungo said, "In those kinds of summer camps, I hope that diversity is acknowledged. Sometimes I feel that in these kinds of things, there is a move to make everyone uniform and gloss over the differences of background and race. I think the differences need to

be embraced. I think my kids need to go to camp where the fact that they are African is acknowledged, and maybe even incorporated in having young people know diversity. I don't think not talking about things helps me. Conformity hurts immigrant or minority people. You are told that you should be like this rather than who you are. I would also not want a camp with just immigrant kids because that is advancing separateness. I want kids to go to a mixed camp where these diversities can be celebrated, acknowledged, and incorporated. "

Baba Rahimu highlights the importance of socialization at summer camp, particularly for immigrant children, supported by Browne et al. (Browne, 2019). He further asserts that he does not feel limited by the traditional practices of his culture, as it is his duty to raise his child in balance of Kenyan and American culture. Baba Rahimu said, "I think it's actually something that is very good for students and kids to go to camp because I know what socialization does to a child. I have also studied immigration, immigrant families, and what conflict does to immigrant families, and this is how it starts. When you say your kid cannot go to camp because it is not culturally appropriate, well that kid is not you and your kid needs to go to camp because they are living in the United States now, they are not living in Kenya. So, whatever you are saying is culturally appropriate you have to balance the two. While you want to keep some Kenyan culture, you also have to be aware that your kid is in the US now. So, if you ask me if it's culturally appropriate, I really don't care about what culture says about how to raise my kid, and I couldn't care less about what people from my country believe about camps

now. One thing that I have heard from parents across the Kenya diaspora is that they don't like sleepovers and things like that because of the principles of America. So, I think that is the cultural perspective that is taboo for many African or Kenyan people. In terms of my reservations about camp, it is not culture based, it is based upon principles on the age of camp counselors, the mission statement, and things like that."

Mama Lulu attributes her dislike of camping to culture. Mama Lulu said, "I think it's cultural, I think it's cultural and I know I am not the only one. We don't camp in my culture. We don't go camping. We live in a house, and you can be surrounded by the wilderness or by the forest of trees and all that. That's your camping. What Americans do here, they drive out of town to go camping and find some outdoor space for camping. Mmm it doesn't appeal to me. I don't want to go camping, I love my bed. I can go outside and sleep in the grass. Sometimes I go and study in the grass. I just sit under a tree and study. I love that. It's an open space but I don't like closed spaces and spending the night outdoors. It's cultural."

Reported Findings: Summer Camp Counselors

While parents expressed concerns about camp staff an as unknown, undifferentiated group, worrying that they might be teenagers who are "just not smart sometimes," as Baba Rahimu put it, in fact the interviews revealed that the summer camp counselors are thoughtful individuals with nuanced experiences. Staff were asked about their backgrounds, including where they grew up, their

interests, and memories of spending time in nature growing up; their experience with outdoor experiential education, and how they got involved with summer camps; what they believe the value is in summer camp; what they hope will happen when a child attends camp; whether they thought summer camp was accessible and inclusive; and whether they could share specific definitions and experiences on accessibility and inclusion. They generously shared their experiences and perceptions of barriers to outdoor experiential education, as well as their personal experiences of exclusion. At the end of each interview, they were asked to share their hopes and visions about the future of summer camp and outdoor experiential education.

Summer Camp Counselors: Thoughtful Individuals with Nuanced (Nature) Experiences

All of the summer camp counselors are thoughtful individuals with nuanced experiences. They all arrived to work at summer camp from different places with different interests, ideas, and passions. The summer camp counselors grew up in various states in the USA including Kentucky, Georgia, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Washington. Their ages ranged from 23-28 years old. They were asked about their experiences in nature, whether formal or informal, and if they had any memories of spending time outdoors with their family when they were growing up. Summer camp staff described the time they spent growing up in nature while growing up, and their experiences with the natural environment which include summer camp, camping, chores and gardening, and sports.

Camp Counselor Sunshine shared that she went to a gymnastics summer camp as a child and had been a camp counselor previously. After that, she started going to a summer camp in Maine that was all outdoors and then took a hiatus for a while but then started being a camp counselor and was a camp counselor for “years and years and years.” Camp Counselor Sunshine shares how she is passionate about being a camp counselor as it allows her to work with the youth as they discover more about themselves. She said, “I think it is interesting because working with young people has always come naturally to me. I think a lot of that is the playfulness that I have in my nature. I am silly, I like to play games and run around, and a lot of kids relate to that and appreciate that in adults because sometimes I think there is a big disconnect between kids and adults. Their connection with this vibrant, life force energy. I think I have lived in that wild, playful, creative, imaginative energy. I realized when I was in my early twenties that my impact on young people sky-rocketed because of their desire to listen to me and watch me so closely. I started calling it micro-mentoring because there is not a huge age gap but in truth sometimes the people closest to our age have the most impact on what is happening to us at that time. So, I started feeling like I had a really powerful role and might change these people's understanding of themselves, of the world, of who they are, who they want to be, and started to think that is important work that I want to be a part of.”

Camp Counselor Berry described how her family went camping every summer in Minnesota. She noted that these experiences were very beneficial as they “learned how to get creative with play and feel really free outside. “It was nice to be safe outside”, they said. Camp Counselor Berry has a passion for arts and crafts, as well as facilitating opportunities for children to “get their hands dirty and feel the dirt.”

Camp Counselor Fern explained how they did not find their love for nature and outdoor activities until later in life, “I have gotten a passion for nature, but I didn’t have a passion for nature when I was growing up and it came to me in college. But now I love, I just love nature. I always want to be outside hiking, camping, or being in the water kayaking, all of those things. And I like yoga and music. I love to dance. And anything where I get to move my body is really important for me.” Camp Counselor Fern did, however, spend time in the garden and doing chores outdoors when they were growing up, “My parents and grandparents both had gardens and a lot of fruit trees. Most of my memories of that was that I didn't want to work in the garden because it was always really hard work and I didn't want to pull weeds with them. I wasn't into vegetables yet, I only liked fruits. I didn't eat the things that came out of the garden. It was something I wanted to get away from. On top of that, my family wasn't into hiking or camping, although we did spend a lot of time going to zoos and aquariums. So, I was into wildlife and seeing animals and things like that. My experience with nature was always kind of passive, I saw things, but I wasn't really engaged with any kind of outdoor

things. I feel like I had experiences about the outdoors but not in nature itself. Maybe not because it wasn't important to me, but because my family wasn't into that. We spent a lot of time playing sports and doing things like that. And so, the value for the people that I was around wasn’t to do things in nature really, it was more something to use for food and stuff like that.”

Camp Counselor River explained that she moved around often as a child, from Washington to Italy to California, and that most of their time in nature as a child was for sports. She shared that their family enjoyed traveling and visiting the beach and had started hiking with their family as a teenager. Camp Counselor Rain had never attended summer camp as a child or gone to outdoor school.

Camp Counselor Soil shared this is her first time as a summer camp counselor. As a child, Camp Counselor Soil shared that her family spent a lot of time on the coast going to beaches. She said, “My family in general is very environmentally conscious. My dad is extremely passionate about recycling, almost too passionate. But I was a big environmentalist in my family, so I feel like I pushed them to be active in environmental stewardship but not necessarily going out of our way to have outdoor experiential learning in any way. But when I brought up environmental topics or engagement, they encouraged it.”

The Summer Camp Counselors all arrived to work at summer camp from different places for different reasons. This is significant because there is diversity

in the experiences and people at summer camp, and it is not just a reflection of the locality of which the summer camp is held. While there is diversity within the summer camp staff, this is not reflected upon first glance to parents and community members. This is a paradox, as summer camp staff that were interviewed shared they hoped to see more diversity, equity, and inclusion in the summer camp setting.

Summer Camp Counselors: Inclusion

Summer camp staff shared their individual definition of inclusion, and whether they think camp is or is not an inclusive environment. Their responses indicated that they took this issue very seriously and considered how inclusion or exclusion would have a personal, emotional impact on children. For example, their definitions of inclusion were varied rather than uniform, and included feeling welcome and secure, feeling valued, feeling represented and heard. They did not focus on inclusion as simply a matter of allowing members of particular group to participate.

Camp Counselor Sunshine does not think camp is an inclusive environment due to the natural tendency for humans to be exclusive. She said, “ I actually find that some of the worst traits of children come out at camp. Including and highlighting social groups, cliques, exclusion, rejection, and to be honest, I've had a lot of tough time navigating this because a lot of kids are products of their parents, and they are thrown into a social situation that they don't have the skills for. But I think

exclusion is incredibly human. I think exclusion is natural because human beings are deeply craving connection and being seen and heard, feeling like they belong somewhere. You can't feel neutral about everything, and you yourself are going to feel different ways about different things. We feel like friends with people because we know what not being friends is. So we have exclusion to provide a contrast of what we do like and what we don't like. So it's almost like, could inclusion and connection exist without exclusion and disconnection? You need the polarity. So, I just think that to be and to find your group is to mean that there are people that are not your group and your friends. You can't have one without the other.” When asked how to make camp more inclusive for racially and ethnically diverse populations, Camp Counselor Sunshine said, People get so comfortable with what they know. They misidentify, misunderstand, and isolate the thing that is different and it's such a clear pattern in human history. If we don't understand something, we push it away and demonize it and label it as “bad.” when in actuality we have no understanding of it. So at camp, how do we open people up to things that are different from them? How do we create a culture where it is healthy to disagree, and healthy to befriend somebody or something that is outside of what you know? So, I think inclusion becomes a cultural shift more than anything. It is not something we create, it is an energy that we must cultivate. Especially for young people to know how to do it. It starts with leadership. There needs to be a commitment of showing up every day and showing up in a different way. I think inclusion is so much bigger than the young people and I find that one of the places I struggle is that some communities know

what to say but they don't know how to do it. Words and actions have such a disconnection. We can't fix decades of oppression and lack of access. There is no quick way to fix something so deep in us and so old that we don't even all know that it is growing within us. How do we change that? There are no quick fixes. And so many things that have been tried are just not enough. It's not enough. And it needs to be a bigger shift than we can even comprehend. I think we need better training for staff. And maybe being totally transparent with the kids. Maybe we can get together with them and name a bunch of stuff that is happening. What does that feel like? What if we did camp agreements where everyone shows up on the first day and we find some creative and interesting way to imprint the ideologies or ideas and then hold people accountable? That is a step. I think maybe Check in with the communities in a way that says what do you need? How can we support that need? Is it exciting for your kid to be out in nature? So direct outreach by visits or phone calls or anything like that."

Camp Counselor Berry describes inclusion as when, "Everyone feels welcome and secure and happy being in a group. Everyone is welcome. And everyone is accepting. Acceptance I guess." Camp Counselor Berry shared that she thinks camp is inclusive and accessible, and they attribute the lack of participation from diverse groups to a lack of desire to participate in camp, as well as money and transportation, "I think money is one and transportation. And probably just camp not being useful anymore or perceived as not useful. Or kinda just like programs could be tweaked or reformed that makes them...I don't know I feel like traditional

camp could be more learning or education based with workshops might make it more inviting. So, I don't know."

Camp Counselor Fern describes inclusivity as, "Everyone's experiences are valued in what they are doing at that moment. We all may be doing the same thing, but the way we experience that one thing is going to be different. And to say that what everyone is bringing in and how they are interacting with that activity is just as valid to every person that is doing it. To me, that is inclusivity." In regard to camp practices, they said, "I feel like the main overarching idea and mission behind camp is inclusive because it is bringing people who have never spent time around each other together and bringing them together and having experiences together. In practice it doesn't always end up inclusive because parents want to send their kids with kids they already know, or they wanna find one that their friends recommended to them, and so groups of people can't afford or don't have time to take their kids to camp. It becomes less inclusive in practice than in the main idea of what camp should be."

Camp Counselor Rain described inclusion as, "Inclusion is feeling like you belong, feeling represented, feeling heard. And being able to be yourself in whatever way feels right to you without other people putting things on you." When asked if summer camp is an inclusive environment she said," I would say no. I would say it's because we are being actively not inclusive, but we aren't actively being inclusive. We aren't being anti-inclusive, but we are kind of in the

middle, but being in the middle and not being active in that pursuit then does not make us inclusive. That goes for a lot of different summer camps and outdoor education in general. They promote diversity but it's like how are you fulfilling that?"

Camp Counselor Soil could not provide a definition of inclusion and said, "Equal opportunity. I don't know, I struggle with it all the time because even when I do come up with an idea, then I'm like wait, I need to tweak that concept. So I don't think I'm ready to give my definition on that." When asked if they think summer camp is an inclusive environment she replied, "Yeah I think so. The few experiences I have had at this camp so far, everyone does seem like they are valued and have an equal voice in activities and things. I have not yet seen anyone picked on. So I think that tells a lot about the kids in general, they are good kids. Also the staff that I am working with are really compassionate and want to make sure every single person is enjoying themselves and not feeling excluded or picked on. It's mostly a good experience if you can get there."
All of the counselors that were interviewed shared they value diversity, equity, and inclusion in the summer camp environment, and believe these values are important to child development.

Camp Counselors on Benefits of Camp for Children

Camp counselors were asked what they think the benefit of nature is for kids, what they hope happens when children come to camp, and what they think

happens if children do not get to spend time in camp. The following themes emerged as important: learning and exploration, and increased wellness. It is significant that summer camp counselors and Kenyan parents in this study shared similar views on the benefit of nature for children such as ideas of learning, wellness, and exploration. I will explore each below, illustrated by relevant excerpts from the transcripts. (More complete excerpts are available in the appendix for context.)

I. Learning and Exploration

Summer camp counselors in this study identified learning and exploration as positive traits of summer camp for youth.

Camp Counselor Sunshine believes camp is a great way for children to learn more about themselves and each other. “I think on the most basic level, I would love for them to learn at camp. I guess they just learn about themselves. I think a big thing for me that isn’t happening in school systems is self-awareness. It is so key. But yeah, learning, building self-awareness. Building relationships. Camp is a powerful and creative time to build relationships. And I think camp hopefully will lead to a sense of personal growth and knowing yourself and knowing your boundaries. Maybe for a lot of young people, the first taste of freedom or independence. Or choice. And it's like, as you move along in your age, the experiences of being on your own and independent just grow and grow. First its

camp, then its college. It's a big building block to learn what it means for us to be on our own."

Camp Counselor Berry used to love going to summer camp as a child and said, "I just remember going to camp and really admiring and loving my camp counselors and learning a lot from them. I hope that each kid goes to summer camp and feels special in themselves and who they are and what they're doing. I think it's really important. I think summer camp is really beneficial because it opens up kids' minds to something so much bigger than school walls and rules. And all these expectations like getting your workload done and going towards all these goals. But then when you come to a camp setting, it's based around life skills like building a fire or pitching a tent. Looking at plants and seeing which plants are edible and what they do for the earth. You can just run and it's a bigger scale. It opens up a lot of possibilities to kids that they otherwise wouldn't focus on or know about. It's just like there are no walls. They can run and be free and explore. There is so much exploring in nature too. Like I was talking to one of my friends about the pond and if we were little it would seem so vast as a kid. The pond probably seems huge to them. It's just like a little pond to us but when you're a kid everything is so big and it's a whole world to discover. Being outside is so good for them because they can just explore all they want. It's really good for them."

Camp Counselor Fern hopes children will try something new when they come to camp, “the most empowering thing that I see is when they just try something new, when they are trying something that they have never done before, specifically if it's something they don't seem excited about when they get there. If it's something that maybe they haven't done, and we talk about things we are going to do that week and they are like oh I want to try that. And then they try it and get really excited. I think that it goes back to where I didn't have any of these experiences until later in my life so seeing people getting them at early ages is really empowering to me. It's what I hope for every time I have a group.”

Camp Counselor Rain hopes children have fun when they come to camp, “I hope they have fun! I feel like being outside is so fun and there are so many things to learn. Especially at summer camp versus outdoor school. Summer camp is about hanging out with other kids and trying new things. It's a place where kids can shed whatever expectations have been placed on them. Kids come with papers that tell you things that they struggle with or things you should know about them before they get there. But sometimes being outside will change the way kids interact with the world. I don't have to be the bossy kid here; I can just be myself or I don't have to be the dyslexic kid because that doesn't matter out here. Kids can be themselves because there's nothing telling them that they can't be or that they should be something else.”

Camp Counselor Soil shared her perceived benefits of summer camp and what she hopes children will experience, “I hope they just really enjoy being outside...I hope they learn about themselves and learn that they are comfortable in situations they didn't think they were. And they might learn they are passionate about the trees or the mountains or the rivers or the lakes. It might lead to new opportunities or experiences for them.”

II. Increased Wellness

Summer camp counselors share that spending time in nature and at summer camp increases wellness for children.

Camp Counselor Sunshine said, “I think I realize another thing about being in nature is learning about the impact on your body physiologically. Like what does it feel like to feel the wind and the sun? What is it to witness the birds singing and the more yogic meditation-based pranayama sensations? How are we giving these young people tools in their life for stress reduction and relaxation? There is something calming about it biologically. So knowing that and teaching that to your kids, that nature is a way to take care of yourself.”

Camp Counselor Soil said, “I think a lot of kids spend a lot of time inside on technological devices. How much outdoor engagement are they really getting? As a kid, I was outside all the time. I was always out in the neighborhood playing

from after school until dinner time. I was never on video games or computers or phones. So I think it's a great opportunity to put down the normal routine and be outside and get out of the comfort zone to do things they don't really do to learn things they might be passionate about and grow as a human."

Summer Camp Counselors: Barriers and Accessibility

Summer camp staff shared their perceptions on whether camp is accessible, why or why not, the barriers to camp, and how to increase accessibility. I will explore each idea below, illustrated by relevant excerpts from the transcripts. (More complete excerpts are available in the appendix for context.)

I. Accessibility

In general, summer camp counselors equated accessibility to summer camp with closeness of location/convenience of proximity, feasibility of cost, access to and convenience of transportation, time, the location of camp "being outside" rather than indoors, inclusive language, and food security. In general, summer camp counselors in this study equated barriers and inaccessibility of summer camp to lack of time, distance, school bullying, Oregon's history, reduced popularity of summer camp, corruption, and lack of diverse staff.

When Camp Counselor Fern was asked if camp is accessible, they said, "In my experience I would say that summer camp in general is somewhat accessible. For example, when I lived in Eugene, I lived right next to the Boys and Girls Club.

Right before I moved, they started opening their summer camps so I would see people running around just in the park by my house, but I saw groups of kids there. Camp Fire Wilani is the first camp that I have worked at and I didn't go to camp as a youth, so it seems that there are options but the options themselves and the accessibility to those options are not necessarily equal. For example, the groups that I was seeing at the boys and girls club were mostly in grassy fields, whereas it has been rare in my job experiences to see members of those groups in forested areas and coming to camp in places where you see biodiversity that goes beyond connecting with other humans and actually connecting with the land. And the experiences that I have had with education seem less accessible than with camp itself."

When asked about accessibility of summer camp, Camp Counselor Rain said, "Being outside makes it more accessible. There are no tests or pressure or expectations that the kids do well or do anything. You can go to camp and not participate if you don't want, or you can. The kids have more control over that. Most of the time, kids just want to have fun. If we provide them space, they will have fun. If we are being inclusive in our language and not assuming anything about the kids and being holistic. Are they food insecure? Can we provide a snack, so they feel good in their body? Everyone is coming back from different places, and we can't make assumptions about anything. Coming from a place of understanding if kids act up because as a counselor you don't see everything that goes on in their lives."

II. Barriers and Inaccessibility

Camp Counselor Sunshine shared that they do not think summer camp is very accessible and attributes potential barriers to school bullying and Oregon's history, "I mean, it is complicated because there are multiple factors playing into it but for example, in the state of Oregon, there is a history of excluding people of color so then there has been decades if not centuries of building separation and all-white communities. Then we look around and wonder why there aren't people of color. So, I think there's especially in Oregon where there is incredible access to natural resources to rivers, oceans, farms, lakes, mountains, forests, and things, to think that there is really a low population of people of color means that probably the access to those opportunities is going to be smaller. I think one of the other things that come up for me is comfort. I think it would be hard for a kid to want to go to camp if they don't feel safe in their social circles. But I guess in truth at camp you never know who is going to show up, but I imagine that if I am bullied at school then sent to camp, there would probably be some fear about being an outsider, being isolated, being rejected. So, I feel like emotionally, that would impact kids.

Camp Counselor Soil said they do not know whether camp is accessible, " I really don't know because I don't know what the advertising and marketing practices are for summer camps, especially this one I am working with. I also don't know what sort of scholarships they offer. I know the summer camp I went

to had a handful of scholarships that were offered but not many, and the price was very high. So that was a privilege. And if you were able to get the scholarship it was accessible. But how did you apply to the scholarship? Did you need electronics, internet, access to technology? Also, this summer camp is thirty minutes from Eugene so you have to have a car to get there, have a parent who can drive you there and pick you up. So, this summer camp specifically is not accessible I believe because it requires long distance travel and it costs money and I don't know what scholarships are offered. public transportation maybe but given the pandemic, that's not possible. So that limits the accessibility of camp. Like I said, people need parents who can take time off work to pick them up and drop them off. Like I said, scholarships too."

Camp Counselor Berry thinks summer camp is accessible, and the barriers are that it is no longer in style to send children to camp, "I also think that summer camp is not as big of a thing as it used to be. I think there are maybe more other programs for kids. Or maybe it's such an old school idea that maybe it's not seen as beneficial anymore. yeah, and maybe, it hasn't but I just feel like there aren't as many, like even Camp Wilani doesn't have as many kids as it used to back in the 70s and 80s. And it's like why is that? Is it because the program isn't good? I know there was money laundering, but I don't know. Not as many kids are going. Maybe the prices are more expensive. i think money is one and transportation. And probably just camp not being useful anymore or perceived as not useful. Or kinda just like programs could be tweaked or reformed that makes them…I don't

know I feel like traditional camp could be more learning or education based with workshops might make it more inviting. So, I don't know."

Camp Counselor Fern identified the following barriers, "I think time and the ability to travel is huge, especially in more outdoor focused camps. Your parents have to be able to come out in the morning and pick you up, or some guardian, and sometimes it can be quite a distance to travel. So that's a big one. I think access to funding of course. Camp can be really expensive especially depending on the camp and the experiences in that camp. Oftentimes, with the intersection of those things it becomes more and more economic barriers definitely. And also, just finding those opportunities. So much of the world now is about marketing and where are you finding about what's going on around you, and oftentimes the places that those advertisements are going out are the same places people running the organization spend their time in. it is the same people coming to camp that are around them all the time."

When asked about barriers, Camp Counselor Rain said, "I think that in regard to staffing, as a white person, and most other staff are white. That was my experience before too. It's hard to promote a mission of diversity and inclusion when the staff is not represented that way. And people see that, parents will come and see all the staff looks the same. Even one person of color can make such a big difference in a kid's life and how powerful that can be. Outdoor educators and people who are hiring should be mindful of the image of their staff

and what are the activities? Are we making assumptions before the kids sign up about their abilities based on their demographics? Language needs to be mindful and not bring kids down."

When asked about barriers Camp Counselor Soil said, "Price, location, inclusion practices like in general i made this observation when we were doing training. It is supposed to be a diversity camp but all of the staff except for one person are white. How are we going to engage with campers on diversity and inclusion if it is an almost all-white staff?"

Summer Camp Counselors: Intersectionality & Exclusion

Summer camp staff shared their personal experiences of exclusion, and what could have amended the experience. This section is relevant to the discussion of intersectionality in environmental education, as summer camp staff perceptions, experiences, and interactions are shaped by their social locations. Although all the counselors were white and did not report any experiences of exclusion based on race, all had experienced exclusion based on other aspects of their identities including gender and gender identity, religion, and educational background.

Camp Counselor Sunshine describes the feeling of exclusion she experienced when transitioning from Waldorf to public school; her educational experience informs her perceptions of exclusion and feelings of being unwelcomed and underrepresented. Camp Counselor Sunshine said, "I think the transition from

Waldorf school to public school was difficult. I was just so on the outside, I didn't understand the culture, I wasn't acclimated to the expectations placed upon me, and so therefore I didn't meet them, and I didn't even know them. They were just so different. I was not too stylish as a young kid, there are some heinous photos of me wearing who knows what. But my mom let me have free reign over dressing myself and I was also probably pretty intense about it, but I would wear the most ridiculous outfits like who even knows what was going on. But I didn't care! And then I got to public school, and it was like, suddenly everything that I am wearing is being judged and ridiculed and questioned. I remember feeling like I can't be myself and honestly like I had to acclimate and pigeon-hole myself into this box to be accepted. So sad." To make it better she said, "I think maybe if schools had support staff for brand new students or maybe if I had a resource or words for what was happening to me. But I think if somebody had approached me and offered guidance before entering high school and given me a heads up. That would have been nice. Also, public school isn't very forgiving and there is hostility there."

Camp Counselor Berry shares how gender informs her perception of exclusion. Camp Counselor Berry said, "I grew up in a family that is very Catholic so my dad would always take the boys fishing and camping or skiing and he wouldn't take the girls. So that was hard." To make it better she said, "Just letting any kid who wanted to go skiing or fishing go skiing or fishing. Gender shouldn't have been an element."

Camp Counselor Fern shares their experience with gender identity and fluidity in the sphere of environmental education, and the opportunities for increased allyship and intersectionality in the field of environmental education. Camp Counselor Fern said, “I have definitely had non-inclusive experiences surrounding my gender identity. Just in environmental education in general, I use they/them pronouns and I identify as gender fluid, and I am in a male body and males are often more encouraged to do things outdoors. For me, it’s important to be seen as queer but often my male traits get elevated and highlighted more often and pronouns get misused and things like that. It just becomes something, for me I know I am mostly welcomed in outdoor spaces, but I am trying to increase accessibility for other people. So, for the people around me, I am living with and working with, to not highlight that I am not just a male or a man. To have the people around me not see that and kind of respect that identity starts to feel like they are excluding me but excluding my values.” To alleviate this, Camp Fern provides overall recommendations for camps that are discussed below.

Camp Counselor Rain said, “I've been super privileged. I think with my experiences and support of family and friends. I don't believe I've had an experience of exclusion that would be related to my race or gender. I think there are small instances in sports here and there. For example, I wanted to play baseball rather than softball, but I had to play softball. I played it for one year and then I quit but even that wasn't traumatizing. I had support and access to so

many other things that that small instance of exclusion didn't impact me whereas if that was something that was continually happening in my life."

Camp Counselor Soil describes how growing up as a religious minority informs her perceptions and experiences of exclusion and discrimination. Camp Counselor Soil said, "I grew up in a small town in Georgia and I was the only Jewish person in my school, so I was picked on because of that. I had a lot of insensitive comments made toward me. So, dealing with being a minority in that sense, a religious minority is something I have learned lessons from. And I try to make sure nobody else experiences that whenever I am present." To make this better they said, "Not be picked on. I don't know, it was almost expected. Like I was the only Jewish person here and that they have ever met so I have to take this bullying in a way because it's expected but maybe hopefully, I can educate them."

Summer Camp Counselors: Recommendations

All of the counselors had thoughtful recommendations to share about ways to make camp more valuable and enjoyable for a diverse range of children and youth, including those who may have been excluded from camp opportunities in the past. In an effort to increase accessibility, summer camp counselors recommend strong leadership, logistical support, inclusive advertising, and presence of diverse staff.

Camp Counselor Sunshine believes increased accessibility begins with leadership. Camp Counselor Sunshine recommends the following, “Leadership. There needs to be a commitment of showing up every day and showing up in a different way. I think inclusion is so much bigger than the young people and I find that one of the places I struggle is that some communities know what to say but they don't know how to do it. Words and actions have such a disconnection. We can't fix decades of oppression and lack of access. There is no quick way to fix something so deep in us and so old that we don't even all know that it is growing within us. How do we change that? There are no quick fixes. And so many things that have been tried are just not enough. It's not enough. And it needs to be a bigger shift than we can even comprehend. One step forward I think is better training for staff. And maybe being totally transparent with the kids. Maybe we can get together with them and name a bunch of stuff that is happening. What does that feel like? What if we did camp agreements where everyone shows up on the first day and we find some creative and interesting way to imprint the ideologies or ideas and then hold people accountable? That is a step. I think maybe Check in with the communities who need more access and inclusion in a way that says what do you need? How can we support that need? Is it exciting for your kid to be out in nature? So direct outreach by visits or phone calls or anything like that.”

Camp Counselor Berry recommends logistical support. Camp Counselor Berry recommends, “I think by providing transportation and maybe doing grants or

certain fundraisers for those kinds of groups to sponsor and support. Or even advertising that this is a space spot to come to."

Camp Counselor Fern and Rain both recommend increasing diverse staff in the summer camp setting. Camp Counselor Fern makes the following recommendations, "I think encouraging more diverse groups to work in the field, and that starts with even teenage training programs like having somebody who went to camp earlier coming to train to be a counselor. So training and encouraging people who are not in the privileged groups to work in those settings is the first thing because for a lot of parents that is going to be the first thing they look at - who is going to be working with their kids. And are they going to make my kid feel included when they are there? I guess that isn't an easy fix in itself but it's something that I think more places can definitely prioritize. And then I really feel like scholarships can be more accessible and more available. We often look at creating scholarships for older groups and we don't think about it for youth. At least in my experience. It doesn't feel emphasized for younger kids. There can be a shift from funding teenagers and 20-year old's and finding some 7 and 9 year old's to go to camp and have those experiences instead."

Camp Counselor Rain agrees with Fern's suggestion and additionally points out the importance of having mature staff, "I think the hiring of diverse staff. I think that we have an older population of staff which is really good because their brains have developed and have more education, so they understand child

development more. But camps can be more aware of their image based on hiring and the people who have first contact with the kids. That can make a big difference.”

Camp Counselor Soil did not provide any recommendations as they candidly stated, “I do not know.”

CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION, FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Thesis Statement

There is a need for outdoor experiential practices that reflect the variation of beliefs about nature and environment. While Kenyan parents in this study value nature and appreciate camp as a means for child learning and development, there is a fundamental difference from Americans in the way Kenyan parents engage with nature. Therefore, there is a need and an opportunity to incorporate African and Indigenous environmental values into environmental education in order to practice and honor non-Euro Western ways of being outdoors. To achieve this goal, there is a need to re-evaluate the wilderness narrative used in outdoor experiential education practice and scholarship. In addition, there needs to be a shift towards understanding summer camps as a means to facilitate cross-cultural interactions and communication both in summer camp practice and in community understanding. Lastly, outdoor spaces ought to be redefined and incorporated into mainstream American culture as places to facilitate dialogue, discussion, and conflict resolution for youth. This endeavor calls for future research to find evidence and determine whether a camp focused on multiculturalism and indigenous ways of knowing will increase participation from Kenyan parents, and other ethnically diverse populations. If the results are positive, further research is needed to measure the program's impact and ability to increase in both scale and scope so that a larger number of families can be served.

Analysis: Research Questions

Research Question One: What are Kenyan parent's values and beliefs about nature, and how do they perceive the role of nature in their child's development?

Kenyan parents highly value nature. Not only do they believe nature has transformative effects on children, they see nature as a connection to their culture and identity. Kenyan parents shared their memories and experiences of spending time in nature growing up, whether in the rural village or exploring safaris and game parks. Parents reported connection to sacred Indigenous plants and practices, although the connection is not as strong as it once was. Kenyan parents view nature as a grounding force, one that connects humans to the Earth as well as the humbling reality of food, agriculture, and life skills and survival. Further, Kenyan parents find nature to be awe-inspiring, beautiful, and full of health benefits.

In regard to their child's development, Kenyan parents report positive effects of both time in nature and summer camp (outdoor experiential education.) Kenyan parents share that nature facilitates learning and maturation, health, calming, regulation of emotions, and socialization among their peers. Further, Kenyan parents find that summer camp is a way for their children to facilitate community, environmental appreciation, and independence in the United States.

Research Question Two: *What do parents and staff perceive as the barriers to accessing outdoor environmental education to diverse populations?*

From the results, it is clear that the biggest barriers for Kenyan parents to outdoor experiential education are fear of wildlife and fear that their child will experience bullying, discrimination, or exclusion. These fears are significant enough that some Kenyan parents do not and will not send their child to summer camp. As Johnson (2005) notes, camp requires immigrants, such as these Kenyan parents, to adopt American core beliefs about nature and the environment. However, this study shows that Kenyan parents and summer camp do not always align in their definitions and experiences of nature, and the concept of "wilderness" can vary widely across cultures. Kenyan parents have a more social and communal concept of nature, rather than seeing nature as a place of solitude and "coming of age." This means that when Kenyan parents send their child to camp or outdoor experiential education, since these experiences are in predominantly white and rural spaces, they are put in a position where it is easy to feel like an "outsider." In addition, and crucially, outdoor spaces have long been considered unsafe for black people in the United States (Finney, 2014), therefore a shift towards inclusion and making camp feel more safe for minorities will benefit Kenyan parents and other various ethnically diverse populations.

Research Question Three: How are camps and camp staff responding to the lack of diversity?

Camp staff is responding to the lack of diversity with awareness and critical thinking, but they point to changes that still must occur at the level of leadership. Summer camp staff are thoughtful individuals with diverse life experiences, yet this is diversity and thoughtfulness is not immediately obvious for Kenyan parents. Nonetheless, Kenyan parents and summer camp staff may have more in common than either group believes. For example, Kenyan parents and summer camp staff do share similar views on the benefits of nature for children such as learning, exploration, and wellness. For this reason, it would help if parents got to know counselors more and were given an opportunity to address stereotypes. Summer camp staff also have experiences of exclusion that might make them more relatable to parents, and which are relevant to the discussion of intersectionality and environmental education. Like the parents in this study, summer camp staff perceptions, experiences, and interactions are shaped by their social locations. Further, their ideas about what could have mitigated their experiences of exclusion help them be impactful summer camp counselors. More direct communication between staff and parents could encourage empathy among children, parents, and each other. In fact, it's important to point out that not all summer camp counselors have been to summer camp as a child, therefore it is not an exclusive club that requires generational experience and exposure. Camp counselors show awareness that camp could be more inclusive and accessible to diverse groups. Based on their definitions of inclusion, one can deduce that summer camp counselors are open and willing to include diverse populations and practices in the summer camp setting, but they see that diversity

is lacking and do not understand why. This is significant, for while summer camp staff believe in and support diversity and multiculturalism, they may not always know how to act in accordance with these values. This gap is a direct concern of Kenyan parents in this study, as parents don't have faith that these counselors have the experience or knowledge to see, understand, respond, and facilitate moving through a difficult and troubling exchange around race and difference – not that they don't have good beliefs, but do they have the knowledge and the skills to "see it" and facilitate in response to it. Having clarified the issues with these answers to my research questions, I will next discuss some important implications, and finally make a set of recommendations below.

Discussion: False Dichotomies

A deeper analysis reveals that significant barriers to outdoor experiential education for Kenyan parents, and perhaps other ethnically diverse populations, are false dichotomies. Through analyzing the qualitative interviews with Kenyan parents and summer camp staff, I have uncovered several false dichotomies including independence versus socialization, diversity versus environmental education, and nature versus not nature. Kenyan parents in this study identified that they hope their children socialize at summer camp, representing a value for community, however they also want their child to embrace independence and learning, a value often associated with American wilderness. This idea that spending time in nature needs to result in either socialization or independence is a false dichotomy. The idea that issues of environmental education are separate

from issues of diversity and inclusion is a false dichotomy, as issues of diversity are embedded within societal systems meaning that natural spaces are not exempt from issues of society. Lastly, the dichotomy between nature and not nature is a false dichotomy for this distinction between is purely subjective, as evidenced by the qualitative interviews with Kenyan parents.

Conclusion: Future Directions

The following recommendations are for creating a more inclusive environment in the context of summer camp and youth outdoor experiential education based on qualitative evidence from Kenyan parents and summer camp staff.

Firstly, there is a need to **re-evaluate the dominant wilderness narrative used in outdoor experiential education** in order to incorporate African and Indigenous environmental values and further honor non-Euro Western ways of being outdoors. One method to activate this process is to challenge the dominant wilderness narrative used in scholarship surrounding outdoor experiential education and environmental education with the intention to collaborate with professional networks and organizations in the industry to facilitate specific training programs and certifications.

Secondly, there is an opportunity to **create summer camps that focus on elements of diversity and multiculturalism.** While camp is currently a predominantly white experience, Kenyan parents in this study reported that they

are interested in multicultural camps and camps that embrace diversity. I recommend the co-constructions of summer camp based on the location of the summer camp, and the desires of historically excluded communities in proximity; these camps situated to be able to incorporate the history of place and Indigenous people into the curriculum, as well as create programs based on the needs and requests of historically excluded populations that are attending. This process begins with community needs assessment and a participatory analysis of a specific geographic area.

In addition to the above-mentioned recommendations, there needs to be a shift towards **summer camps that facilitate cross-cultural dialogue, discussion, and conflict resolution for youth**. Similar to the method necessary to re-evaluate the dominant wilderness used in environmental education, this shift towards expanding the intention and agency of summer camp must occur with collaboration amongst summer camp professionals, scholars, and community networks. This process may perhaps commence with a social enterprise business model to promote social impact through business operations.

Lastly**, future research is needed** to determine whether a camp focused on multiculturalism and indigenous ways of knowing will increase participation from Kenyan parents, and other ethnically diverse populations. If the results are positive, further research is needed to measure the program's impact and ability to increase in scale and scope. I recommend a mixed-methods research study

that quantitatively measures parent preference for sending their child to camp as well as parent perception on the value of nature with a Likert Scale, and qualitatively follows up with participants to inquire about their choices.

This study has revealed a troubling discrepancy between the perceived value of nature experiences and the choices parents make about whether to send their child to camp. By presenting the voices of a historically excluded community, namely a group of immigrant parents from Kenya, this study has also integrated their voices into the scholarly literature and interrupted the dominant western narratives about the relationship of humans with nature, and the role of nature in the wellbeing of children and youth.

In conclusion, this research project set out to discover the barriers to outdoor experiential education through interviews with Kenyan parents and summer camp staff in Lane County, Oregon. New information and original findings from this study reveal that the strongest attribute of accessibility to outdoor experiential education is whether there is communal value for their child to attend through known networks or the potential to develop new networks. On the contrary, the most important barriers to outdoor experiential education for Kenyan parents in this study is the fear of wildlife and the fear of discrimination. In order to move towards a more inclusive and environment in outdoor experiential education as a whole, I recommend that the outdoor experiential education scholars and industry professionals begin to re-evaluate the dominant

wilderness narrative used in outdoor experiential education, create summer camps that focus on elements of diversity and multiculturalism, and conduct future research with mixed methodology.

APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION QUOTES

Parent Experiences in Nature Growing Up/in Kenya

Mama Johari: “Moments when I was growing up, we spent time in the village which is again eight and a half hours from the city, with my grandparents. And a lot of being in the village means you spend a lot of time in nature because there is not a lot of, there is no, at that point there was no electricity so what are you doing inside? That is what my grandparents would say because there is no TV, no radio, there is nothing really to keep you indoors. Cooking was outside. And there are a lot of chores to do so for example, we were required to go to the garden and plant crops or harvest or do something or herd the animals. Just continue to do activities outside which were regarded as work, housework. So, for me a lot of that helped me. I like to compare it to camping because I learned a lot of life skills outside like how to start a fire, how to get water from the river and bring it back home, how I herd animals, how to kill chickens and stuff like that for food. So, you get something from the farm all the way to the table. It's not like you go to the supermarket and buy something. So that was one of the most important skills that I learned from spending time in nature. And then the values. I think again this is something I would compare to being outdoors in the United States but even more because I was learning a lot more from being in nature because everything had a lesson to learn, going to the garden you are learning how to work the land and you seeing are plants grow from just seeds all the way to these big trees or fruitful plants on your table, you are carrying water for miles

or two or four to bring it home so you learn how to appreciate water and how important water is. So you don't waste it. Yes there is unity. We would walk in a group of five to ten kids, and you are carrying water in these cans, we call them jerry cans. And you would sing all the way from the well to the house and just sing a kind of group with a sense of unity and togetherness. And at the end of the day you kind of feel accomplished because you have done a day's work and seen the fruits of that work by being put on the table and you are rewarded at the end of the day with good food and when it is time to relax, everybody is sitting around the fire, singing songs and rejoicing at the end of the day, dancing or just that sense of accomplishment for that day. So, it kind of taught me how to live day by day. And take each day for what it was."

Mama Waridi: Oh. Kenya happens to be a very nice place that has so much nature in it. And there are so many nice trees, indigenous trees, there is a variety of animals and stuff. So, I think almost all the time during summer or during long holidays we would travel to the park. We would go to places like Lake Nakuru National Park to see animals like the flamingos. We would also go to the beach. I have camped a few times when I was in high school, I was a scout, so I went camping with the girls. And yeah, it was fun. Yeah, the times we went to Lake Nakuru we would go as a family. I think Lake Nakuru was like our place. We would go most of the time and it was close to our home. So we would go together, look at the animals and stuff, take pictures, eat out, and it was so much fun. We would look forward to those days when we would go to Lake Nakuru

National Park. And we kept on monitoring the level of the water. Lake Nakuru National Park is in the Rift Valley. I don't know if you know what a rift valley is, it's the longest rift valley in the world. So, Lake Nakuru is just on the rift valley, and we would go to check how the water has gone, like because of global warming and stuff. The water keeps drying up and stuff like that. So, we would be like, ‘Last time when we were here, this place had water but now it does not’ So it was a fun moment and seeing animals. Looking at buffalos, I remember when we were just crossing and then we would see things like giraffes, we would feed them. And then we had an experience with baboons and monkeys. Like at the entrance of the park they show you baboons and monkeys in the trees so if you are not careful, they can grab something from you. So, I remember there was this day that we were just in the car waiting to get in, and then I accidentally opened the window, and I was holding something. I can't remember if it was a banana or what it was, before I knew it, it was gone. So those are like crazy nice moments. Yes. and if I was to remember back traditionally, the African community were so protective of their environment. They had sacred trees, sacred plants, plants that you cannot cut, and trees that were special. They had religious meaning and stuff. I feel like those are things that are going away with modernization and stuff. I feel like we need to go back a little where we appreciate our trees more. Being an African, I remember we used to use herbs for medicine and those are some of the things that are fading away. They are fading away. Because I remember for example people like my grandfather would give us this tree when we got sick and stuff, it was being passed from one generation to another. The chain broke. I

don't think my brother knows which tree it was, but my dad knows. So, they used to pass it down, it was like a family tree. They will pass it from one generation to another. But because of modernization and urbanization, some of these things are fading away."

Baba Fungo: "Nature was there. It was right there. So, it wasn't like we were planning to go places unless we were going to a national game park as a school or church trip. Nature was where we lived. It wasn't something we had to make special arrangements to do."

Baba Rahimu: "I actually have a lot of experience with that because back in Kenya, I grew up in the countryside. Basically, everything from herding cattle to swimming to playing with my friends in natural settings and things like that. Those are all parts of who I was in Kenya. And then my family back in Kenya actually owns a safari business, so nature is a part of my livelihood. Basically, my daddy made money in the natural environment, and that is how we survived in my home. So, nature has been a part of me big time. Nature is really something that is very close and dear to me. Like I said, it's been economically beneficial to me, and it is something that I like for serenity and beauty."

Mama Lulu: "I come from Kenya, and I grew up in a certain environment, you know? Surrounded by nature, lots of nature, and I love it. I love nature. "She did

not expand more upon this, as she continued on to her experiences in nature in the United States, particularly in the state of Oregon.

Parent Experiences in Nature in USA

Mama Johari: The first hike I did was, I think up Spencer's Butte. I think it was such a Zen moment for me. I hiked the two-hour hike, and it was strenuous, but it was such a Zen moment when I got to the top because after all this hard work of trying to get to the top, and then the view was just gorgeous. Watching the sunset was amazing. The fresh air up there, the air is so far different than the way it is down below. So, I felt immersed in the nature and one with nature at that point which was amazing. Then it kind of encouraged me to go on more hikes. So, I hiked the Blue Pool and I hiked Silver Falls, another long hike. So, I have kind of enjoyed that kind of experience being in the trees and walking around the riverside to this beautiful destination."

Mama Waridi: "Until I came here, I couldn't imagine having a tree or plant inside my house. Unless it's a flower. But I see here people are taking plants, having them close to their bed, it looks so special. I feel like that is something that we grow up with in the environment and we grow up with nature, and it's part of us and we forget that it is so special. We forget that it does something for us in our lives, we just take it for granted. Yeah, and I think when you see other people appreciating it, you are like okay these are things I just assume. I don't know whether I am communicating. But sometimes you have things with you, and you

forget that they are even there. They are so natural. I think that is one thing people back at home don't have. We live in nature so much that we forget that it is there. I think I am more of an outdoor kind of person so even in Eugene, I have gone camping at Cottage Grove. So, yeah. And I appreciate nature, I appreciate the trees, the nice scent."

Baba Fungo: "One of things we love as a family here in Oregon is to hike. We don't like camping for some reason as a family. Nobody likes it. My son goes sometimes. I think all of us want to go on a day trip and come back. I have tried, I have gone to Crater Lake and the Sisters and walked up and down. We go to Mount Pisgah and Spencer Butte." While this family does not prefer to spend a whole night in the wilderness, they enjoy taking trips together into nature.

Baba Rahimu: "When I came to the United States, I did a lot of hiking when I was in Ohio. I did mountain biking in Ohio too and I also did lots of road tripping. I've driven from Ohio to Seattle three times. And so, every time I drive like that, I stop at Yellowstone, or I stop at places that are cool and environmentally friendly."

Mama Lulu: "Here I live in Eugene; I love the greenery. I love the feeling of being surrounded by trees and flowers, especially in the spring, even though I get allergies. That is another thing that is new to me in the United States. I have never had allergies before in my life but here every spring when the flowers

bloom, I get allergies. I hate winter because I don't see green. It is only grey. So, when I see green, I get excited, but I get a pollen allergy. I have a very bad pollen allergy. So yeah, I love green, and I love nature. When I came here, I couldn't even imagine going camping. To do what? I can't even imagine the need or the joy of camping. I have never tried it and I don't see it. Why should I go and pitch a tent, and then sleep on the ground in that tent? And then cook food with this little stove and look for some sticks to cook food? And then have mosquito bites and use repellent? No. it is not my way of having fun. I would rather take my walks every day and enjoy nature for what it is but not stay outdoors, you know? I wouldn't mind going to visit somewhere like a river or cottage, but I would live in a cottage, not in a camp, outside in a tent."

Parent Perceptions on the Value of Nature for Children

Mama Johari: "Oh man. A child experiences a lot of learning, a lot of appreciation, a lot of discipline, in the outdoors. Because as much as nature is beautiful, anything can kill you out there. There are cliffs, trees falling, fires, wildlife. So, you learn how to be cautious first of all. You learn how to use all your senses with nature, and I think that develops an appreciation for it. So, I think awareness, a child gets more aware. They get more grounded naturally because you have to respect nature in order for it to respect you back. So, they get that sense of appreciation for the outdoors."

Mama Waridi: I think it's calming, like I don't know. Like in other words I usually say that it is a moment of serendipity."

Baba Fungo: "So I think it's a really big deal that kids grow up to know how things get to the table and to the store. That's one thing. It's ignorance to grow to a certain age without having the respect of how these things get to the store and get to the table. They might look down on the work done by farmers if they don't know how hard farming is. I used to wake up at four in the morning to help in the daily farm before going to school. Kids are missing out on that and the hard work that farming is. And also, how rewarding it is to grow your own food. I can just go to the garden and get a tomato and eat it right now. They will never know the beauty of that and the beauty of achieving something like that. I also feel like my experience in the US has been that kids' health is affected mentally and physically by just sitting in the house and not able to exercise. One of the things is that you never saw a kid that was obese in Kenya except in the urban areas. That is one immediate benefit. The other thing that is true too is that kids learn how to interact with others, strangers, and the land. If you are not out here looking at what has changed, then you have no appreciation of taking care of nature. If you are out here and you are able to play with the other kids and then you realize you can't play with other kids because it's too hot or too wet or the area is taken up by development. For example, in Kenya kids would play but all of a sudden, the open field is being grabbed by someone who wants to develop the place. Without that experience, kids won't fight for open spaces because they

don't care. It's not a big deal for them. I think the other thing kids can get out of nature is a free spirit. I feel like it is much more experiential outside. Kids can just learn how to fix things like if they are riding a bike and it breaks down in the middle of nowhere, you are forced to try to fix it yourself rather than having somebody else do this for you. So, I think kids getting their hands dirty gives them an idea that they can fix stuff, right? I know that whenever we go hiking, my kids used to carry a backpack that had everything in it. They would have a knife, a pair of scissors, bandages, food, water, all these things, over prepared. Once we started going out more, that anxiety about going out and what to do if something happened eventually went away. So, it is actually a great experience if kids can learn on their own how things grow and appreciate the environment more and take care of it. They can see how it's changing. You don't know what your community needs, or it is changing if you don't go out. Learning how to interact with others and playing outside with the other kids gave me the idea that we stopped looking at them as different. We realized we are all kids. We all get hungry the same way. We used to share our food, that sharing outside was special."

Baba Rahimu: "I think that as a kid you don't think much about them, to be honest with you. It's just the time. It's more freedom, you are not told to stop running into things and you can just do what you want to do. So, it's freedom, right? But as an adult and looking back, kind of retrospectively, I know that there is just something therapeutic about being outside, about exercising you know

because you are outside and running, you are literally running the whole time. There's also that, I said, freedom, and that is very important because there is just a field, and you can play for acres and acres and miles and just play as long as you keep focus on the time and the responsibilities that you have and then you can run as much as you want. I think that like I said before there is that element of freedom. So that child has a lot of space to play so the space concept. The space concept that there is just so much more space outside. I think also covid is teaching us the importance of the freshness of the air and there is just more circulation outside. The air is free and fresher outside. And I think every space has a different lesson for everybody. So being outside, they make connections. For example, if they see a plane outside then they can make the connection that that is the plane that they saw in their book. They will see that the sky is blue. So, they will see the lessons of nature outside that they are learning in their book or seeing in the computer. So of course, there is a lot that you can go down the road and point at you know and think that they learn." Baba Rahimu also discusses how spending time in nature is important for socialization. "But then if the space is like a jungle gym or something like that, then there is socialization, you know? In the family system, there are only four of us in this home but when we go outside, and her friends are playing outside then she has more friends to play with so there is that socialization aspect."

Mama Lulu: "Yes, it is very vital, it is very important. Nature gives us so much. So much. There is so much in the natural universe that speaks to us. And speaks

to us in terms of health. I love it. That's why I love Eugene. When I take walks in the evening, I love the trees. It's like the leaves are just talking to me and saying, “Be peaceful. Be peaceful.” and that's one thing that I love. I believe that the universe speaks to us through the trees, I believe that these trees have a message that is therapeutic. It is important to take advantage of that.”

Parent Preferences and Hopes for Summer Camp

Mama Johari: “I would have to ask other parents because most parents that I have experienced here in the US have sent their kids to summer camps. So, I guess it is a crucial part of their kids' learning. It also helps the kid make community with his friends because he is out with his peers, they learn to spend time together and explore together as peers rather than being under constant supervision of parents. So, I think it's a good opportunity for a child to experience summer camp. I mean I would want my son to experience that, so I am not the parent who is the overbearing mom to the boy, very protective. So, letting him loose, which is what my parents did, they let go of us during the holidays, and they gave us to our grandparents and let us explore on our own. I want him to be independent and have that socialization. I would hope that he learns something, he learns survival skills out in nature, that he would learn how to use all his senses to communicate and how to trust people around him and trust himself. I would hope that he appreciates nature more and that he comes back with a sense of discipline just from experiencing the outdoors.”

Mama Waridi: “Of course.” When asked what she hopes happens when a child attends camp she said, “I want her to experience nature. I want her to appreciate what she sees. I think by sending her to a summer camp, which is something back at home, it happens on school field trips. I think when she interacts with people of her age, she will learn so much. Then when I just interact with her, and I take her out and she sees the environment, I might not know everything. But when she interacts with other people, and there are so many people from different backgrounds and families, there will be so much for her to learn. And I think most of the summer camps, there is usually a voice of authority. Someone who is more informed about where they are going and stuff like that. So, she will learn more than when she is with me. I think if they appreciate nature more, they will appreciate nature more. And they learn not to take things for granted. Like, in my country we have a problem of deforestation. People are cutting down trees. I think if they went out and learned more about the environment and saw how beautiful the environment is and how it helps our community or the world or the globe in general, they will appreciate trees more and they won't cut them down. I want them to harden up. I want them to be independent and I think that is one way of teaching them independence because they will be away from you. They are going to learn how to be on their own.”

Baba Fungo: “so I did not send my kids to summer camp. From talking to other immigrants, you start to feel antsy about sending your kids there. And you don't want your kids to experience anything bad. When you are near, you can step in

and minimize it or try to mitigate it. For example, if my kids have bad experience, you can rephrase that experience and restate it in a way that minimizes harm. You learn as an immigrant and person of color that these things can be very traumatizing for your kid, so you try to downplay or rephrase it in a way that is less harmful. For example, if my kids were to tell me my teacher doesn't like when I answer questions, I would say I'm sure it's not just you. I might say something like ask the teacher how to ask better questions. Just so I get my kids to feel like, don't jump to conclusions, I want them to be skeptical of jumping to conclusions. So, if I'm not near and able to do that, I know discrimination is real and I need to protect my kids from this, I don't want to completely not be in a place where maybe this is something we can discuss and debrief about. We have gotten to the point where if something happens to the kids, we debrief over the dinner table. So, we can resolve it for them. So, in camp, that is not possible."

Baba Rahimu: "I would. I think because of how much I have emphasized safety and discrimination; those are my number one goals. So, if she goes and is safe, and she has a good time and is taken care of like every other kid, equally, so if everyone is being punished and my kid is as well, then that's fine. If she did wrong, as long as she did wrong, let her be punished. That is fine by me. The problem comes when she is treated in a lesser way than everybody else. So, that will be my number one priority. Number two, I think just to socialize and have a good time. So, you know, they have some physical engagement of course I know that is a default, they have activities for them and maybe some sort of skill, a new

skill. Let's say this summer camp has swimming lessons or some skill. Painting, piano lessons, I don't know. Something cool that she can come and say to daddy I learned how to do this. That will be exciting as well. But from a parent's perspective, not thinking as a scholar, and it's important to be aware of the difference. As a parent I think her safety and not being looked down upon are my biggest concerns. Everything else is neither here nor there, she is a baby, and she is going to play, you know, whatever.

Mama Lulu: "Yes, they can. My kids are different, they are more different than I because they have grown up here. So, they don't mind the outdoors. My son is out right now on a bike, and he will go to the river with his friends to swim. I don't even swim in the river, but they love it. Compared to me, they love it. They don't mind at all. That's why I am saying that it is culturally, especially when it comes to things like camping. I like sending my kids off to camp because they make friends. I always hope that he has a story to tell. I always hope he will tell us. I am always asking, ``What did you watch? What did you see?

Parent Concerns and Reservations of Summer Camp

Mama Johari: "Challenges? Again, this is just, I don't even know if he will have these challenges at all because naturally kids just thrive when they are independent, and they succeed and thrive in situations when they are away from their parents. But some kids don't. They want to be around their parents, and

they want the company and supervision of their parents. So, I don't know if he will feel lonely or neglected or feel like I am sending him away and don't want to spend time with him. Because I mean I was watching the movie yesterday, there was this boy who was raised by his single mom and she was really rich and really busy so she never paid him any attention and she would send him to summer camp in the summer, but since she was never home, he thought he could get away with it so he paid the summer camp teachers and decided to stay and do things on his own because New York is much more interesting than being in camp or with other kids. So, for him, he thought he didn't thrive around other kids and found it boring running around in nature, he would rather be reading books or exploring New York City on his own. So, I don't know. I don't know what my son will be like. If he is going to say I don't like camp, I want to be on my own, kids bully me, kids aren't fun to be around, I like adults, I don't know. My hope is that he will enjoy being around his peers. What other challenges? Yeah, if he was being bullied that would not be cool so I would consider that a challenge because he wouldn't be thriving around his peers. I don't know but it was another movie, the camp instructors sexually harassing children. I don't know if this is true or not. So, I wouldn't want that to happen at all. Then, what else, just again the unknown. Being out in nature, there are things that can happen that you just can't expect. I think that's why you have to sign a waiver or something. Because whatever happens in nature, you can't really predict."

Mama Waridi: “I think of some of the challenges like the ones I've told you about, attacked by wild animals and insects. And, maybe not feeling scared because maybe she is away from her mother and home. So, I can just encourage her because I feel like going out of your way and going out with your friends and going away from home will make her more independent. I would just try to encourage her and show her the benefits of it. And before she goes, in terms of preparation I will make sure I have prepared her physically like a pack for her enough clothing and stuff like that. Have emergency medicines and stuff, maybe painkillers in case anything happens. Maybe she can even have a bandage in case she gets hurt. I will just tell her to be careful, but she needs that experience to grow up. Back at home, there are so many snakes! It's a hot country so there are snakes. And it can be unsafe. And I think that's one of the reasons people will be reluctant to send their kids out to summer camp. Because there are wild animals, wild insects like safari ants, there are snakes everywhere. So, it can be scary. I used to live in a place that was next to a forest and the forest had monkeys. My baby was four and these things used to freak her out. She would cry. She would cry. They run after her, so she is taller than them, but you know monkeys want to play but she doesn't know they want to play, and they are just chasing her. They really scare her, and she would come home so stressed out and traumatized. She would tell me that she doesn't want to go there because there are so many monkeys. So, I want her to enjoy the experience, not to be traumatized.”

Baba Fungo: “In those kinds of summer camps, I hope that diversity is acknowledged. Sometimes I feel that in these kinds of things, there is a move to make everyone uniform and gloss over the differences of background and race. I think the differences need to be embraced. I think my kids need to go to camp where the fact that they are African is acknowledged, and maybe even incorporated in having young people know diversity. I don’t think not talking about things helps me. Conformity hurts immigrant or minority people. You are told that you should be like this rather than who you are. I would also not want a camp with just immigrant kids because that is advancing separateness. I want kids to go to a mixed camp where these diversities can be celebrated, acknowledged, and incorporated.”

Baba Rahimu: My biggest reservation is being discriminated against. And so, studies have shown repeatedly that black children are punished more, are put in time out more, and thought of delinquents and every bad thing. ADHD, they are put on medications and things like that. So, my biggest reservation is that she goes to camp and when people are taking turns jumping over a pool, I don't know just guessing something, she gets the last chance to jump or before her turn comes, they go to the next activity. Or when she is doing it, she is not being supervised. Especially because the age of camp counselors is that age, I'm sorry to say, but teenagers are just not smart sometimes. And most of them are biased and not even know they are being biased. And it's a problem that I think as a parent I would just be staying up all night and thinking about my baby being in

camp and being discriminated against. I also know about tokenism; I don't want her to be tokenized. So, for example they are talking about jumping rope and somebody would say to her like you know this because you are from Africa, something like that. Things that really just sit poorly with me. I know that I am going into these serious matters because oftentimes as a minority, we don't care about structures and how many stones are there. I don't care how many stones are there, they will play, they are babies, and they will have a good time. They will provide opportunities for them to play, that's not the problem. The problem for me comes from an emotional perspective or a bias perspective, that is where the meat is. I will not stay up late because there are not enough monkey bars. If she is outside, she will have fun, I know who she is. I know the camp always does a good job of having balloons, water sprays, things like that. The part that I think is a problem is, there is a teenage counselor, not knowing how to handle a racist situation, as a supervisor, not knowing how to handle a situation where my kid has been discriminated against. Those are my problems."

Mama Lulu: "What challenges do you think your child might face in participating in this experience? In camp? What challenges does my child face? Not now, but now it is just a challenge I don't know. I really try to provide for them. If I can't provide for them, then I don't send them to camp. I don't want them to go there and lack things, I just want to make sure they have everything that they need. You know, by the way, when you send your kid to camp you have to send them with some money. They always say it's optional, but how is it optional? There is

always a canteen, or a kiosk and you cannot send your kid to camp without money if the other kids have money. The parents leave them money and leave cash there. The kid goes and they deduct the amount from there and whatever remains, they give you a video of the camp or blah blah blah. I am just wondering if it is optional because there is always a time set aside for the canteen or the kiosk. So, you just wonder about the kids who don't have money and if they can't go. And if it's a black kid then you know it's an even more awkward situation so then you have to have that money for him there. Put some ten bucks so that he can buy something. Yeah. So, I don't know what challenges he might face. He didn't go to camp this year; he went last year. He didn't go to camp because we went somewhere. And another thing that my son told me is that there is a lot of classism in camps. And there are those groups. There are those kids that group together, there is a lot of grouping. It is very exclusionary. Now another thing like what you mentioned before, another thing about the camps here is that you know Eugene is very white. So last year I took him to camp, and I noticed he is the only black boy in the camp. Or maybe there were two...there were only two black boys in the camp. Of course, that is not comfortable for me, I wish camps were more inclusive you know. That's a problem in Eugene, it is really white. It's so white. Everything is so white. Most experiences here are white, and I want my children to have multicultural experiences. But since Africans are a minority, come to think of it, it would be good for the African communities to organize their own outdoor camps where we teach our children their cultural heritage. We can do storytelling

and oral evenings and storytelling so that they know where they come from, and they are proud of their ancestors. It would be a good initiative.

Parent Perceptions of Accessibility to Summer Camp

Mama Johari: "Yes, I think so. I am sure whatever school I put him in at that point would have a program or programs. I would allow him to explore the outdoors. But I feel like I would do summer camp every other year. That way I could explore the outdoors with him too. He can learn from me. In the way of transportation or proximity. It's pretty close, everything is close by. And then I have family or friends that also appreciate the outdoors, so it's easy to get people ready to go outside to walk or go hike or let's go to the ocean and relax, let's go to a park. So, there is a community to do it with."

Mama Waridi: "But I still need to know who will be in charge. I have questions. who will be in charge, I want to know what they do, what their history is, I want my child to feel safe. I also need to know who the kids are going there. I would maybe ask the organizers. So, what type of people are being invited? I need to know their demographics. I don't want my kid to interact with bullies. I hate to say it. I don't want her to interact with people who might corrupt her. First, I need to know where they are going, is the place safe? Like if it is back at home, there are places where there are elephants and places that have wild animals. I want to know if my kid is safe."

Baba Fungo: “Cost. it has to be free or subsidized in such a way that somebody is paying for it and parents are only responsible for taking them there. A lot of immigrant parents and minority parents cannot afford these camps. And secondly like I said, acknowledging or having staff there that are sensitive to diversity. That's a big deal for me. People who embrace diversity. Immigrant camp counselors, or there is some acknowledgement of people who are multilingual. At the same time, any racial diversity. That's a big deal. In a place like Oregon, it is very much dominantly white. But there are people who are not white in Oregon and it's a good thing to have those people in the recruitment of students attending and in the staff. That sounds like are we going to make it all representative? Not really. But talking about equity versus equality, you do want to make an effort towards affirmative action. A deliberate effort to get some equity, not just equality”.

Baba Rahimu: “I would have to do a lot of research about the camp. Like I told you, while I believe there are a lot of good people in the United States, there are also many twisted people in the United States. There are stories about summer camps just being a cesspool of badness and counselors are terrible people and things like that. I would have to really do my research and intensive research, but I think because I am a father now, my perspectives of trusting people have changed. And also, really there is just a lot in the news, so I am just really not trusting of situations like that. So, I just think that from a parent’s perspective, maybe when they get older my perspective will change, but I just feel like I will

have to do intensive research about the facility. I think it really needs to be like a watertight structure. A watertight, maybe airtight, I don't know which word to use. An airtight structure whereby there is a lot of supervision and accountabilities. So, there are camp counselors but there are people who are looking at the camp counselors at a regular rate. So, it can't just be 17-year old's and 18-year old's looking after babies the whole time, right? There are the camp counselors but then there are senior people, and the senior people need to be hands on, also I need to be able to show up anytime I want because there's nothing to hide. So, what is the problem? I can show up anytime I want. I can see my baby and make sure she is okay. Now these things might change down the road as they become more adult but those are just the ideas I'm thinking right now. On top of that, those issues of diversity, equity, and that kind of stuff. It is important for me, and I think it's important for my child as well. So, for example there needs to be a counselor of minority status because I truly believe that minorities tend to see things differently. I honestly think that my biggest reservations are not physical and not intellectual because she is smart, and I know she is physically capable."

Mama Lulu: "And anyway before my son goes off to camp, I really have to vet the camp. I have to do my research about the camp and look at the reviews, and then I will call the office and I'll talk to them, and I'll tell them yes, my son is coming, and he is not white, he is black. He is a black boy and I just want him to feel at home and welcome and included, not excluded. And I don't want him to feel sympathy, we don't want sympathy. I just want him to feel like he is an equal

like the rest, not to be judged by the color of his skin. And they have to give me that assurance. And so, if he goes to camp then yeah. I have to make sure he is having fun. And my son is open, if he is having a problem then he will let me know. So, I look at what other parents are saying. Sometimes I get referrals from other parents. When I came here, I found an African community that is strong and I will ask them what camps they have sent their kids to, which ones they liked and didn't like, and then I will go look at their reviews, pictures, and videos. I will see what values they stand for, and yeah, I have to vet. I really vet the camp because I think I am very overprotective when it comes to my children. I am overprotective. So, I really vet the camps that they go to. My sons play basketball and sometimes they have basketball camps, so we are like family with the basketball team and other players. We have people from different backgrounds, that one is good. The basketball camps are multicultural."

Summer Camp, Camping, and Culture

Mama Johari: "I have not had the same experience before. I would compare that to a safari so driving through the national parks and wildlife reserves. It's hours and hours of just savannah land, green grass, and you are in a car, you can't really get out, because there is danger of wildlife but it kind of gives you that feeling of being one with nature even though you are in a car. I think that's the closest I have been. I wouldn't even say it's anything close to actually walking, you know. Feeling the breeze and being in the trees, I wouldn't compare it. Yes, it's not the same. I guarantee I have never felt what I felt when I hiked here in the

us. The air is clean and fresher. The sounds, the birds, all these natural elements come to play, and I guarantee I never experienced that before. So, when East Africans came here, I would say they need exposure and people here and natives here need to create opportunities for us to explore the lands and explore nature here. My sister and I were pretty excited to be one with the outdoors, but not many East Africans are enthusiastic about taking long walks or hiking or going on these long hikes. They just want to sit home and stay indoors. For example, my dad hates the cold. If it drops a certain level, he is not going to get out of the house. He won't go outside. Whereas for us, we will gear up, put on wool socks and extra layers and a jacket, and go outside. So, people have that sense of relaxation differently. So, it would require self-motivation and a sense of exploration to experience the outdoors. I feel like for a lot of people and East Africans that come here, it just requires a sense of exposure to outdoor spaces. For me, within the first week of being here, I was already hiking and driving with family and friends to these outdoor spaces. So, like the second I landed in Oregon, they really wanted to show me mountains, waterfalls, and oceans. They were really enthusiastic about sharing their outdoor experiences with me, and that also aided my love for the outdoors here. Considering how cooped up we are in the cities in East Africa with limited access to nature because a lot of the outdoor spaces are safari lands which are reserves and protected for wildlife. And the beautiful places to hike are really far away and require a lot of money. So, I really would never have hiked anything because it's just a lot of effort and a lot of money. We don't want to spend our money doing those things. We went on

many walks in the city but that is not a nature walk because you are walking on the road to people's houses, it's not experiencing the walks we have here in the trees with the breeze."

Mama Waridi: "If I was to remember back traditionally, the African community were so protective of their environment. They had sacred trees, sacred plants, plants that you cannot cut, and trees that were special. They had religious meaning and stuff. I feel like those are things that are going away with modernization and stuff. I feel like we need to go back a little where we appreciate our trees more. Being an African, I remember we used to use herbs for medicine and those are some of the things that are fading away. They are fading away. Because I remember for example people like my grandfather would give us this tree when we got sick and stuff, it was being passed from one generation to another. The chain broke. I don't think my brother knows which tree it was, but my dad knows. So, they used to pass it down, it was like a family tree. They will pass it from one generation to another. But because of modernization and urbanization, some of these things are fading away."

Baba Fungo: "In those kinds of summer camps, I hope that diversity is acknowledged. Sometimes I feel that in these kinds of things, there is a move to make everyone uniform and gloss over the differences of background and race. I think the differences need to be embraced. I think my kids need to go to camp where the fact that they are African is acknowledged, and maybe even

incorporated in having young people know diversity. I don’t think not talking about things helps me. Conformity hurts immigrant or minority people. You are told that you should be like this rather than who you are. I would also not want a camp with just immigrant kids because that is advancing separateness. I want kids to go to a mixed camp where these diversities can be celebrated, acknowledged, and incorporated. “

Baba Rahimu: “I think it's actually something that is very good for students and kids to go to camp because I know what socialization does to a child. I have also studied immigration, immigrant families, and what conflict does to immigrant families, and this is how it starts. When you say your kid cannot go to camp because it is not culturally appropriate, well that kid is not you and your kid needs to go to camp because they are living in the United States now, they are not living in Kenya. So, whatever you are saying is culturally appropriate you have to balance the two. While you want to keep some Kenyan culture, you also have to be aware that your kid is in the US now. So, if you ask me if it's culturally appropriate, I really don't care about what culture says about how to raise my kid, and I couldn't care less about what people from my country believe about camps now. One thing that I have heard from parents across the Kenya diaspora is that they don't like sleepovers and things like that because of the principles of America. So, I think that is the cultural perspective that is taboo for many African or Kenyan people. In terms of my reservations about camp, it is not culture

based, it is based upon principles on the age of camp counselors, the mission statement, and things like that."

Mama Lulu: "I think it's cultural, I think it's cultural and I know I am not the only one. We don't camp in my culture. We don't go camping. We live in a house, and you can be surrounded by the wilderness or by the forest of trees and all that. That's your camping. What Americans do here, they drive out of town to go camping and find some outdoor space for camping. Mmm, it doesn't appeal to me. I don't want to go camping, I love my bed. I can go outside and sleep in the grass. Sometimes I go and study in the grass. I just sit under a tree and study. I love that. It's an open space but I don't like closed spaces and spending the night outdoors. lt's cultural."

Summer Camp Counselors: Dynamic Individuals with Nuanced (Nature) Experiences

Camp Counselor Sunshine: "I think it is interesting because working with young people has always come naturally to me. I think a lot of that is the playfulness that I have in my nature. I am silly, I like to play games and run around, and a lot of kids relate to that and appreciate that in adults because sometimes I think there is a big disconnect between kids and adults. Their connection with this vibrant, life force energy. I think I have lived in that wild, playful, creative, imaginative energy. I realized when I was in my early twenties that my impact on young people sky-rocketed because of their desire to listen to me and watch me

so closely. I started calling it micro-mentoring because there is not a huge age gap but in truth sometimes the people closest to our age have the most impact on what is happening to us at that time. So, I started feeling like I had a really powerful role and might change these people's understanding of themselves, of the world, of who they are, who they want to be, and started to think that is important work that I want to be a part of."

Camp Counselor Fern: "I have gotten a passion for nature, but I didn't have a passion for nature when I was growing up and it came to me in college. But now I love, I just love nature. I always want to be outside hiking, camping, or being in the water kayaking, all of those things. And I like yoga and music. I love to dance. And anything where I get to move my body is really important for me." Camp Counselor Fern did, however, spend time in the garden and doing chores outdoors when they were growing up, "My parents and grandparents both had gardens and a lot of fruit trees. Most of my memories of that was that I didn't want to work in the garden because it was always really hard work, and I didn't want to pull weeds with them. I wasn't into vegetables yet, I only liked fruits. I didn't eat the things that came out of the garden. It was something I wanted to get away from. On top of that, my family wasn't into hiking or camping, although we did spend a lot of time going to zoos and aquariums. So, I was into wildlife and seeing animals and things like that. My experience with nature was always kind of passive, I saw things, but I wasn't really engaged with any kind of outdoor things. I feel like I had experiences about the outdoors but not in nature itself.

Maybe not because it wasn't important to me, but because my family wasn't into that. We spent a lot of time playing sports and doing things like that. And so, the value for the people that I was around wasn't to do things in nature really, it was more something to use for food and stuff like that."

Camp Counselor Soil: "My family in general is very environmentally conscious. My dad is extremely passionate about recycling, almost too passionate. But I was a big environmentalist in my family, so I feel like I pushed them to be active in environmental stewardship but not necessarily going out of our way to have outdoor experiential learning in any way. But when I brought up environmental topics or engagement, they encouraged it."

Summer Camp Counselors: Inclusion

Camp Counselor Sunshine: "I actually find that some of the worst traits of children come out at camp. Including and highlighting social groups, cliques, exclusion, rejection, and to be honest, I've had a lot of tough time navigating this because a lot of kids are products of their parents, and they are thrown into a social situation that they don't have the skills for. But I think exclusion is incredibly human. I think exclusion is natural because human beings are deeply craving connection and being seen and heard, feeling like they belong somewhere. You can't feel neutral about everything, and you yourself are going to feel different ways about different things. We feel like friends with people because we know what not being friends is. So, we have exclusion to provide a

contrast of what we do like and what we don't like. So, it's almost like, could inclusion and connection exist without exclusion and disconnection? You need the polarity. So, I just think that to be and to find your group is to mean that there are people that are not your group and your friends. You can't have one without the other." When asked how to make camp more inclusive for racially and ethnically diverse populations, Camp Counselor Sunshine said, People get so comfortable with what they know. They misidentify, misunderstand, and isolate the thing that is different and it's such a clear pattern in human history. If we don't understand something, we push it away and demonize it and label it as "bad." when in actuality we have no understanding of it. So, at camp, how do we open people up to things that are different from them? How do we create a culture where it is healthy to disagree, and healthy to befriend somebody or something that is outside of what you know? So, I think inclusion becomes a cultural shift more than anything. It is not something we create; it is an energy that we must cultivate. Especially for young people to know how to do it. It starts with leadership. There needs to be a commitment of showing up every day and showing up in a different way. I think inclusion is so much bigger than the young people and I find that one of the places I struggle is that some communities know what to say but they don't know how to do it. Words and actions have such a disconnection. We can't fix decades of oppression and lack of access. There is no quick way to fix something so deep in us and so old that we don't even all know that it is growing within us. How do we change that? There are no quick fixes. And so many things that have been tried are just not enough. It's not

enough. And it needs to be a bigger shift than we can even comprehend. I think we need better training for staff. And maybe being totally transparent with the kids. Maybe we can get together with them and name a bunch of stuff that is happening. What does that feel like? What if we did camp agreements where everyone shows up on the first day and we find some creative and interesting way to imprint the ideologies or ideas and then hold people accountable? That is a step. I think maybe Check in with the communities in a way that says what do you need? How can we support that need? Is it exciting for your kid to be out in nature? So direct outreach by visits or phone calls or anything like that."

Camp Counselor Berry: I think everyone feels welcome and secure and happy being in a group. Everyone is welcome. And everyone is accepting. Acceptance I guess." Camp Counselor Berry shared that they think camp is inclusive and accessible, and they attribute the lack of participation from diverse groups to a lack of desire to participate in camp, as well as money and transportation, "I think money is one and transportation. And probably just camp not being useful anymore or perceived as not useful. Or kinda just like programs could be tweaked or reformed that makes them...I don't know I feel like traditional camp could be more learning or education based with workshops might make it more inviting. So, I don't know."

Camp Counselor Fern: “Everyone’s experiences are valued in what they are doing at that moment. We all may be doing the same thing, but the way we experience that one thing is going to be different. And to say that what everyone is bringing in and how they are interacting with that activity is just as valid to every person that is doing it. To me, that is inclusivity.” In regard to camp practices, they said, “I feel like the main overarching idea and mission behind camp is inclusive because it is bringing people who have never spent time around each other together and bringing them together and having experiences together. In practice it doesn't always end up inclusive because parents want to send their kids with kids they already know, or they wanna find one that their friends recommended to them, and so groups of people can't afford or don't have time to take their kids to camp. It becomes less inclusive in practice than in the main idea of what camp should be.”

Camp Counselor Rain: “inclusion is feeling like you belong, feeling represented, feeling heard. And being able to be yourself in whatever way feels right to you without other people putting things on you.” When asked if summer camp is an inclusive environment they said,” I would say no. I would say it's because we are being actively not inclusive, but we aren't actively being inclusive. We aren't being anti-inclusive, but we are kind of in the middle, but being in the middle and not being active in that pursuit then does not make us inclusive. That goes for a lot of different summer camps and outdoor education in general. They promote diversity but it's like how are you fulfilling that?”

Camp Counselor Soil:" Equal opportunity. I don't know, I struggle with it all the time because even when I do come up with an idea, then I'm like wait, I need to tweak that concept. So, I don't think I'm ready to give my definition on that." When asked if they think summer camp is an inclusive environment they said, "Yeah I think so. The few experiences I have had at this camp so far, everyone does seem like they are valued and have an equal voice in activities and things. I have not yet seen anyone picked on. So, I think that tells a lot about the kids in general, they are good kids. Also, the staff that I am working with are really compassionate and want to make sure every single person is enjoying themselves and not feeling excluded or picked on. It's mostly a good experience if you can get there."

Summer Camp Counselors: Benefits of Camp for Children

Camp Counselor Sunshine: "I think on the most basic level, I would love for them to learn at camp. I guess they just learn about themselves. I think a big thing for me that isn't happening in school systems is self-awareness. It is so key. But yeah, learning, building self-awareness. Building relationships. Camp is a powerful and creative time to build relationships. And I think camp hopefully will lead to a sense of personal growth and knowing yourself and knowing your boundaries. Maybe for a lot of young people, the first taste of freedom or independence. Or choice. And it's like, as you move along in your age, the experiences of being on your own and independent just grow and grow. First its

camp, then its college. It's a big building block to learn what it means for us to be on our own. I think I realize another thing about being in nature is learning about the impact on your body physiologically. Like what does it feel like to feel the wind and the sun? What is it to witness the birds singing and the more yogic meditation-based pranayama sensations? How are we giving these young people tools in their life for stress reduction and relaxation? There is something calming about it biologically. So, knowing that and teaching that to your kids, that nature is a way to take care of yourself."

Camp Counselor Berry: "I just remember going to camp and really admiring and loving my camp counselors and learning a lot from them. I hope that each kid goes to summer camp and feels special in themselves and who they are and what they're doing. I think it's really important." Camp Counselor Berry said, "I think summer camp is really beneficial because it opens up kids' minds to something so much bigger than school walls and rules. And all these expectations like getting your workload done and going towards all these goals. But then when you come to a camp setting, it's based around life skills like building a fire or pitching a tent. Looking at plants and seeing which plants are edible and what they do for the earth. You can just run and it's a bigger scale. It opens up a lot of possibilities to kids that they otherwise wouldn't focus on or know about. It's just like there are no walls. They can run and be free and explore. There is so much exploring in nature too. Like I was talking to one of my friends about the pond and if we were little it would seem so vast as a kid. The

pond probably seems huge to them. It's just like a little pond to us but when you're a kid everything is so big and it's a whole world to discover. Being outside is so good for them because they can just explore all they want. It's really good for them." In Camp Counselor Berry's opinion, camp is less popular now than in the past, and this is why she thinks diverse groups do not participate as much.

Camp Counselor Fern: "The most empowering thing that I see is when they just try something new, when they are trying something that they have never done before, specifically if it's something they don't seem excited about when they get there. If it's something that maybe they haven't done, and we talk about things we are going to do that week and they are like oh I want to try that. And then they try it and get really excited. I think that it goes back to where I didn't have any of these experiences until later in my life so seeing people getting them at early ages is really empowering to me. It's what I hope for every time I have a group."

Camp Counselor Rain: "I hope they have fun! I feel like being outside is so fun and there are so many things to learn. Especially at summer camp versus outdoor school. Summer camp is about hanging out with other kids and trying new things. It's a place where kids can shed whatever expectations have been placed on them. Kids come with papers that tell you things that they struggle with or things you should know about them before they get there. But sometimes being outside will change the way kids interact with the world. I don't have to be the bossy kid here; I can just be myself or I don't have to be the dyslexic kid

because that doesn't matter out here. Kids can be themselves because there's nothing telling them that they can't be or that they should be something else."

Camp Counselor Soil: "I hope they just really enjoy being outside. I think a lot of kids spend a lot of time inside on technological devices. How much outdoor engagement are they really getting? As a kid, I was outside all the time. I was always out in the neighborhood playing from after school until dinner time. I was never on video games or computers or phones. So, I think it's a great opportunity to put down the normal routine and be outside and get out of the comfort zone to do things they don't really do to learn things they might be passionate about and grow as a human. I hope they learn about themselves and learn that they are comfortable in situations they didn't think they were. And they might learn they are passionate about the trees or the mountains or the rivers or the lakes. It might lead to new opportunities or experiences for them."

Summer Camp Counselors: Barriers and Accessibility

Camp Counselor Sunshine: "I mean, it is complicated because there are multiple factors playing into it but for example, in the state of Oregon, there is a history of excluding people of color so then there has been decades if not centuries of building separation and all-white communities. Then we look around and wonder why there aren't people of color. So, I think there's especially in Oregon where there is incredible access to natural resources to rivers, oceans, farms, lakes, mountains, forests, and things, to think that there is really a low

population of people of color means that probably the access to those opportunities is going to be smaller. I think one of the other things that come up for me is comfort. I think it would be hard for a kid to want to go to camp if they don't feel safe in their social circles. But I guess in truth at camp you never know who is going to show up, but I imagine that if I am bullied at school then sent to camp, there would probably be some fear about being an outsider, being isolated, being rejected. So, I feel like emotionally, that would impact kids. “To make camp more accessible, Camp Counselor Sunshine recommends, “Basic needs of scholarships, and camp programs that have scholarships. And then I am thinking about transportation or parents working, so basic needs like that. Scholarships. Food security impacts camp. If everyone is told they have to bring their own lunch, is that going to be a problem?”

Camp Counselor Berry: “I also think that summer camp is not as big of a thing as it used to be. I think there are maybe more other programs for kids. Or maybe it's such an old school idea that maybe it's not seen as beneficial anymore. yeah, and maybe, it hasn't but I just feel like there aren't as many, like even camp wilani doesn't have as many kids as it used to back in the 70s and 80s. And it's like why is that? Is it because the program isn't good? I know there was money laundering, but I don't know. Not as many kids are going. Maybe the prices are more expensive. I think money is one and transportation. And probably just camp not being useful anymore or perceived as not useful. Or kinda just like programs could be tweaked or reformed that makes them...I don't know I feel like traditional

camp could be more learning or education based with workshops might make it more inviting. So, I don't know." Camp Counselor Berry thinks increasing accessibility to camp looks like adding more activities and other activities such as," I think by providing transportation and maybe doing grants or certain fundraisers for those kinds of groups to sponsor and support. Or even advertising that this is a space spot to come to."

Camp Counselor Fern: "In my experience I would say that summer camp in general is somewhat accessible. For example, when I lived in Eugene, I lived right next to the Boys and Girls Club. Right before I moved, they started opening their summer camps so I would see people running around just in the park by my house, but I saw groups of kids there. CampFire Wilani is the first camp that I have worked at, and I didn't go to camp as a youth, so it seems that there are options but the options themselves and the accessibility to those options are not necessarily equal. For example, the groups that I was seeing at the boys and girls club were mostly in grassy fields, whereas it has been rare in my job experiences to see members of those groups in forested areas and coming to camp in places where you see biodiversity that goes beyond connecting with other humans and actually connecting with the land. And the experiences that I have had with education seem less accessible than with camp itself." Camp Counselor Fern identified the following barriers, "I think time and the ability to travel is huge, especially in more outdoor focused camps. Your parents have to be able to come out in the morning and pick you up, or some guardian, and

sometimes it can be quite a distance to travel. So that's a big one. I think access to funding of course. Camp can be really expensive especially depending on the camp and the experiences in that camp. Oftentimes, with the intersection of those things it becomes more and more economic barriers definitely. And also, just finding those opportunities. So much of the world now is about marketing and where are you finding about what's going on around you, and oftentimes the places that those advertisements are going out are the same places people running the organization spend their time in. it is the same people coming to camp that are around them all the time."

Camp Counselor Rain: "Being outside makes it more accessible. There are no tests or pressure or expectations that the kids do well or do anything. You can go to camp and not participate if you don't want, or you can. The kids have more control over that. Most of the time, kids just want to have fun. If we provide them space, they will have fun. If we are being inclusive in our language and not assuming anything about the kids and being holistic. Are they food insecure? Can we provide a snack, so they feel good in their body? Everyone is coming back from different places, and we can't make assumptions about anything. Coming from a place of understanding if kids act up because as a counselor you don't see everything that goes on in their lives." When asked about barriers, they said, "I think that in regard to staffing, as a white person, and most other staff are white. That was my experience before too. It's hard to promote a mission of diversity and inclusion when the staff is not represented that way. And people

see that, parents will come and see all the staff looks the same. Even one person of color can make such a big difference in a kid's life and how powerful that can be. Outdoor educators and people who are hiring should be mindful of the image of their staff and what are the activities? Are we making assumptions before the kids sign up about their abilities based on their demographics? Language needs to be mindful and not bring kids down."

Camp Counselor Soil: "I really don't know because I don't know what the advertising and marketing practices are for summer camps, especially this one I am working with. I also don't know what sort of scholarships they offer. I know the summer camp I went to have a handful of scholarships that were offered but not many, and the price was very high. So that was a privilege. And if you were able to get the scholarship it was accessible. But how did you apply to the scholarship? Did you need electronics, internet, access to technology? Also, this summer camp is thirty minutes from Eugene so you have to have a car to get there, have a parent who can drive you there and pick you up. So, this summer camp specifically is not accessible I believe because it requires long distance travel, and it costs money, and I don't know what scholarships are offered. public transportation maybe but given the pandemic, that's not possible. So that limits the accessibility of camp. Like I said, people need parents who can take time off work to pick them up and drop them off. Like I said, scholarships too." When asked about barriers they said, "Price, location, inclusion practices like in general I made this observation when we were doing training. It is supposed to be a

diversity camp but all of the staff except for one person are white. How are we going to engage with campers on diversity and inclusion if it is an almost all-white staff?"

Summer Camp Counselors: Intersectionality and Exclusion

Camp Counselor Sunshine: "I think the transition from Waldorf school to public school was difficult. I was just so on the outside, I didn't understand the culture, I wasn't acclimated to the expectations placed upon me, and so therefore I didn't meet them, and I didn't even know them. They were just so different. I was not too stylish as a young kid, there are some heinous photos of me wearing who knows what. But my mom let me have free reign over dressing myself and I was also probably pretty intense about it, but I would wear the most ridiculous outfits like who even knows what was going on. But I didn't care! And then I got to public school, and it was like, suddenly everything that I am wearing is being judged and ridiculed and questioned. I remember feeling like I can't be myself and honestly like I had to acclimate and pigeon-hole myself into this box to be accepted. So sad." To make it better they said, "I think maybe if schools had support staff for brand new students or maybe if I had a resource or words for what was happening to me. But I think if somebody had approached me and offered guidance before entering high school and given me a heads up. That would have been nice. Also, public school isn't very forgiving and there is hostility there."

Camp Counselor Berry: “yeah I grew up in a family that is very Catholic so my dad would always take the boys fishing and camping or skiing and he wouldn't take the girls. So that was hard.” To make it better they said, “Just letting any kid who wanted to go skiing or fishing go skiing or fishing. Gender shouldn't have been an element.”

Camp Counselor Fern: “I have definitely had non-inclusive experiences surrounding my gender identity. Just in environmental education in general, I use they/them pronouns and I identify as gender fluid, and I am in a male body and males are often more encouraged to do things outdoors. For me, it’s important to be seen as queer but often my male traits get elevated and highlighted more often and pronouns get misused and things like that. It just becomes something, for me I know I am mostly welcomed in outdoor spaces, but I am trying to increase accessibility for other people. So, for the people around me, I am living with and working with, to not highlight that I am not just a male or a man. To have the people around me not see that and kind of respect that identity starts to feel like they are excluding me but excluding my values.” To alleviate this, Camp Fern provides overall recommendations for camps that are discussed below.

Camp Counselor Rain: “I've been super privileged. I think with my experiences and support of family and friends. I don't believe I've had an experience of exclusion that would be related to my race or gender. I think there are small instances in sports here and there. For example, I wanted to play baseball rather

than softball, but I had to play softball. I played it for one year and then I quit but even that wasn't traumatizing. I had support and access to so many other things that that small instance of exclusion didn't impact me whereas if that was something that was continually happening in my life."

Camp Counselor Soil: "I grew up in a small town in Georgia and I was the only Jewish person in my school, so I was picked on because of that. I had a lot of insensitive comments made toward me. So, dealing with being a minority in that sense, a religious minority is something I have learned lessons from. And I try to make sure nobody else experiences that whenever I am present." To make this better they said, "Not be picked on. I don't know, it was almost expected. Like I was the only Jewish person here and that they have ever met so I have to take this bullying in a way because it's expected but maybe hopefully, I can educate them."

Summer Camp Counselors: Recommendations

Camp Counselor Sunshine: "Leadership. There needs to be a commitment of showing up every day and showing up in a different way. I think inclusion is so much bigger than the young people and I find that one of the places I struggle is that some communities know what to say but they don't know how to do it. Words and actions have such a disconnection. We can't fix decades of oppression and lack of access. There is no quick way to fix something so deep in us and so old that we don't even all know that it is growing within us. How do we change that?

There are no quick fixes. And so many things that have been tried are just not enough. It's not enough. And it needs to be a bigger shift than we can even comprehend. One step forward I think is better training for staff. And maybe being totally transparent with the kids. Maybe we can get together with them and name a bunch of stuff that is happening. What does that feel like? What if we did camp agreements where everyone shows up on the first day and we find some creative and interesting way to imprint the ideologies or ideas and then hold people accountable? That is a step. I think maybe Check in with the communities who need more access and inclusion in a way that says what do you need? How can we support that need? Is it exciting for your kid to be out in nature? So direct outreach by visits or phone calls or anything like that."

Camp Counselor Berry: I think by providing transportation and maybe doing grants or certain fundraisers for those kinds of groups to sponsor and support. Or even advertising that this is a space spot to come to."

Camp Counselor Fern: "I think encouraging more diverse groups to work in the field, and that starts with even teenage training programs like having somebody who went to camp earlier coming to train to be a counselor. So, training and encouraging people who are not in the privileged groups to work in those settings is the first thing because for a lot of parents that is going to be the first thing they look at - who is going to be working with their kids. And are they going to make my kid feel included when they are there? I guess that isn't an easy fix in itself

but it's something that I think more places can definitely prioritize. And then I really feel like scholarships can be more accessible and more available. We often look at creating scholarships for older groups and we don't think about it for youth. At least in my experience. It doesn't feel emphasized for younger kids. There can be a shift from funding teenagers and 20-year old's and finding some 7- and 9-year-olds to go to camp and have those experiences instead."

Camp Counselor Rain: "I think the hiring of diverse staff. I think that we have an older population of staff which is really good because their brains have developed and have more education, so they understand child development more. But camps can be more aware of their image based on hiring and the people who have first contact with the kids. That can make a big difference."

Camp Counselor Soil: "I do not know."

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