Professionals Reflect on the Under Representation of Visitors of Color in Wilderness Areas

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PROFESSIONALS REFLECT ON THE UNDERREPRESENTATION
OF VISITORS OF COLOR IN WILDERNESS AREAS

by

Jessica Iris Ostrov

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Education: Natural Science and Environmental Education.

Hamline University

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I would not have arrived at this point without the guidance of teachers that have shaped my eco-identity and the passion for sharing it: The amazing Mike Link, Bryan Wood and Douglas Wood; my “big sisters” Becky Guneratne and Jeni Holt; and my greatest teacher ~ my uncle, Chuck Levine.

To these important women in my life ~ thank you for the never-ending love and support: My Boubie, Gloria, my mother, Lori, my aunties, Marla and Tarri, my sister, Mollie, and my best friend, Liba.

But most of all, this capstone is dedicated to my son, Nico. 

*May you always be embraced in nature and find peace, love, and connection there.*
“I would encourage us all, African Americans, Asians, Latinos, Whites, Native Americans to study history. I long for the time when all the human history is taught as one history. I am stronger because you are stronger. I am weaker if you are weak. So we are more alike than we are unlike.”

~ Maya Angelou
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: Capstone Context ...................................................................................................... 9
  Introduction .................................................................................................................................... 9
  Personal Significance of the Capstone Question ........................................................................... 11
  An Increasingly Diverse America ................................................................................................. 15
    Wilderness Visitor Statistics ....................................................................................................... 16
    Wilderness Staff Statistics .......................................................................................................... 19
  Significance of Closing the Gap ..................................................................................................... 20
  Considerations ............................................................................................................................... 23
  Conclusion and Capstone Organization ......................................................................................... 25

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review .................................................................................................. 26
  Introduction ................................................................................................................................... 26
  History of the Framework of Inequity of United States Parks ...................................................... 28
  Negative Impact of the Lack of Broad Participation in United States Parks ............................ 34
    Sustainability/Broad Support ........................................................................................................ 34
    Physical and Mental Public Health ............................................................................................... 36
    Strengthening Families/Youth Development .............................................................................. 38
  Explanations and Contributing Factors to the Scarcity of Visitors of Color in Wilderness Areas ......................................................................................................................... 39
CHAPTER FOUR: Data Analysis

Racism as it is Manifested in Outdoor Spaces

A Feeling of Unwelcome

Stereotypes

Unequal Distribution of Wealth

In the Name of Progress It Can Seem Like Moving Backwards

Reality of Diversity Initiatives

A Masked Form of Racism Within the System

Design, Programming and Staffing Disconnect

Socio-Spatial Issues

When Word-of-Mouth Doesn’t Reach New Communities

When You’re the “Only One”

The Cycle Has Been Broken

Conclusion

CHAPTER THREE: Capstone Methodology

Introduction

Rationale for the Research Paradigm and Qualitative Interview

Design of Data Collection Tool: Demographic Survey

Design of Data Collection Tool: Qualitative Interview

Design of Data Collection Tool: Reflection Template

Data Analysis

Interview Logistics and Participants

Limitations of the Research Design

CHAPTER FOUR: Data Analysis
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 – Overview of Participants..............................................................81
Table 2 – Proximity of Wilderness Locations to the City.................................85
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Nighttime Cherry Blossom Viewing</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Family Camp</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Participation in Outdoor Activities by Demographic</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td><em>The Green Book</em>, Spring of 1956</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Annual Income of Outdoor Participants</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Demographic Survey</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE

Capstone Context

How often is the soul of man, especially that of the child, deprived because one does not put him in contact with nature. ~ Maria Montessori

Introduction

“Mama, they have brown skin like mine,” my son leaned over and whispered to me during an unusual weekend at camp. This was an observation my son has made exactly two other times in our lives: riding on the city bus to the downtown library, and watching President Barack Obama on a video clip. It is not something that he had ever said before in a wilderness area.

In the summers, my son and I live and work at a family camp next to a protected wilderness area. It is located five hours north of the major metropolitan area in the state in which this study will take place. I see the magic that happens for families every day at camp. According to the camp’s website (About, YMCA Twin Cities, 2015), the mission is “to strengthen families by providing opportunities for individual and family growth, supporting spiritual development and enhancing environmental awareness in a wilderness
setting” (¶ 1). This mission is lived and breathed in everything that we do to serve camper families. In 2013, I joined the board, and two committees: Sustainability and Outreach and Inclusion. I am passionate about protecting this precious wilderness area and making the experience of family camp accessible to as many people, from as many backgrounds, as possible. From my perspective, camp is for everyone.

For those of us who work or volunteer at the camp, I feel we have the honor of making it feel welcoming to anyone who would like to visit. However, the camper base is quite narrow—almost entirely comprised of white campers. In fact, of those who chose to fill out the most recent online evaluation, 83.28% of ethnicity was reported as white (S. Wilke, personal communication, March 22, 2015). The reality that the majority of campers are white leads me to search for an explanation through my capstone question: How do people working in wilderness areas describe the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of visitors of color?

In this capstone, I analyze the issue in a few ways. After a thorough literature review, my data collection employs qualitative interviews with five people connected to this field and living in the region where research is conducted. The interviewees include a state park naturalist, a visitor services director for a regional park, and staff involved with an urban outdoor program and family camping.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four sections. First, I give an overview of the personal importance of this capstone question as well as share an observation I made while traveling in Tokyo, Japan, that demonstrates the universality of humankind’s need to connect with nature. The demographic statistics of who is visiting natural areas are illustrated next, as is a discussion on how statistics and perceptions are
interwined. The next section highlights the considerations that I will be factoring into my research. The last section provides a brief conclusion and an overview of the next four chapters.

**Personal Importance of the Capstone Question**

Understanding how to increase the diversity of camp has a personal dimension for me. I am a third generation Jewish American single mother from an Eastern European background. My son’s father is from Ghana, West Africa, and lives in Tokyo, Japan. Since 2012, my son has been spending his summers growing up at the family camp as a “camp kid.” In the winter of 2015, a partnership between camp and an organization that engages underserved families with outdoor adventure resulted in five black families from an economically challenged area of the city traveling up to camp.

It was through our experience with these families that I realized that my desire to expand diversity at camp was a personal one as well as for the greater good. Because I had the privilege of never being concerned for my safety or thinking about whether or not I would see people that look like me in wilderness areas, it actually had not occurred to me until that point that my child may be seen differently in natural spaces. He will not be seeing many people that look like him, and potentially, he could encounter racially motivated discrimination or danger.

The families associated with the organization came to camp over winter break, and many of the members of the group had not been outside of an urban environment. I watched the weekend progress and saw my son naturally connect with the boys. He leaned over to me and said, “Mama, they have brown skin like me.” I then realized how
meaningful it would be for my son and I if there were greater diversity in our camper base and the greater network of wilderness areas in the United States.

I also saw the dynamic of the weekend shift powerfully in just the short time that the families were there: what started as trepidation and unease on the first night, melted away into joyful, unplugged family time with daylight of the first morning. By the second morning, the families did not want to leave, making comments about how they rarely have this much quality time with their children, they seldomly see their children this engaged, and how cherished this experience will be for them. In addition to this powerful experience at camp, I will share an international experience that highlights the universal importance of being able to connect with nature.

In 2015, my son and I traveled to Japan during Cherry Blossom season. I had not planned the journey intentionally at that time to coincide with this phenomenon ~ sakura ~ as the blossoms are called in Japanese. However, the timing was perfect, and every person I met was thrilled that our visit was coinciding with this special occasion (Fig. 1).
The people of Tokyo go to great lengths to secure their spot under the cherry trees, even placing tarps down before they go to work in the morning. Although many spend their days in an office-type environment, high in a skyscraper, wearing the drab colors of the corporate uniform, I interpret their desire to have a space below the sakura as a longing for a connection with nature within this concrete jungle. When the sakura is in bloom, it seems to me that there is a sprinkling of magic over the city that unites people with nature. It was powerful to see the connection to nature on the other side of the planet, thousands of miles from the camp in the north woods, where that feeling seems much more obvious to me.

My son and I make sacrifices to be able to spend the summer at camp, but it is well worth it. Each day, he is outside for 12 hours and sleeps for 12 hours, while he is
navigating the grounds, running over rocks and roots and dodging branches, swimming in
the cold, crystal clear waters of the lake (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Family Camp. Photo Credit: Volunteer

He is independent, managing risks, making friends, and growing in every possible way.
He may not know it, but I have intentionally chosen this summer life for us. My goal is
to do as my uncle did for me as a child: create an unbreakable bond between the child and
nature. My hope is that he will always feel at home in wilderness, and that connection
will foster a recognizable peacefulness in his soul when he is outside.

For myself, I experience that peacefulness fiercely when I am sitting at water’s
edge under a starry sky at camp, even though this particular lake is one I never visited in
my childhood. But growing up in a mid-size city at the edge of one of the Great Lakes, I
could feel the presence of that body of water everywhere I went. I explored her jagged,
icy shores in winter, and the sandy and pebbly beaches in summer. Decades later, I still
feel at home next to a body of water ~ a connection to the essence of who I am. My
belief is that all humankind is part of nature, and for groups of people to feel excluded
from that goes against nature. In an increasingly diverse America, anyone who is involved in a wilderness area, personally or professionally, has a responsibility to gain a greater understanding of how to ensure that parks and wilderness areas are inviting and accessible to everyone.

**An Increasingly Diverse America**

Camp life and life in Tokyo often seem like they exist on different planets, yet there are many examples of connections with nature that span the globe. The connection is seen all over our planet: Native Americans celebrating in the harvest season, Finnish fisherman spending their days on a frozen lake, Israelis climbing to the top of Mount Masada, and children bird watching in Kenya. So how is it that in America, various groups seem to have lost their connection to nature? When my son and I spend the summer at camp, or go camping in state parks around the state in which this study will take place, he is often the only person of color. According to Sainato (2015), these observations are coinciding with a movement across the nation to address the issue of the lack of diversity in wilderness areas.

The demographic of the United States has been shifting for quite some time to a more diverse population. Harrison (2013) notes, “in an increasingly diverse America, understanding how race operates in the remaining racially homogeneous outposts of privilege is essential to the project of dismantling its power” (p. 333). Wilderness areas continue to remain racially homogeneous outposts. Given the power of nature to change lives and break down stereotypes, accessibility of wilderness areas is an important way to contribute to the dismantling of the power of which Harrison speaks. One might wonder if there is simply a perception that there are less visitors of color than there are white
visitors, but the statistics are shocking proof that it is no perception. The remainder of this section is broken into three subsections, first exploring the current statistics of wilderness visitors, followed by the statistics of wilderness staff, ending with the significance of closing the gap between who visits or works in wilderness and the general population.

**Wilderness Visitor Statistics**

Nelson (2015) reports that of the record 292.8 million visitors to the National Parks System (NPS) in 2014, “the vast majority of visitors were white and aging” (¶ 5). Taylor, Grandjean and Gramann (2011), of The Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center at the University of Wyoming, conducted *The National Park System Comprehensive Survey of the American Public, 2008-2009*, which is the more recent counterpart to the survey they took in 2000. When analyzed together, they show that the population in the United States has grown much more diverse, yet Taylor et al. (2011) reported that black Americans and Hispanic Americans are still vastly underrepresented in the 394 National Park Service locations.

*The National Park System Comprehensive Survey of the American Public* (2011) documented that in 2009, the visitors were:

- 78% white
- 9% Hispanic
- 7% black

The overall population of citizens had quite a different breakdown:

- 64% white
- 16% Hispanic
When asked about parks that feature more wilderness-focused recreation, such as hiking and camping in a place like Yosemite, visitors were:

- 77% white
- 11% Hispanic and Asian American
- 1% black

Kearney (2013) reported that the Census Bureau is predicting that in about 40 years, the majority of the U.S. population will be non-white minorities. In 2013, the Outdoor Foundation’s studies offered the following demographic breakdown of participation in outdoor activities by age and ethnicity, providing a broader wilderness perspective (Figure 3).
Statistics in urban parks are significant to the conversation regarding wild areas because these spaces can be seen as a microcosm of the larger outdoor environment. According to Garcia, Rawson, Yellott and Zaldana (2009), who are referencing the California Census Bureau’s survey, *A Child’s Day*, only 68% of Hispanics, 71% of black Americans, and 81% of Asian Americans agree that there are safe places for children to play in their neighborhoods. Garcia et al. (2009) reported that almost half (48%) of Hispanic children in central cities were kept inside by their parents as often as possible because their parents believed the neighborhoods to be unsafe. More than 39% of black
American parents believed the same. As a parent and an educator, my belief is that physical and emotional safety is the very least one should expect in a place of recreation and enjoyment. The staff in wilderness areas plays a large role in providing that safety and sense of comfort.

**Wilderness Area Staff Statistics**

Many authors, such as Mapp (as cited by Meraji, 2015), Finney (2014), Kearney (2013) and Johnson (2013), noted how people feel in a wilderness area when they see the staff of the park or the camp representing (or not representing) their ethnic group. Teresa Baker (2015) states,

> For every agency and outdoor organization that continues to do business as usual, I suggest you change your way of thinking. If you defend your stance by saying, “all are welcome,” yet when I walk into outdoor spaces that you manage and I don’t see faces of color, you’ve lied, and diversity isn’t of concern to you. If I look at your budgets and I don’t see a line item set aside for the work of diversity and inclusion, you’ve lied. (¶ 3)

Baker’s (2015) perception of the lack of staff diversity is proven by the numbers, as seen in the following:

- According to the Census Bureau (as cited by Peterson, 2014), 80% of National Parks Service (NPS) staff is White, and in administrative roles, there is an increase to 85% (¶ 9).
- McClure (2014) reports that only 37% of park staff is female (¶ 5).
• Golash-Boza, Noble, Treitler and Valdez (2015) points out that there are only four minorities on The National Park Foundations board, consisting of 22 members, whose mission it is to fundraise and support the NPS. 

• Nelson (2015) states that The 2014 Study for Green 2.0 (a non profit initiative committed to increasing diversity in “green” organizations) found that the boards or staff of over 300 organizations of this type did not exceed 16% minority staffing or board members.

These demographical statistics are powerful tools explicitly demonstrating the scarcity of diversity in staff, administration, and board members, which parleys into a perception that diversity is not a priority, and that wilderness areas are not welcoming for people of color.

**Significance of Closing the Gap**

How do these statistics contribute to the perceptions about “who visits” wilderness areas? Headlines were made when President Barack Obama hiked Cadillac Mountain with his family in 2010. As reported by Kong (2015), this was newsworthy not only because he was the first sitting president to visit Acadia National Park, but also because it is uncommon to see black visitors and other ethnic minorities in this country’s national parks. From my perspective, the lack of visitor and staff diversity in our national parks is a matter of social justice (these spaces belong to everybody), but also of environmental responsibility.

According to Teresa Baker (2015), founder of the African American National Parks Experience, all of us have had a hand in disturbing the natural rhythms of the planet. Her statement points out that the degradation of the environment is non-
discriminatory. At times, everyone uses resources and everyone prioritizes convenience over protecting the environment. If you agree with Baker’s (2015) ideas, it is reasonable to expect that protecting the environment is the responsibility of all of us. One potential solution to ensuring that everyone feels a responsibility to protect the environment is to foster an attitude of caring about the environment, which begins with people connecting to nature as Baker (2015) described with the following quote:

You cannot stand in the shadow of a giant Sequoia and not fall in love with the beauty of its vastness. You cannot walk the valley of Yosemite and not be in awe of its beauty. That’s the sanctity of nature, it doesn’t discriminate; it casts its beauty upon all who venture to embrace it. I challenge all to be as brave and as welcoming as nature. (¶ 6)

This all-inclusive attitude, this all-hands-on-deck philosophy is catching on, and people are spreading the word as seen in the work of Outdoor Afros.

Outdoor Afros is an organization tackling the stereotypes and breaking down barriers in this arena. According to Outdoor Afro founder, Rue Mapp (as cited by Meraji, 2015), there are more than 30 trained leaders in 18 cities across the United States facilitating outdoor-based meetups for the families and individuals that make up the more than 11,000 members. Mapp (as cited by the Children in Nature Collaborative, n. d.) had this to say when asked why she started the organization:

Outdoor Afros is an organic building of community – a way of reconnecting that can help people be happier, be empowered and find love again in things that can really help sustain them. . . . I deliberately use the word reconnect. What I focus on doing, in a more deliberate way, is helping to shift the visual reinterpretation of
who gets outdoors – reminding us of our history, who we are as people living in close contact with the land, and inviting us to build on those connections. (¶ 11)

Outdoor Afros has social and cultural goals, but also addresses the fact that diversity in the National Parks System (NPS) is a matter of social justice. These spaces belong to all people.

The goals of the NPS reflect this sentiment on their website (National Park Service. “What We Do,” 2016):

Since 1916, the American people have entrusted the NPS with the care of their national parks. With the help of volunteers and park partners, we safeguard these more than 400 places and share their stories with more than 275 million visitors every year. (¶ 1)

However, the scope of sites and stories that are told through the NPS has not always included people of color.

Boston Globe columnist Derrick Z. Jackson (as cited by Kong, 2015) reminds his readers with the following quote to keep in mind that the goals of the civil rights movement included equal access to the NPS:

Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. did not just fight for bus seats, lunch counters and school desegregation, the fight was to also allow African Americans the freedom to go to national parks and wildlife refuges and to take part in the environmental movement and preserve the outdoors. (¶ 13)

Jackson commented as well (as cited by Kong, 2015) on the hope that diversity in the parks will lead to broadened public support for these natural areas.
The National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) agrees with the necessity of broad public support for natural areas. The mission of the NPCA is “to protect and enhance America’s National Park System for present and future generations” (NPCA, n. d., About). According to “Diversity in the National Parks System” (NPCA, 2015) “the dialogue is not always comfortable, but it is always purposeful and vital to the future of the parks” (¶ 2). Whether it is the idea of environmental responsibility, social justice, or a sustainable future for America’s wild spaces, it is critical that more people, of all backgrounds, become engaged and in love with nature.

Considerations

However, the question arises – is it legitimate to assume that everyone wants to spend time in nature? Are outdoor experiences for everyone? One response to this question can be found by exploring cultural history as a means of informing the way a person’s view of nature is shaped. For example, I love gardening. I have a deep love for the way I feel at the end of a particularly grueling day of gardening: I’m hot, sweaty, dirty, sore, covered in bug bites, and my fingernails are encrusted in soil. I explained this to a black friend who thought my day sounded simply horrible (J. Bragg, personal communication, July 15, 2015). To him, yard work was always seen as a punishment. Mowing the lawn or pulling weeds was something he hated to do, and he explained to me that in his family’s history of slavery, his ancestors had been forced to do that type of work and so those tasks became regarded and passed down as the worst kinds of chores.

Logistical factors may be a consideration as to whether a person feels comfortable spending time in nature. Munger (2015) notes that in the state in which this study takes place, located in the northern midwest, most non-white residents or their parents or
grandparents originate from warm places including Thailand, Mexico, Somalia and the Southern regions of the United States, where the climate would be a limiting factor to creating a tradition of cold weather outdoor activity. Munger’s (2015) organization strategizes one solution by connecting people to nature through outdoor sport. From there, a love of nature can grow, as can a desire to protect it.

Some say it is “just not part of the culture.” To that type of argument, I would suggest that the systems that have been in place for generations have led to a feeling of unwelcome, and even danger, for people of color in wilderness places. In fact, for a very long time, it was downright dangerous to travel in many geographic areas for black motorists. Matthews (2015) tells the story of a black civic leader in the early 1930’s, Victor H. Green, who published a manual called *The Negro Motorist’s Green Book*, outlining danger spots all over the country (Figure 4).

![The Green Book](image)

Figure 4: *The Green Book*, Spring of 1956
According to Matthews (2015), *The Green Book* became a useful guide, which allowed black travelers to know where they would be tolerated and where their lives might truly be in danger as they traveled across the country. In my opinion, with a reality such as that, it is no wonder that families thought it best just to stay home.

**Conclusion and Capstone Organization**

The statistics document that there is a vast under-representation of people of color in wilderness areas. In the four additional chapters of this capstone, I explore the reasons for this disparity from different angles. Chapter Two, Literature Review, takes a deeper look at the widespread work that others have done analyzing the statistics and seeking the explanations for the scarcity of diverse wilderness visitors. Chapter Three explains the research process and interviews that I plan to utilize to conduct my study. Chapter Four analyzes themes and patterns found during qualitative interviews. Chapter Five gives me the opportunity to suggest future research, look at my personal reflections and voice my perspective.
CHAPTER TWO
Literature Review

Introduction

The lack of visitor diversity in wilderness areas has become increasingly important to national, state and city parks management staff, environmentalists, educators, politicians, camp directors and nature lovers everywhere (Weber & Sultana, 2013). An emergence of research has been conducted to address and break down the many factors that contribute to this phenomenon. Researchers are wondering why visitors to wilderness areas are largely white in the United States, where so many cultures are represented. This wondering has lead to my capstone question, which explores: How do people working in wilderness areas describe the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of visitors of color?

All humans, regardless of their demographic background, have a need for leisure and recreation: For example, Livengood and Stodolska (2004) reported that the Muslim American participants in their study, Discrimination and American Muslims in Post 9-11 America, “conceptualized leisure as an integral part of their daily routines and schedules, feelings and experiences, and equated it with the enjoyment of life and freedom to engage in the activities of their choice (p. 191).“ Chavez (2000) reports that recreation may be
accomplished through reading, visiting with friends, enjoying hobbies, or watching television, while another way to recreate is to enjoy a connection with nature.

According to Finney (as cited by Hawkes, 2015), we all have a connection with nature; if you’re breathing, “you’ve got a relationship with nature” (¶ 8). Latino participants in a study by Byrne (2011) report a myriad of nature’s benefits, including “escaping the city, getting fresh air, observing beautiful scenery, relaxing, exercise, health, and providing escape from daily routines” (p. 602).

In this chapter of my capstone, I outline the literature that discusses and explores various reasons for the underrepresentation of visitors of color to wilderness areas in the United States. By examining the history of how these areas were formed and utilized, one can begin to see the framework of inequity that created the lack of visitor and staff diversity that exists today. Moving into more current history, the confluence of the environmental rights and civil rights movements further informed how the nation was viewing the use of wild spaces. Even today, there is a disconnect between the people who live near wild spaces and the people who manage them.

The framework of inequity has a long-term impact on park visitors and employees. According to Kong (2015), without participation from all people, sustainability and broad support for the parks are in jeopardy. Physical and mental public health suffers, and the opportunities for family and youth development are lost.

The complexity of the issue is outlined by the many contributing factors. Racism has manifested in outdoor spaces throughout history in many forms, and ramifications are seen today. Kearney (2013) states that for a person of color visiting a wilderness area, the reality is likely they will be the only person of color, and that may be reason enough
Louv (2005) explains that ultimately, the cycle of children growing up in nature and then becoming adults who take their children into nature has been broken. The perspective of this review of the research literature is that one can only understand the complexities of today by looking back at history.

**History of the Framework of Inequity of United States Parks**

According to Byrne and Wolch (2009), the first groomed parks in America served a colonialist purpose. A framework was created with these spaces using the ideology that exposure to tamed nature would uplift and civilize the populations into “morally proper, socially responsible, economically prudent, and intelligent” (p. 746) members of society. The authors report that the opposite of this framework – exposure to lowlands, marshes, swamps and wild areas – would encourage savage and deviant behavior.

The parks, both national and local, were meant to be a place for upstanding (white) citizens to have a place for leisurely strolls and enlightenment, far from the chaos, filth, and profane areas of the melting pot of the city. Peterson (2014) reports that national parks as well were partially “envisioned as a refuge where white urban-dwellers could find respite from cities increasingly being transformed by immigration” (¶ 10). Byrne and Wolch (2009) go on to explain that as the public parks became more accessible to the entire populations, the poor and people of color were restricted from using the parks due to stringent dress codes and behavioral rules, given to encourage upper class cultural norms within the immigrant and working class citizens.

Purdy (2015) explains that this segregation is likely related to the ideologies of conservationist men (and in some limited circumstances, women), who designed national parks. According to Mock (2014), Theodore Roosevelt is the president most often
credited for his role in creating the parks. Mock (2014) also notes that behind the scenes, his influential friendships with Charles M. Goethe and Madison Grant are not frequently discussed. These two were leaders of the Eugenics movement, which was a “brand of scientific racism that held that people of color were an innately inferior species. These men saw the national parks as refuges for white people” (¶ 9).

Purdy (2015) goes on to discuss another potential contributor to the framework of inequity due to his ideology – Gifford Pinchot. A prominent member of society, Pinchot had great influence as he popularized the conservation movement of the time. He was a delegate to the International Eugenics Congress, and a member of the advisory council of the American Eugenics Society. In addition to those positions, Purdy (2015) notes that Pinchot was also appointed by Roosevelt as the head of the new Forest Service, and also the National Conservation Commission. Although Pinchot, Grant and Goethe had power in the behind the scenes formation of the National Parks Service (NPS), they never gained popularity as the face of the wilderness the way that John Muir did.

Credited with the quote, “going to the woods is going home” (¶ 1), Muir (1900) expressed brotherhood with animals and plants and is revered in history as a gentle and passionate environmentalist (Purdy, 2015). Saintano (2015) recalls one of the most famous stories in environmental history is that of Muir’s influential excursion deep into the woods with Theodore Roosevelt, exposing the president to the profound power of nature, which ultimately informed many of the policies regarding environmental protection.

Purdy (2015) highlights that even John Muir, a respected advocate for the environment and founder of the Sierra Club, journaled about the “dirty and irregular life”
he encountered during his 1000 mile walk from the Upper Midwest to the Gulf of Mexico. In a 1901 essay that he wrote to promote tourism to the parks, Muir (as cited by Purdy, 2015) assured visitors, “as to Indians, most of them are dead or civilized into useless innocence” (¶ 8). Peterson (2014) writes, “such fathers of conservation as Teddy Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot and John Muir held opinions that today we’d consider unabashedly racist” (¶ 10).

It has become commonplace to regard these attitudes of racism simply as part of the times in which these icons lived. Purdy (2015) believes that brushing it off as if it were excusable, given the time in history, does not hold exclusive merit, as is proven by other giants of this period. The author notes how Thoreau, a literary hero to these conservationists, lived in the same era and had different ideas. In his 1854 speech, “Slavery in Massachusetts,” Thoreau (as cited by Purdy, 2015) discusses that his heart was troubled by the human injustice of slavery so much so, that it tainted his enjoyment of the ponds and strolls in nature that fed his soul. “What signifies the beauty of nature when men are base? . . . The remembrance of my country spoils my walk” (¶ 10). From my perspective, given the mentalities of the founders, it is not surprising that the rights of the indigenous, the poor, and people of color were overlooked when the parks were formed.

Parks, both urban and wild, have devastating histories of displacing and exploiting the labor of underserved populations. Finney (as cited by Hawkes, 2015) asks, “when I see someone gained something, like a wilderness area, who lost something?” (¶ 19). Byrne and Wolch (2009) give an urban park example: the marginalized
neighborhood of Seneca Village, primarily consisting of Irish and African American populations, was destroyed to create Central Park in New York City. Central Park is romanticized in movies and television shows, yet the history of the park shows an utter lack of concern for the inhabitants of the area. At the time that Central Park was created, the gentrification of the area began, the displaced populations ended up far from the park itself, and public transportation was not such that it was very useful to them if they wanted to visit the park.

Furthermore, national and state parks have an equally unjust history filled with exclusivity and dispossession. Byrne and Wolch (2009) explain, “these parks were founded upon middle- and upper-class sensibilities and Eugenicist ideologies about pristine wilderness . . . and were spatially codified as distinctively ‘white natures’ . . . to create a white nation with abundant capital, compensating for the perceived lack of Europe’s cultural sophistication” (p. 747). To achieve this goal, populations were displaced and exploited. Cosgrove and Spence (as cited by Byrne & Wolch, 2009) contended, “wilderness ideals were complicit in the dispossession of Native Americans for land designated for national parks” (p. 747).

As well, Shu (2015) describes the exploitation of Chinese laborers working in Yosemite National Park at its conception, and how they became victims of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Shu (2015) states that this act was “the first explicitly racial discriminatory immigration law in the U.S. . . . part of a rising fever of anti-immigrant racism and violence” (¶ 6). The story of exploited peoples is just starting to be told in National Parks across the country. According to Byrne (2011), research has failed to
examine the after affects of the displacement of peoples as a tragedy and how the use or non-use of park spaces might be related.

In more recent history, Dudley Edmondson (2006) explains that the mid-1960’s were an important time for the advancement of social and environmental causes. In 1962, Rachel Carson published Silent Spring, her book that was part of the inspiration for the environmental movement. The same year, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was in Albany, Georgia, fighting segregation laws. Edmondson (2006) looks to both icons as pioneers who paved the way for him, both personally and professionally as a black environmentalist. Interesting to note, the Civil Rights Act and the Wilderness Act were passed in the same year (Finney, as cited by Hawkes, 2015).

How do these two acts manifest in reality? On a local level, one might assume that “natural public places, including parks, school and sport fields, rivers, beaches, forests, mountains, and trails, are a necessary part of any urban infrastructure for healthy, livable, just communities” (Garcia, Rawson, Yellott & Zaldaña, 2009, p. 17) and would therefore be equally distributed and accessible between different socio-economic groups. However, Byrne (2011) reports that several authors describe how the parks in low-income areas often do not provide a plentiful variety of recreational opportunities or even park facilities in good repair (p. 597). According to Byrne and Wolch (2009) “the uneven development of park space means that the multiple benefits of parks are not equally accessible. People of color are especially likely to encounter problems in accessing parks, and this has emerged as a compelling environmental justice issue” (p. 754).
Rott (2016) cites Darla Sidles, Arizona’s Saguaro National Park’s superintendent, as she makes the point as well that people of color are often far removed from the natural spaces right in their own community. “The type of people that are coming to the park versus the people just five minutes away in Tucson is really an issue for us here” (¶ 2). Tucson’s population is estimated at 44% Hispanic or Latino, while less than 2% of the 650,000 visitors to the park represent the Latino community. This disconnect also occurs in the state in which research for this capstone is conducted.

Anthony Taylor (Havey, 2015), Adventure Coordinator for the Loppet Foundation in Minneapolis, Minnesota, recognizes the insight of the founding fathers of the Twin Cities to make the plentiful waterways available and accessible to the public. However, in the following quote, Taylor (as cited by Havey, 2015) describes the alienation of some communities living the closest to Twin Cities’ rivers and lakes:

If we believe access to the outdoors is a public right, in order to re-engage those communities who have been disconnected, we need to increase the amount of investment and outreach we do. We know people are going to drive from Edina and south Minneapolis to go skiing at Wirth [Park]. The ones who aren’t coming are the ones who live down the street. (¶ 7)

There is a disconnect between the “ones who live down the street” and those who are influential in creating policy surrounding these areas in the Twin Cities. Regulations regarding land use are made by the people in a position to be involved when decisions are being made. Green, Tarrant, Raychaudhuri, and Zhang (2005) note that “economic segregation leads to environmental segregation” (p. 38). In my opinion, the long-standing history of displacement and disregard for people of color, paired with the
contemporary marginalization of current residents, directly correlates to the lack of broad participation in wilderness visitation.

**Negative Impact of the Lack of Broad Participation in United States Park Systems**

**Sustainability/Broad Support**

In the forward to Dudley Edmondson’s (2006), *Black & Brown Faces in America’s Wild Places*, James Mallman, president of Watchable Wildlife, Inc., wrote, “We know that people only support what they understand and value. As our nation becomes more culturally diverse, a growing portion of our population is not connected to wildlife and our conservation heritage” (p. 5). Mallman (as cited by Edmondson, 2006) goes on to explain that with exclusion of such large proportions that has lasted for so long, “the negative repercussions of this exclusion will be hard felt for years to come” (p. 5). Brian Joyner (as cited by McClure, 2014), a supervisor of an NPS diversity program states, “if the National Park System doesn’t do a better job nationally to represent the minorities of the population, less visitors will be attracted to the parks and ultimately the importance of the park system to America could be compromised” (¶ 9). This sentiment is echoed by staff that work in national parks.

Cliff Spencer is one of just a few African Americans working in the upper ranks of the NPS. He is superintendent of Colorado’s Mesa Verde National Park. He is looking forward to a day when it will not be newsworthy to see a black park ranger. Spencer (as cited by Peterson, 2014) also understands that the future of the park depends on the broadening of the visitor base:

We can’t allow millions of people, generations of people, to not experience parks and have no connection to them. When those people get into positions where
they’ll influence policy and hold the purse strings, they won’t understand what parks are and how important they are. (¶ 6)

Spencer believes that with the pressures put on parks to allow things such as motorized recreation and the threats of mining or logging, the focus should be placed on connecting all people to the land. Fostering this stewardship of the land by all people is the key to its preservation.

Carolyn Finney (as cited by Latour, 2014) agrees that it will be the people who will work toward protection of the environment, and given how the demographics have changed, it will not look like the same people as it was 60 or 70 years ago. Therefore, Finney (as cited by Latour, 2014) believes it is critical to engage all people and make the connection to nature by increasing awareness and access.

The parks’ survival is dependent upon equal opportunity. Rott (2016) quotes Darla Sidles, Arizona’s Saguaro National Park’s superintendent, who is concerned with the lack of Hispanic visitors in the park, next to Tucson, a city that is comprised of a large Hispanic population. “If we’re not being relevant to almost half of the population, then 30, 40, 50 years from now, the park isn’t going to matter to them” (¶ 3). Johnson (as cited by Lovitt, 2011) asks, “what is the Park Service going to do in 2050 if the potential stewards (such as legislators and the people who vote them into office) have no sense of ownership or connection to the national parks?” (¶ 28). Consequently, Peterson (as cited by Lovitt, 2011) points out that if the majority of the population feels no connection, it will not matter if every single white person decided to protect the environment. They would still be the minority. When the vast majority of American citizens are disconnected with nature, there are detrimental societal issues that arise.
Physical and Mental Public Health

The uses of park space are too numerous to count. According to Razani (2014), one use is movement, and people are easily drawn to green spaces, consciously or unconsciously, to get physical and mental health exercised at the same time. Dr. Amanda McCoy and Dr. Kristin Alves (as cited by Kong, 2015) describe negative public health ramifications to the lack of visitation by people of color to wilderness areas.

According to these doctors, when children and adults are refraining from the activity level that accompanies outdoor adventures, the resulting sedentary lifestyle is contributing to the obesity epidemic. They both noticed the lack of diversity while they were hiking Acadia National Park. McCoy is black and Alves is Scottish American. McCoy (as cited by Kong, 2015) noted, “The rising obesity epidemic, particularly in African Americans, is an indicator of the low priority placed on physical activity and exercise” (¶ 14). According to many authors (cited by Byrne & Wolch, 2009), swimming, biking, running, hiking, skateboarding, sledding, in-line skating and playing sports are just some of the activities that many parks allow. There are also many “passive,” peaceful activities to be enjoyed in parks, such as picnicking, sunbathing, fishing, painting, bird-watching, playing musical instruments, people-watching and playing with children or animals.

All of these activities, while done in a beautiful, natural space filled with fresh air, rain, snow, sunshine or other, are incredibly valuable to the mind, body and spirit (Byrne & Wolch, 2009). A Latino participant in Byrne’s study (2011) demonstrated her affirmation that nature has a positive affect on one’s well-being: “because I like the silence . . . no car noise, no people noise, I am happy with just hearing birds singing, little
animals here and there, it is good for your health” (p. 602). Many urban parks and green spaces contain community gardens, which serve to educate and provide well-balanced food options and provide opportunities for community building. Razani (2014) discusses that on the flip side, a poor diet goes hand in hand with unhealthy living.

Garcia, et al. (2009) note that the sedentary lifestyle that has become so normalized in American society can lead to obesity, diabetes, heart issues and mental health issues such as depression. A study by Gross (2015) done in Barcelona, Spain pointed out that green spaces are significant ways to lower stress levels, decrease air pollution and block the distracting noises of the city. A 2004-2006 study based on school records in California showed that 37 out of 71 school districts were not enforcing the required 200 minutes of physical education to be provided every ten days to students. Garcia et al. (2009) make the point that “this is the first generation in the history of the country in which children will have a lower life expectancy than their parents if obesity is not reversed” (p. 5). Furthermore, the children’s overall development is strengthened by time in nature.

Richard Louv, as noted in his book, Last Child in the Woods (2005), has coined the phrase: “Nature Deficit Disorder” or NDD, in which the healthy development of children is compromised without the opportunity to spend as much unstructured free time in nature as possible. According to Louv (2005), children must have the “loose parts” found in nature (i.e. sticks, rocks, water, seeds) to engage the parts of themselves that lead to imagination, grit, assessing risk, and growing strength of character. In my experience, children and families that are given uninterrupted, unstructured outdoor time grow, both as individuals and as family units.
Strengthening Families/Youth Development

Latino participants of Byrne’s study (2011) explained that being together as a family was an especially important benefit, and went on to say, “this is the only time we have together. Between school, work and so on, we don’t see each other” (p. 602). Another participant explained, “because I work, and they go to school, we need to have time together, to go out to the park and to walk.” Anthony Taylor, Adventures Coordinator for the Loppet Foundation agrees that nature is a powerful way to engage whole families. He feels particularly strongly about empowering parents as part of the process, and argues that any program that doesn’t include the parents is [indirectly] undermining the family unit (A. Taylor, personal communication, December 27, 2014). One opportunity for families to spend time together in a safe, semi-structured environment is a wilderness-based camp.

The YMCA is an organization that strives to support youth development, healthy living and social responsibility (About | YMCA Twin Cities, n. d.). Nationally, the YMCA has many youth and family camps. The camp where I work in the summer is specifically designed for family camping, and the values of family growth and youth development is integrated into all of the programming and board decisions. The following description is offered to give an idea of the importance of spending time in nature together as a family:

Whether by schedules or screens, we are often distracted from the people we love the most. Family camps take you away from your normal routine. We offer a north woods escape, where you can surround yourselves in serene wilderness, take a break from life’s many interruptions and relax together as a family.
Families come in all shapes and sizes. The definition of family can be different for many people. At camp, we appreciate the value of diverse populations and welcome all. Our camp brings together families of any shape and size, strengthening relationships and creating unforgettable memories that you’ll share for a lifetime (About | YMCA Twin Cities, n. d.).

Razani (2014) discusses how time as a family in nature is important as children grow through their developmental stages.

Razani (2014) believes that by providing families access to nature creates opportunities for children to take risks, yet feel safe because their trusted adults are nearby. Communication is strengthened as there is time to explore and connect to each other. Resilience grows as families encourage each other to hike that extra mile, or climb to the next branch of a tree. The bonds grow deeper throughout “distraction-free moments of quiet, tenderness, and laughter between parents, grandparents, and siblings in nature” (¶ 5). So with all of the many advantages of time in nature, it is my opinion that a great opportunity is lost by not ensuring that all families have equal access to wilderness areas.

Explanations and Contributing Factors to the Scarcity of Visitors of Color in Wilderness Areas

I consider this section to be the heart of the entire capstone, and in it, I describe the research that has been done in various outlets, such as scholarly papers, newspaper and magazine editorials, blogs, and published books. The content is divided into subsections based on racism as it is manifested in outdoor spaces, unequal distribution of
resources, institutional flaws, and other factors contributing to the culminating issue that the inter-generational cycle of connecting with nature has been broken.

**Racism as it is Manifested in Outdoor Spaces**

Historical and contemporary racial violence and segregation continues to make a tragic and significant impact in the United States. Gotham (as cited in Byrne, 2011) discusses that until 1948, people of color were, by law, confined to specific areas within cities around the nation. Jim Crow ideologies, into the 1960’s, were supportive of “separate but (supposedly) equal urban park systems” (p. 595). Finney (as quoted by Latour, 2014) says, “those barriers would come to shape our most basic perceptions about who cherishes nature and who belongs in it” (¶ 6). Finney (as quoted by Latour, 2014) goes on to explain how the legacy of slavery and segregation “mapped the wilderness as a terrain of extreme terror and struggle for generations of blacks – as well as a place of refuge” (¶ 7). Finney, in her own scholarly paper elaborates on the ongoing impact of slavery and segregation (n. d.)

Regardless of where African-Americans live geographically, our common history of slavery, segregation and racism appears to inform our perceptions and attitudes about the environment. Issues of fear, exclusion, little sense of ownership and lack of awareness all come into play. (p. 5)

Like Finney (n. d.), Harrison also connects the impact of slavery and segregation to how people interact with nature.

For example, Harrison (2013) explains that the history of slavery often included negative and forceful interactions with the outdoors. People were made to work the fields under terrible conditions with insects, inclement weather, long hours, inhumane
treatment, and worse . . . not having a choice about it. As discussed in Chapter One, Matthews (2015) notes that even once slavery was abolished, traveling around the United States was a dangerous undertaking, as outlined in Victor Green’s *Green Book* (1956).

The danger of travel not only restricted people from visiting National Parks, but also prevented them from engaging in outdoor sports that required travel, such as hiking or downhill skiing. Anthony Kwane Harrison’s (2013) *Black Skiing, Everyday Racism, and the Racial Spatiality of Whiteness* is centered around the sport of downhill skiing, how it is saturated in white privilege, and the feeling of alienation experienced by many people of color. His perspective on skiing is parallel to the reality of many people of color visiting wilderness areas.

The ideologies founded in prejudice and discrimination that have become obstacles for people of color entering the sport of downhill skiing are also the barrier for people of color who are hesitant to visit wild spaces for fear of being subjected to racist remarks and attitudes. Carter (as cited by Harrison, 2013) explains the concept of racial spatiality as being “founded on the perception that certain racialized bodies are expected to occupy certain social spaces, and, complimentarily, that the presence of other bodies creates social disruption, moral unbalances, and/or demands explanation (p. 317).” Harrison (2013) also notes that “because such perceptions exist at the level of ideology, and not social structure, their exclusionary functions are especially hidden and enduring” (p. 317). Racism exists in many forms, and the discriminatory feelings can manifest by something as simple as a prolonged glance that can contribute to everyday racism (Harrison, 2013).
Philenoma Essed (as cited in Harrison, 2013) describes the concept of *everyday racism*. This means that the ideology of the norm has become so widely accepted that it is rarely questioned. It is expected and seen by the dominant group as normal. This does not necessarily mean violent racism or blatantly discriminatory remarks. For example, everyday racism refers more to the subtle (or not so subtle) double takes that white people do when they see a person of color in a space or engaged in an activity that they consciously or subconsciously view as a white space or a white activity. They may not take a moment to think about the factors that have contributed to the racial spatiality of this space or activity. Accordingly, Mills (as cited by Harrison, 2013) observes that “[r]acism and racially structured discrimination have not been *deviations* from the norm; they have been *been* the norm’” (p. 319). That type of everyday racism contributes to an overall unwelcome feeling.

**A Feeling of Unwelcome**

A feeling of unwelcome can present itself in various ways. Many visitors of color are concerned with the potential for racial profiling that has been reported in the National Parks System. Golash-Boza, et al. (2015) conducted an experiment on this topic by inviting eight female Ph.D., four of them were white or Latino and four of them were black, to visit a park. They were instructed to explain to the park attendant that they were visiting the research station and that their fees were meant to be waived as part of their program. The white and Latino academics gave the information as they were directed. They were welcomed and invited through the gates.

The black academics came to the gate at different times and entrances and gave the same information, however, they were questioned extensively about their program
and degrees, told to fill out a form, underwent unnecessary red tape, and were reluctantly allowed into the park. According to Golash-Boza, et al. (2015), “the agents appeared incapable of imagining that a black woman could hold a Ph.D. and visit a research station for a scholarly event” (¶ 9). An investigation has been opened at the national park where this event took place. At this particular park, only 1% of the visitors are black.

According to the literature, discrimination is not limited to any particular non-white group of wilderness visitors. For example, Livengood and Stodolska’s (2004) study with Muslim Americans after the events of September 11, 2001 showed that outdoor recreational areas were reported as settings where there were experiences of hateful acts such as racial slurs, vandalism, threats, disrespectful gestures, and physical violence. “Experiences with various forms of discrimination restricted the range of leisure options available to Muslim Americans, made them limit their contacts with mainstream Americans and drew them closer to their ethnic communities” (p. 194).

Latino participants in Byrne’s (2011) research also shared stories of experiencing an unwelcome feeling while visiting the parks. One member of the focus group said that neighbors of the park would call the sheriff if they saw Latinos utilizing park spaces near “white” areas. Another participant (as cited by Byrne, 2011) explained her apprehension about visiting wilderness parks, saying, “that is the area of American people, that is their park . . . it never occurred to me to go to the park. Not even my church goes there” (p. 605). Many of the focus group agreed that they felt a feeling of unwelcome, and had a perception that their recreational park use differed from white park-goers: the Latino families said that they go to the park to be with their extended families . . . and they are
afraid that their behavior will offend white visitors who go to the parks for peace and quiet.

Rott (2016) described the feeling of Luis Perales, the chief academic officer at Changemaker High School in Tucson, Arizona:

It’s not that Latinos don’t want to go outside. Go to any park or hiking trail in Tucson and you will see that’s not the case. It’s that they might want to have a different experience . . . the national parks promote the solitude and quiet of a John Muir photo. That message of ‘rugged individualism’ doesn’t necessarily work with Latinos [who are going to] bring the whole family, going to be loud, and going to explore. (¶ 17)

One participant in Byrne’s (2011) study noted, “. . . there are millionaires there, and I am poor. How am I going to approach them? If I approach them, they will feel that I want something from them or that I am going to do something to them” (p. 605). These Latino members of the group worried about being seen as an outsider, and that their chosen recreational styles would cause them to stand out even further.

Byrne (2011) goes on to ponder if there is a “white ideal of nature and commensurate notion of what constitutes appropriate recreational styles that has become enshrined in park spaces, and which in turn asks as a normative register influencing how other ethno-racial groups perceive and use these spaces” (p. 606). Even newer parks that do not have a racialized history may have a perception, based on the idea of green spaces in general, that the underlying notion is “whites-only” when the vast majority of people utilizing the park spaces and facilities are white.
Peterson (2014) reminds her readers that until World War II, there were still “whites-only” signs in some outdoor spaces, which were a literal representation that people of color were not welcome. Alan Spears, director for cultural resources with the National Parks Conservation Association (as cited by Peterson, 2014), notes that “those concerns (of segregation and not being welcome in public places) don’t simply vanish when the signs go away . . . it takes generations for those memories of discrimination to work themselves out” (¶ 10). In fact, Mapp (as cited by Meraji, 2005) recalls the story of an Outdoor Afro leader whose grandmother would only take her to a specific part of a park in Kansas long after the end of segregation because she was afraid; for generations, this area had been the only safe part of the park for black visitors. The long standing tradition of segregation in parks, in turn, contributes to the stereotypes that enjoying nature is a thing that only whites do.

Stereotypes

Outdoor recreation ideologies are riddled with ethnic stereotyping, limiting the perception of who does what in a wilderness setting. With widely accepted stereotypes, one must ponder the racially motivated systems leading to these stereotypes. Finney (as quoted by Latour, 2014) states, “there’s this prevailing myth of black Americans as alienated from nature, as urban, as deeply unattached. Well, I push back on that, because I think we are actually very attached” (¶ 8). An understanding of race and racism as it pertains to the outdoors, specifically to wooded areas, is paramount to understanding the roots of the stereotypes.

Given that wooded areas were historically dangerous places for people of color, my opinion is that it is obvious why it would be inter-generationally passed down as
unsafe, and best to avoid. Johnson and White (as cited by Harrison, 2013) point out that “remote, back-country environments were typically sites where lynching occurred” (p. 322). And Merchant and Meeker (as cited by Harrison, 2013) explain how “black people in America have historically been linked to the land primarily through the involuntary and abusive institutions of chattel slavery and post emancipation sharecropping and tenant farming” (p. 322). It is argued that because of this shared history, “black people developed a particular relationship to forest wild lands that is distinct from the typical (white) American attachment to them as sites of exploration, refuge and escape” (p. 322). So powerful is this collective memory, that it transcends having had first hand experiences with this violence. The legacy of hatred and the result, fear, is at the forefront of the minds of many black Americans to this day. These facts, feelings and fears manifest themselves as what Johnson, Horan and Pepper (as cited by Harrison, 2013) call “generationally persistent ‘wild land aversions’” (p. 323).

In addition, prevalent even in contemporary times, is a discriminatory, hurtful stereotype of black Americans being looked upon as primitive or closer to nature. Johnson and McDaniel (as cited by Harrison, 2013) describe an “African American quest for modernization” that set the stage for a lifestyle having little to do with the outdoors (p. 323).

Furthermore, Byrne (2011) reports the discriminatory and still highly relevant tug-of-war over green spaces in urban areas, which continues to allocate smaller, less funded spaces for people of lesser means (which, based on Byrne’s research, often indicates people of color). If basketball on an urban lot is the only accessible activity, then basketball on an urban lot is what will be used for recreation. One can see that inner
city parks are not where the disparity ends; the evidence of the divide is clear when getting out of the big city and into vacation destinations.

Harrison (2013) points out that when one visits resorts across the country that are marketed to highlight an outdoor environment, it would be challenging not to notice the stark racial contrast between the patrons and the workforce, enforcing the stereotypes of who uses spaces and for what purpose. He emphasizes that this phenomenon stretches from beach resorts in the southeast to desert resorts in the southwest to ski resorts in the Rockies to fall color resorts in New England, with very little deviance. Coleman and Stoddard (as cited by Harrison, 2013) highlight that it is especially remarkable where the overwhelming population of the area consists of people of color, and the majority of the visitors to the facilities are white. “It is notable that such racial administration of roles within white spaces is not remarkably different from what occurred with the largely invisible black workforce that served Jim Crow society” (p. 325).

Ultimately, however, it is my opinion that holding an entire population to an idea that may or may not be contemporarily true to the entire group is misguided and enforces dangerous stereotypes. Paying less attention to the stereotypes and more attention to where they come from and how to break down these social constructs will have more impact on creating an equitable contemporary view of environmental uses. The times are changing, and if society continues to adhere to outdated stereotypes, progress can be painfully slow. In addition, the expense of a trip into the wilderness can be surprisingly high and serve as an obstacle as well.
Unequal Distribution of Wealth

Economic challenges are an enormous roadblock to access of wilderness places. It is a harsh reality that many people of color have less access to quality education, and once they are out in the workforce, there will be a greater challenge finding full-time employment in their fields. Things have improved only minimally since the Civil Rights Act. Marte (2014) notes, “In 2011, blacks made 66 cents for every dollar earned by whites, compared to 55 cents for every dollar earned by whites in 1963” (¶ 5). Given these statistics, and all of the expenses involved, it is no wonder that a trip across the country to Yellowstone or Glacier National Parks might feel out of reach.

Kearny (2013) discusses the expenses for a destination camping trip, including either a flight or a car with a full tank of gas, necessary gear like a tent, sleeping bag and camping equipment. Of course the family also needs to have free time, which is not likely if they are working two or more jobs, which many people are. According to Fry and Passel (2014), “racial and ethnic minorities generally have been more likely to live in multi-generational family arrangements, and their numbers have grown with increased immigration since the 1970’s” (¶ 11). Fry and Passel (2014) explain that there is a rise in multi-generational living in the post-recession era. Family obligations may be a prominent factor in the lives of many disadvantaged households. The costs associated with finding care for elders or boarding pets may be more than the family can afford along with the cost of the trip itself. Kearney (2013) estimates that $1000 is needed for such a trip. He goes on to make the correlation, “That may explain why 40% of outdoor participants come from households with incomes of $75,000 or more, according to the Outdoor Foundation’s report” (¶ 5), as seen in Figure 5.
The financial challenges extend further than a hindrance to participation, but seeking employment in wilderness areas can reveal financial obstacles as well. For people of color who have a desire to work in national parks or other green industries, an economic challenge may be the obstacle that is impossible to overcome. In fact, Kong (2015) reports that “the 2014 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government survey ranks the National Parks Service 261st out of 314 agencies when it comes to support for diversity” (¶ 5). Robert Stanton, the first black American Head of the National Parks Service, recalls his own path that ultimately lead him to this prestigious title.

In the 1960’s, Stanton was able to take advantage of a program designed by Interior Secretary Steward Udall. Udall had lofty ideas of creating a more diverse work force in the National Parks. Greenberg (2014) describes an initiative seeking out “exceptional students from historically black colleges and universities,” (¶ 2) which hired
many students who were, unfortunately unable to accept the positions due to the lack of cash flow that was needed to start. Each student was required to purchase a train ticket to Wyoming and buy a park ranger uniform, which some were simply unable to do. Greenberg (2014) describes how Stanton was able to borrow the $250 it took to get his ticket and uniform and that was not the case for other students recruited for this program.

However, Stanton was able to participate and become a park ranger. From there, Greenberg (2014) describes how he was able to work his way up, holding many positions at a variety of parks, and then he held positions within the National Parks agency. President Bill Clinton and then-Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt nominated him in 1997 to be the 15th director of the NPS (Greenberg, 2014). At the same time, progress can sometimes have an unexpected backlash.

**In the Name of Progress It Can Seem Like Moving Backwards**

Carol Cain (as cited by Johnson, 2013), a visitor to Olympia National Park, says, “the idea of roughing it in a tent can feel like going backwards” (¶ 15). Her family’s history includes many challenges trying to escape from a difficult rural life with Dominican and Puerto Rican roots. Kearney (2013) finds this to be one of the biggest hurdles to increasing minority participation in outdoor activities. He paints a picture of a black American or Hispanic teen whose parents are raising them with overwhelming economic hardships. They persevered, were able to work and study hard and finally make a decent living, moving into a higher income bracket. The teens have never been to a state or national park, because the parents never had the means, the time, or the interest in going. According to Kearney (2013), people who overcome economic hardships wonder “why on earth would you use your hard-earned vacation time to spend a week eating
freeze-dried food in the woods—rather than, say, reclining at a seaside hotel on Miami Beach, frozen margarita in hand?” (¶ 7).

Given these deeply rooted, systemic obstacles that stand in the way for people of color, it is my opinion that it is not surprising that a wilderness vacation is not a priority, and may not even be in the consciousness of many people of color. The history of racial violence, a feeling of unwelcome, the development of stereotypes, the uneven distribution of resources, and the idea that going to the woods may feel like going backwards, is, from my perspective, valid reason enough not to go. However, do the (mostly white) people designing the parks, making the policies, allocating the funds, and spreading the word do all that they can to attract and welcome underrepresented populations? Some argue that the theory isn’t always put into practice.

**Reality of Diversity Initiatives**

Santucci, Floyd, Bocarro and Henderson (2014) conducted the study, *Visitor Services Staff Perceptions of Strategies to Encourage Diversity at Two Urban National Parks*, and found thee main themes describing the ineffective nature of initiatives designed to engage communities of color in the parks. The first point, “Youth Engagement beyond Threshold Experiences” (p. 19), illustrates the disconnect between introductory visits to the park through school visits or other group trips, and developing a sustainable interest in becoming a regular visitor. Santucci et al. (2014) explain that youth is a demographic that the NPS needs in order to ensure the future of the parks and without programming and staff to which youth can relate, a long-term relationship is out of reach.
The second result that Santucci et al. explored was “National Park Service Traditions and Organizational Culture” (p. 21). A resistance to go with the times, a hesitation to engage the use of technology and social media, and a lack of thoughtfulness about the perceptions that are conveyed by sitting behind a desk in a uniform. The interviewees in the research of Carolyn Finney (2014) echo a frustration with the “old boys network” in the National Park System and throughout the environmental movement: mainly that some staff believe that diversity is seen as an “expression of political correctness or as a goal that has to happen within certain financial and time constraints” (p. 107). Santucci et al.’s (2014) research participants also expressed frustration at the structure of the staffing system in the NPS. Initiatives designed to train diverse staff for seasonal positions result in a large expenditure of time and training, only to not be able to offer full time positions to these valuable employees.

The third point in Santucci et al.’s (2014) study is, “Talking the Talk” (p. 22). NPS staff reported that the administration pushes for diversity, but it is near impossible for staff to carry out orders due to an inability to communicate with administration to ask questions, a lack of time and thoughtfulness put into creating the initiatives, and a worry about the reliability of funding. Finney’s (2014) research participants also noted that when funding is short, “diversity training” or initiatives are often the first to go, making these efforts feel like a luxury if there is time or money, not as a necessity. Finney’s (2014) ideal would be for these large, governmental institutions to take on the method of smaller organizations, such as community groups or non-profits, which is often to have diversity priorities written into the mission statement. Therefore, inviting and engaging
people of color is part of daily operations and the big picture, not an add-on that goes away when funding is short.

As a result of her research, Finney (2014) concludes that the only way to make real change in the “old boy’s network” in the NPS is to enlist the support of policy makers and high ranking officials in the parks systems. She also states that a long-term commitment is needed to eliminate the mentality that diversity is a luxury, but also shifting the ideology of the people of color, whose perceptions of the environment come from a different understanding and history of the natural environment. The racialized way in which we have arrived at our current situation has many people of color believing that spending time in nature is something that only white people do. Finney (2014) goes on to say that other people of color do have a “passionate acknowledgement about the importance of land, a need to claim a place, and recognizing that [everyone has] a right to it” (p. 6), however, once more underrepresented visitors arrive, one might wonder how will they be welcomed?

A Masked Form of Racism Within the System

According to Taylor (2000), when faced with the challenge to bring in a broader base of visitors to parks, some staff make the argument that more visitors means more foot traffic, potential damage to habitat, and an increase in crime and pollution. Taylor (2000) writes, “managers who cringe at the thought of large numbers of people of color using wild lands invoke carrying capacity arguments to rationalize their exclusion” (p. 177). However, litter, crime and noise pollution is a current problem, which evokes the question of who the current users are. The research of Hester, Blazej and Moore (1999) show that traditional users (i.e. white users) who have never had to feel fear of walking in
the woods, have a tendency to visit parks for activities that take them into the forest, camping overnight, hiking or snowmobiling. Therefore, it is not people of color who are causing the problems in parks and campsites, but it is the current users, who, according to Hester et al. (1999), are almost entirely white.

Taylor (2000) discusses what she’s seen at the parks: the overflowing trash receptacles, trying to fall asleep to the howling and screaming of drunken youth, the female washroom overcrowded with women taxing the park’s power grid with their electrical beauty aids, or the warnings posted to alert campers to guard against theft.

While white wild land recreationers continue to clutch their wallets when they encounter minority users . . . [they] should probably start worrying more about non-minority wild land users . . . to realize that in the absence of large numbers of people of color in these areas, there is considerable crime, violence, degradation, depreciation, overcrowding, and gross over-consumption of resources. (p. 177)

Given the statistics of the miniscule percentage of people of color in the wilderness, these incidents are clearly caused by white users of these wild areas.

Of course, this damage is caused by a fraction of the visitors, and we can assume that the majority of users are respectful and follow the Leave No Trace guideline of leaving a place in better condition than it was found. There is no reason whatsoever to assume that people of color would treat the wilderness any differently. Until the playing field is leveled and people of color feel comfortable introducing deep woods activities into their lives, the degradation of the deep woods is due to white usage.
Design, Programming and Staffing Disconnect

The layout of parks themselves may cause barriers. What activities were intended for spaces in the park? Who designed it, and with what in mind? Krymkowski, Manning and Valliere (2014) explain:

The historic policy of discouraging African American visitation to national parks in connection with viewing the parks as spaces for “white” reinvigoration . . . and designing parks in accordance with the preferences of whites [has a lot to do with] people of color (and African Americans in particular) viewing these spaces as not for them. (p. 40)

Krymkowski et al. (2014) ask if the park is designed to accommodate games like soccer or others that aim to bring people together? Or perhaps there is a lack of picnic tables, water fountains or flush toilets, all things that make people with limited outdoor experience feel comfortable. A Latino parent at a school near Tucson, Arizona described to Rott (2016) that the facilities weren’t large enough to accommodate her extended family and another pointed out there is no public transportation.

Byrne (2011) highlights a disconnect between park policies, staffing, programming and the people who are using the spaces, and how that can be a deterrent. For example, the programming may be an obstacle if it is largely Anglo-centric, or high entrance fees may make a park visit cost-prohibitive for lower-income families. Rott (2016) interviewed Tucson residents (a city that is almost 50% Spanish-speaking) that find a barrier with the lack of Spanish on signs and within informational brochures, making whole populations feel disconnected and uninformed. A NPS staff participant in Stantucci et al.’s (2014) study on park initiatives described a need for Spanish language
training. According to Byrne (2011), studies have shown how “projects of nature-making have historically been projects of appropriation and exclusion” (p. 597), and the lack of translation efforts is an example. A Spanish-speaking participant in his focus group reported, “the problem is the language. I feel very uncomfortable and tense if I can’t communicate for basic stuff – ‘what time is it?’ or ‘how do I get there?’” (p. 605). These park management philosophies serve as tools in alienating potential populations of park visitors.

**Socio-Spatial Issues**

The location itself of a park can be a large obstacle. Mair, the first African American president of the Sierra Club (as cited by Mills, 2015) explains, “you start to see the institutional forms of how racism is reinforced and maintained by planning departments, municipal departments, zoning departments and you realize that this is the power of the vote” (¶ 9). Families that are living in areas that have not been allotted safe and well-kept park spaces, may simply live too far from a desirable park. The time that would be required to travel may be too great for busy, working families. A participant in Byrne’s study (2011) explains, “It is too far away to take the bus, one spends the entire day on the bus. I want to go, but I need to go with someone who has a car” (p. 603). So if a family doesn’t own a car, or is trying to get by with only one car and there is no public transport, it may present too much of a challenge. Railways or highways may be a physical barrier to people or children who would like to walk or bike to the park, even if it is close to someone’s home. Closer malls and urban centers offer competing places to go for recreation.
Byrne (2011) comments on other factors related to the physicality of the park that can limit outdoor experiences for low to moderate income families. He notes how parks that are located in or near urban areas are often too small to offer hiking or other recreational activities that require vast spaces. It is difficult to enjoy bird watching in a park that is too small to have adequate habitat for birds. Byrne (2011) also notes how very little research has been done to determine the affects of crowds, presence or lack of security, how a park looks (aesthetics and facilities), signage, lighting or landscaping and its impact on visitors.

Byrne (2011) goes on to note that parks in lower-income urban areas are often not given as much funding for security and up-keep and that a park with broken equipment, unsanitary restrooms and water fountains or chronic littering would not be enticing to a family. Byrne (2011) highlights that the perception or reputation of a park may be enough to deter visitors. Parks are generally avoided if they are considered unsafe or have a history of violent crimes. A participant of Byrne’s (2011) study reports that she would obviously stop her child from playing at a park that is known for drug or alcohol use, racial or other types of violence or sexual activity. Even loose or unenforced park policies can make a park feel unsafe, such as unleashed dogs that can pose a threat to children. Concerns arise that the area has become unsanitary when owners do not clean up after their dogs. Byrne (2011) explains that when bicyclists do not adhere to the guidelines of where to ride, the speeding bikes can frighten visitors who are not used to it. So, how are under-represented families able to find safe parks, and how to access them?
When Word-of-Mouth Doesn’t Reach New Communities

When the participants at the family camp where I work are asked how they first learned about camp, it is almost always through a friend or relative. Word-of-mouth is the number one way of spreading awareness (N. Geisler, personal communication, June 14, 2013). Not knowing much about the parks is among the reasons listed by black Americans when asked why they are absent from parks (Hawkes, 2015). How would people in developing communities learn of parks that are far away, and plan for accommodation, food and transportation?

Byrne (2011) asks, if advertisements such as flyers or brochures are not visible in the community, how would people know they exist if no one from their social circle has experience with these parks? According to Gwaltney (as cited by Lovitt, 2014), when people are confronted with an unfamiliar scenario, the tendency is to avoid it. “If someone says, ‘let’s go to Yosemite,’ the answer becomes, ‘well, where’s that? I don’t know anybody who’s been there. Let’s go visit Grandma instead’” (¶ 19). Furthermore, if a family or individual does indeed surpass the obstacles and visit one of these spaces, will they feel comfortable if they are the only ones who look like themselves?

When You’re the “Only One”

Rue Mapp of Outdoor Afro (as cited in an interview with the Children in Nature Collaborative, n. d.) recognizes that people not only have a need to connect with nature, but sharing it with others with whom one can relate brings it to a new level. Mapp tells the story of Judith, a black American docent with the Golden Gate Audubon in San Francisco, who led an Outdoor Afro meetup in a bird watching hike. She said that Judith was moved to tears; she had never birded with people who looked like herself, and that
was just what was missing for her as she went about her work. She discussed how it felt to resonate with people in a different way because not only was she sharing her love of birding, but it was with people with whom she could personally connect in a deep and powerful way. According to Judith, the opportunity to lead a black American group of birders is rare.

Teresa Baker (2015), organizer of the African American Nature & Parks Experience (AANPE), is often asked why she puts forth so much effort towards the AANPE. Her response is often, “because I want to see faces that look like mine when I’m out in our national parks and forests” (¶ 1). In fact, to mark the AANPE’s 3rd annual event, black American and other minority wilderness-goers were encouraged to post photos of themselves on social media during visits to national parks. Baker lists not seeing park employees of color, as well as not seeing visitors of color as a significant reason for the paucity of minorities in national parks (Kong, 2015).

Derrick Z. Jackson, a writer for the Boston Globe, backpacked with his wife in Acadia National Park on their honeymoon and vacationed there on two other occasions. He recently explained to Delores Kong (2015), “the thing my wife and I wish we could see more of is African American families truly hiking, truly backpacking. That part is really, really white” (¶ 3). He has also written about similar hiking experiences in Yosemite, Death Valley, the Great Smoky Mountains, and other parks.

Actually, Johnson (2013) describes how seeing almost entirely only white visitors during a park visit may just be a big enough reason on its own for people of color to avoid visiting. After a visit to Olympia National Park, the author of the blog, Girl Gone Travel, Carol Cain (as cited by Johnson, 2013), decided she would like to inform her
readers of this phenomenon before they go, and encourage them not to let it distract them from the beauty of the place itself. Contrarily, Ana Serafin, a native of Venezuela, who writes for the blog, *Traveling Latino*, decided not to mention the lack of diversity in her blog so as not to frighten her readers into not visiting (Johnson, 2013).

This reality is so widely known, that it has become a running joke among opinion writers. Kearny (2013) begins his piece,

> White people simply love to spend their free time walking up and down mountains and sleeping in the forest. Search “hiking” in Google Images and see how far you have to scroll to find a non-white person. Ditto rock climbing. (¶ 1)

He goes on to say that in a website titled, *Stuff White People Like*, there are at least three entries involving this stereotype, including “Outdoor Performance Clothes,” “Camping,” and “Making you feel bad about not going outside.” One finds the same to be true when looking at advertising materials for outdoor destinations and outdoor retail stores.

Outdoor equipment companies are realizing what park staff, camp staff, and all others whose livelihood depends on the success of environmental tourism are figuring out as well: everyone needs to broaden their base, or they are out of business. Not long ago, when this fact was not as widely understood, Carolyn Finney (2014), a graduate student at the University of California at Berkley at that time, conducted a study tracking the pictures in Outside Magazine from 1991 to 2001. The mission statement of Outside Magazine (Outside Media Kit, n. d.) is as follows: “The mission of Outside magazine is to inspire participation in the world outside through award-winning coverage of the sports, people, places, adventures, discoveries, environmental issues, health and fitness, gear and apparel, style and culture that define the active lifestyle” (¶ 1).
Finney’s findings (2014) revealed startling statistics: during the ten-year period, there were 6,980 pictures, and out of the 4,602 pictures with people, just 103 were African Americans. She stresses the need to acknowledge the work of black American environmentalists, recognize black stories not only during Black History Month but year round, being mindful not to frame these stories only in the context of white constructs, and increase the representation of people of color in exhibits at the state and national park level and also in brochures and educational materials in these establishments.

The Cycle Has Been Broken

In my experience, when children have safe, enticing green spaces in their childhood, they grow up into adults who seek to provide those same experiences for their children. When the cycle has been broken, due to the many factors listed above, it is difficult and rare to bridge the gap, especially when there are negative emotions associated with the outdoors such as fear, anger, and alienation.

According to Byrne (2011) “the importance of parks to children and the role of childhood experiences in shaping park visitation are two interconnected and recurrent themes” (p. 602). Harrison (2013) confirms this ideology by saying “patterned behaviors are generationally reproduced within a context of already racialized social space. Thus, without some form of intervention or rupture, racialized structures are slow to change” (p. 321). Some examples of how time in nature as a child translates into the enjoyment of nature as an adult can be seen by one of Byrne’s study participants (2011), who noted how being outdoors reminded her of her childhood in Mexico, and how all of the interviewees in Edmondson’s book, *Black & Brown Faces in America’s Wild Places*
had significant childhood experiences in nature that inform their current lifestyle as outdoor enthusiasts.

It is highly unlikely for an adult who has not had positive childhood experiences in nature to create a love for nature as deeply as an adult who has. This is the basis for the Obama administration’s initiative, “Every Kid in a Park” (National Park Foundation, 2015). Free National Park passes are being issued to entire families of fourth graders across the nation, with special emphasis on providing passes to low-income, urban families. Tuttle (2015) explains that research has shown that there is a particularly powerful time in childhood, reaching a peak at fourth grade, where a connection with nature is at its easiest to form, “Fourth grade is an ideal time to expose children to the wonders of the outdoors, with the hope that doing so promotes a lifelong interest and appreciation of nature” (¶ 4).

Conclusion

The researchers that have come before me have covered a great deal of perspectives in the sensitive issue of the underrepresentation of people of color in wilderness areas. There is a universal, human need to connect with nature and with each other (Mapp, as cited by Children in Nature Collaborative, n. d.), and it is a matter of social justice to ensure that all ethnicities and races feel that these lands belong to each of us, equally (Jackson, as cited by Kong, 2015). The history shows how the displacement of people and the goals for the first parks set the framework of inequity (Purdy, 2015) for the relationship between people of color and the outdoors as a place for recreation.

Lack of engagement with the environment by people of color has a long-term, negative impact on many levels. The sustainability of green spaces is in jeopardy (Kong,
and the only way to get people to care is to get them to connect, which starts by making everyone feel welcome (Mallman, as cited by Edmondson, 2006). Public health is at risk (McCoy, as cited by Kong, 2015), as is healthy development of children and families as a whole (Razani, 2014).

The reasons for the disparity are multi-faceted, deeply rooted, and impossible to fix with one solution. Historical and contemporary manifestations of racism in wilderness areas has lead to the collective mentality that these spaces are for whites only (Byrne, 2011), with or without actual signage making that statement. Many people in the position to make change give a lackluster attempt, with inadequate attention and intention paid to creating spaces with equal access, and inadequate follow-through on diversity initiatives (Krymkowski et al., 2014). Ultimately, the generational cycle of parents passing a love of nature on to their children has been broken, further creating the divide between subsequent generations and a prioritization of nature in their lives (Edmondson, 2006).

Chapter Three focuses on the methodology that I utilize to do my own research focusing on the perceptions of staff in wilderness areas regarding outreach and inclusion in their places of work. I have developed a letter of informed consent, a brief demographic survey, an interview protocol with potential prompts, and a reflection template. Following the interviews, I will proceed with data analysis and a conclusion.
CHAPTER THREE

Capstone Methodology

Introduction

The capstone question is “how do people working in wilderness areas describe the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of visitors of color?” When people hear about my capstone topic, they often feel there is a simple, one-way answer. “It must be the economic and/or education gap.” Or others have said, “Obviously it is because of the history of racial violence that happened in wild areas.” And still others conclude, “Camping and hiking is a ‘white thing’ or, the flip side, it’s ‘not a black thing.’” If there is one thing I have learned from the many resources I’ve examined, it can be all of the above, none of the above, and much, much more. Through informal conversations with friends and coworkers, various opinions have emerged. My capstone will explore the more formalized thoughts of someone with the unique perspective of a staff person working in a wilderness area.

Through the remainder of this chapter, I outline the methodology that I used to collect data for my research. The rationale is explained in detail as to why I have chosen qualitative interviews as the most effective way to capture the opinions and perceptions of the participants. Next, I provide an outline of the demographic survey, the interview questions, including prompts to encourage more details from the conversation, and the reflection template that I used within 24 hours of each interview. I explain the strategy for data analysis of the demographic survey, the interview, and the reflection template as
well as the type of setting and participants that I interviewed. I conclude the chapter with potential limitations of the study.

**Rationale for the Research Paradigm and Qualitative Interview**

When I looked at the different methods of data collection, I needed to gauge what type of information I was seeking. Was it something that a simple multiple-choice survey could capture, or even a short answer questionnaire? Was it possible to produce charts and graphs based on statistics? I decided that the nature of the information I desired was not something that could be obtained through a quantitative approach. It was clear that a qualitative method was the way to effectively record the perspectives of the participants.

More specifically, I chose the qualitative interview approach to conduct my research because there is nothing parallel to a personal narrative to express people’s opinions and feelings about the lack of diversity in wilderness areas. Many of the researchers I discussed in Chapter Two used this technique and had great success in capturing the thoughts of the participants. For example, a statement such as the one that follows, would never be able to be captured in a survey: According to Mels (as cited by Roberts, 2009) “The exclusion of the poor and people of color was a hallmark of the US National Park System . . . [and] Wilderness ideals were complicit in the dispossession of Native Americans from land designated for national parks” (p. 501). Roberts (2009) goes on to state, “to consider parks as ‘ideologically neutral spaces’ is to deny parks as being reinforced by Anglo-normativity” (p. 501). In addition to the personal narrative I was seeking, Weiss (1994) outlines two reasons to use qualitative interviews in the research process that make them an appropriate tool for use in my capstone research.
Weiss’s (1994) first rationale for the use of a qualitative interview is to develop detailed descriptions. That concept is important to the current capstone question because it can be difficult for people to express their ideas about the capstone subject through a survey; it forces them to choose between multiple choice options while experiences and thoughts on the topic can be complex. Participants of the study may be able to express themselves more clearly with the use of anecdotes to illustrate their point. When discussing issues of race, cultural traits, sensitive historical context and matters of feeling and perception, a narrative approach allows the participants to expand on what is often very personal and cannot be confined to a survey-style data collection tool. A second reason stated by Weiss (1994) for using qualitative interviews is the idea of integrating multiple perspectives, which is a limitation of quantitative research.

In my experience, people have unique interpretations and will describe things differently from each other. As I suspected, that was the case when I interviewed five different people working in outdoor areas. The ideas of the participants supported me in weaving together the similarities and differences in how they explained the under-representation of people of color visiting the wilderness. I suspected that although the five staff are working in four different outdoor areas, their stories and perceptions have common threads. Using qualitative interviews in this research design also enable me to develop holistic descriptions by interviewing different people about the same systems or events, to encourage an overall interpretation (Weiss, 1994). My review of the research literature provided support for the idea that there are many deeply rooted systems in place that have brought society to the current ideas of who visits wilderness areas.
In addition, Weiss (1994) describes how the qualitative interview is “bridging intersubjectivities” (p. 10) as a method for assisting the reader in painting a picture in their mind about what the interviewee is describing. Using the qualitative interview, one can visualize what it might feel like to be one of very few people of color in wilderness areas when an experience is outlined from the participant’s point of view. For example, Roberts (2009) let her readers know that she is a woman of color, and gave the following statements, as she believes them to be true for white people. They are meant to be an example of the “whiteness” of the outdoor tourism industry:

- You can consider going on a trip with an outdoor organization and be assured that people of your race will be on the course with you.
- You can see your race presented on energy bars, and be assured that the trip food you are given to eat will include the staple foods that fit with your cultural traditions.
- You can do really well as a rock climber and not be a credit to your race.
- You can hike up the mountain and be reasonably sure that if you meet people on the trail, they will be of your own race.
- When you read an outdoor leadership textbook, you can be sure that members of your race will be represented, and that the history of outdoor adventure will show you that people of your color made it what it is. (p. 499)

My goal was to create a research design that would yield a rich description of how people working in outdoor tourism areas explain the underrepresentation of people of color visiting the wilderness. This is a sensitive topic, where marginalization has occurred. To achieve this rich description, I agreed with Weiss (1994) that I needed more
words, more feelings, and a clearer description that came from the qualitative interviews. These thoughts and emotions would have been difficult to capture in any other form, and impossible to quantify by any standardized unit of measurement.

**Design of Data Collection Tool: Demographic Survey**

In order to avoid spending time answering questions that require little to no elaboration, I created a demographic survey (Figure 6, see Appendix A for fully formatted survey).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age Range</strong> (circle one): 18-25</td>
<td>26-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following best represents your racial or ethnic heritage? Circle all that apply: Non-Hispanic White or Euro-American Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American Latino or Hispanic American East Asian or Asian American South Asian or Indian American Middle Eastern or Arab American Native American or Alaskan Native Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Wilderness Area</strong> (circle one): camp state park national park nature center environmental learning center other (please specify):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Title:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brief Description of Job Duties:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Years Working at This Job:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Number of Years Working in Wilderness Areas:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Demographic Survey

This tool allowed me to collect basic demographic information on each participant and enabled me to analyze if or how their personal background informed their perspectives.
With a capstone topic that focuses on racial or ethnic issues, I felt it was important to know the participant’s age and how long he or she has worked in a wilderness area to put their experience into historical context. I wanted to consider that societal attitudes and awareness towards issues of inclusion have evolved throughout recent history, and age and experience may be a determining factor whether the participant has had opportunities to be engaged with the changes as it pertains to who visits the outdoors. I believe that humans look at the world through the lenses of their own experiences, and therefore, it felt important to indicate the interviewee’s own ethnic or racial background.

Once the letter of informed consent (see Appendix B for full letter of informed consent) was signed, which outlines the study and ensures anonymity for participants, participants completed the demographic survey and it was time to go forth with the interview.

**Design of Data Collection Tool: Qualitative Interview**

I designed a six-question, semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix C for questions and prompts). The questions were asked in the same order, and each person was asked all of the same questions. I designed the interview questions to ask for specific information, but also to allow room for narratives. The questions were crafted to avoid a yes or no answer, and to encourage a thoughtful response.

I did a pilot test of the interview questions before conducting the official interviews. This was an opportunity to work out technical challenges with recording apps on my iPhone. As well, it helped me to better estimate the length of the interviews. In my experience, there are people who are passionate about this work, and have endless
stories to tell, while others are concise and to the point. The pilot test also inspired additional prompts to be added to the interview protocol.

According to the guide, *Strategies for Qualitative Interviews* put out by Harvard University (n. d.), the questions should “tap into the experiences and expertise [of the participants]” (p. 3). I have created the questions so that the respondent felt safe as well as encouraged to be complete and to be honest. To do so, I was careful to avoid questions having a tone or wording that suggests a bias or a judgment. If that were to have happened, the respondent may have detected an agenda by the interviewer, and therefore shaped their answers in a way they may not have otherwise done.

The flow of the interview was designed to feel smooth, and lasted forty-five minutes or less. The language I used was catered to the respondents as professionals working in wilderness areas. I started out with a short answer question as a warm-up, followed by questions that built a foundation encouraging the respondent to think more deeply about the topic. The use of formal or informal prompts were designed to get the respondent to elaborate; I inquired by saying, “that is interesting, please tell me more about that.” The main question, which was the most complex to answer, lead to the primary point. This was a critical juncture, when I made sure that the interviewee felt that they were heard and ultimately, was content with the conversation. A follow up question inquired about initiatives that their place of employment utilizes to attract visitors and staff from underrepresented populations. We both felt closure, as this was time well spent.
The survey questions are as follows:

- What is the part of your job that you like best?

- Given that you have worked in wilderness areas for (insert the number of years), help me understand your perception of the level of diversity at (insert name of park, camp, wilderness area).
  - Potential prompts:
    - What percentage of visitors do you estimate is from ethnic backgrounds other than white?

- If I wanted a break down of the demographic information of visitors, including ethnic diversity to your (insert name of park, camp, wilderness area), would I be able to obtain this information because it is collected?
  - Potential prompts:
    - How is this information collected?
    - Is it available to the public?
    - In what ways does your organization make use of this information?

- In the time you’ve been working in wilderness areas, describe to me any noticeable differences in the level of diversity among the visitors to your (insert name of park, camp or wilderness area)?
  - Potential Prompts:
    - What do you feel are the explanations for any differences?
    - Have you had any feedback from visitors regarding diversity at your (insert name of park, camp or wilderness area)?
• How would you describe the factors leading to the underrepresentation of people of color in wilderness areas? Please describe the factors that you think lead to the underrepresentation of people of color in your (insert name of park, camp or wilderness area).
  
  o Potential Prompts:
    ▪ Have there been any reported incidents of a feeling of unwelcome or racism that you can remember or have been documented by your organization?
    ▪ Do you have any evaluations or surveys for visitors that include questions regarding diversity?

• Does your place of work participate in any outreach and inclusion initiatives?
Help me understand any outreach and inclusion initiatives that your (insert name of park, camp, wilderness area) may be involved in or thinking about.
  
  o Potential Prompts:
    ▪ Does your organization have any initiatives for attracting visitors from different backgrounds?
    ▪ Does your organization have any initiatives for attracting staff from different backgrounds?
    ▪ Is the idea of diversity discussed among administration and staff?
    ▪ How much of a priority is it to your organization to create not only equal access, but also a welcoming feeling to participants from underrepresented populations?
Once the interview was finished, I spent time reflecting on the experience of the conversation, and filled out a reflection template. This helped me to capture the essence of the interview.

**Design of Data Collection Tool: Reflection Template**

The reflection template (see Appendix D for template) helped me process the interview experience while it was fresh in my mind. I had a goal of answering the following questions (as adapted from Spartz, Johnson, Tanski, & Mallett, n. d.) within 24 hours of the interview:

1. Note the name and job title of participant, as well as the date, time, and location of the interview.
2. In general, how did the interview go? Did it proceed as expected or was there a surprise in the process?
3. What is the most memorable part of the interview? (Maybe something the participant revealed or an event of some sort that occurred during the interview.)
4. What was the best interview question? Why?
5. What new questions would I be sure to ask if I were to meet with the interviewee again?
6. Has the interview changed my attitude toward the subject in any way?
7. Did I find out what I had expected to by doing the interview? (Provide at least two examples of information I expected to learn and subsequently did learn in the interview, and two examples of information I wasn’t expecting.)
8. What are the top five words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) you would use to effectively describe the interviewee, and why?
9. How did the interview conclude? Did both parties walk away feeling like it was a worthwhile experience?

I sent a note of gratitude to each participant, thanking him/her for his or her time and commitment to this project within a week of the interview. Once all of the interviews were completed, I began the process of data analysis.

**Data Analysis**

According to the Pell Institute and Pathways to College Network (2015), “it is important to note that qualitative data analysis is an ongoing, fluid, and cyclical process that happens throughout the data collection stage of your evaluation project and carries over to the data entry and analysis stages” (¶ 4). As I compiled the information according to themes that correlated to the interview questions, additional themes and patterns emerged. The interviews were recorded so that I could go back and listen as many times as needed to discover all of the nuances and details that the participants wanted to convey. I created a partial transcription of each interview as it seemed unnecessary and time-consuming to do a verbatim transcription. My goal was to discover main points and to crosscheck them for overlapping ideas.

The Pell Institute and Pathways to College Network (2015) had helpful tips on their website for the analyses of interviews. The Institute’s recommendation when analyzing interview data is to record data from the beginning, and not include every detail, but only the important, usable and relevant information. According to the Pell Institute and Pathways to College Network (2015), grouping the data can be done in two ways: by content (searching for specific words or content, patterns and their meanings)
and/or by themes (can be pre-determined before analysis, or may emerge as information is collected).

My plan for following the recommendation of the Pell Institute and Pathways to College Network (2015) was to use the interview questions and reflection template as a framework. I sifted through the raw data, undergoing a data reduction process that boiled the conversation down to the usable information. I compiled a new document that merged the responses to each question. I analyzed that document much as I did for the literature review: I identified the main themes, and color-coded them. For example, ideas related to barriers were highlighted in green; the concept of European cultural traits was highlighted in light blue, and so on. It was critical to look for any deviations from the main themes, as these are the areas that shed light in new and different ways.

According to Dr. Deborah Gabriel (2013), “The main difference between inductive and deductive approaches to research is that whilst a deductive approach is aimed at testing a theory, an inductive approach is concerned with the generation of new theory emerging from the data” (¶ 1). I used a blend of these techniques as I analyzed the reflection templates for each, and listened to the interviews from each person. I was aware of the themes that supported what I already knew from the literature review, but was open to the idea of new theories arising from the participants’ unique perspectives as staff in wilderness areas. I was hoping for some new insight leading to new theories, which did indeed arise. Drawing conclusions and implications from the organized data was the final step. Next, I will to discuss the logistics of conducting the interviews.
Interview Logistics and Participants

I met with participants off-site. Meeting at their places of employment would have required a waiver from their organizations, and given the time constraints, the process was expedited by meeting at a separate location. This included travel within and out of the large metropolitan area in the upper mid-west of the U.S. where the research was conducted. Locations included coffee shops or their homes. Interviews were recorded with a voice memo app on my iPhone, and lasted less than forty-five minutes. I also jotted down notes as I spoke with these five participants.

My research design was to recruit interviewees who work in outdoor settings. The five participants who agreed to be interviewed in this research were outdoor staff working with youth, families or adults in urban or outlying outdoor areas. My recruitment efforts were designed to gather the perspective of staff from various locations that might offer unique insights, based on where they are working and the goals of their organization.

Some of the participants are acquaintances of mine, and some came by recommendation. Because I have been working at the family camp, and am a member of the Outreach and Inclusion Committee, I know that many at the camp grapple with the current capstone topic. I decided to interview our resident caretaker of 26 years and program director and staff member of 10 years. I was also very interested in the perspective of the leader of a urban youth organization, who was a parent of one of my former students, and has also been instrumental in partnering with the camp to bring families from the city up to the wilderness.
The last two interviewees were the head naturalist at a state park and the visitor services coordinator for a regional park, both introduced to me by a colleague in the Environmental Education field; she had worked with both of them in park settings. I did not have any difficulties in soliciting the participation of those involved; in fact, they seemed eager to talk about this pressing issue. While I was hoping for some diversity in the interviewees, I was surprised at the variety in the backgrounds of participants, which happened naturally; it was not pre-determined or intentional.

Most of the five interviewees have worked in the outdoor field for at least five years. They may or may not have an educational background that directly pertains to their line of work or their connection with this capstone topic. Their age, gender and ethnic background were secondary concerns in the recruitment process; the emphasis was more on their job description and knowledge base. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the limitations of using qualitative interviews as the tools for my research.

**Limitations of the Research Design**

The use of qualitative interviews can present challenges as well as advantages. While qualitative data intends to capture the true sentiment of the participants more accurately than a quantitative format such as a survey, according to Anderson (2010), the researcher’s bias can be difficult to avoid. She explains that the factor of the researcher simply being there will have an affect on the participant, perhaps even influencing their response. I often wonder, with a topic such as this capstone question, might there sometimes be an attempt to seem politically correct. My concern was that this attempt may override honesty in some cases. With these particular wilderness staff, I did not notice much of that, however, certain participants did choose their words very slowly and
carefully. My interpretation of this was that there was varying experience with speaking candidly about the topic of inclusion, as well as simple differences in style and personality.

The data analysis is more complex for qualitative research. The pool of participants is smaller for personal interviews than for a quantitative study, yet Anderson (2010) points out that interviews are more time consuming to analyze than surveys. If the questions were in a survey format, they can be filled out on paper or online, and can be sent to hundreds or thousands of people. With a fixed response, quantitative survey, a computer can be used to complete data analyses quickly and accurately based on the selected fields. For qualitative interviews, the researcher is analyzing dialogue, looking for trends and patterns, which, according to Anderson (2010), not only takes longer, but can be more difficult to represent visually, such as in a chart or graph. I agree with that rationale, however, I believe that the benefits override the challenges.

In Chapter Four, I analyze data presented in the five interviews, and group the responses according to theme. I use a narrative format, which as a researcher, I have found is the method that does the most justice to the personal expression of the interviewers on the capstone topic. I will keep in mind the following, according to Madrigal and McClain (2012), “The rule of thumb is that hearing a statement from just one participant is an anecdote; from two, a coincidence; and hearing it from three makes it a trend” (¶ 13).
CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis

Introduction

Through qualitative interviews, I was able to have conversations with five wilderness staff members, discussing diversity of visitors to their places of work, on a personal and professional level. The participants and I discussed their roles and workplaces, if and how demographic data was collected, and their answer to the capstone question: How do people working in wilderness areas describe the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of visitors of color? We finished the interviews by discussing initiatives, if any, the organizations had for attracting visitors and staff from different backgrounds.

To protect the anonymity of the interviewees, I assigned pseudonyms, and describe their workplace in a generic fashion, simply designating the different types of wilderness areas. I feel that is important to share that I work at the family camp where two of the participants are also employed, therefore, it is possible the inside knowledge I have as a staff person, board member, and active member of the Outreach and Inclusion Committee may have unintentionally influenced my interpretation of the interviews with these two staff members. As the topic of diversity is a sensitive one, all of the
conversations had emotional components to them, sometimes depicting a sense of longing for the day when this will no longer be an issue, and sometimes depicting a sense of joy with specific success stories.

The following sections of this chapter will examine the responses. A brief background of each participant is a direct response to the demographic survey that each member completed. Next, there is an explanation of each person’s perception of the level of diversity at the respective workplaces. The participants and I go on to discuss the various ways that their places of employment collect, or do not collect, demographic information of their visitors. Once preliminary interview questions are complete, the capstone question is asked, and each person gives their unique response. That final section is broken into two main subsections: Historical Influence and Contemporary Barriers. The five interviews were completed in December of 2015 and January of 2016.

The Participants

The interviewees were passionate about their work, and especially making the outdoors accessible and enjoyable for as many people as possible. It was clear that this is an important topic in each of the wilderness areas. The participants were in their thirties or their fifties, represented both men and women, and were from three different ethnic groups. Table 1 is a summary of the participants demographic information.
Table 1: Overview of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Racial/Ethnic Heritage</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Type of Wilderness Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>Property Manager</td>
<td>Family Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>Program Director</td>
<td>Family Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander</td>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>black</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Urban Youth Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>Park Visitor Services Coordinator</td>
<td>Regional Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>Lead Naturalist</td>
<td>Urban State Park</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first interview was with Simon, the caretaker for 26 years of a family camp where I also work in the summer. The camp is located on the edge of a protected Boreal forest wilderness area in the northern part of the state where this study is taking place. He is a white male, between the ages of 51 and 60, and lives on site at the camp. The camp is quite secluded, on a dead end road 17 miles from the closest town. The town has a population of 3,500, comprised of a mixture of residents that have been in the area for generations, and a smaller group of progressive-minded transplants from larger cities that have come there for the proximity to the pristine wilderness in that part of the state.

Simon manages all maintenance, construction and housekeeping of camp by working with and supervising maintenance staff, volunteers and contractors. He has seen the evolution of the camp, from a small, rugged environment during times when it was rare to see the cabins and tent sites fully booked, to the current situation, where the camp has grown considerably, and summer registration is handled with a lottery. Many frustrated families (mostly from the large metropolitan cities that lie five hours south) end up on a wait list. The cost of summer accommodation (including programming, but not
meals) varies from a rustic tent site at $475/week to a full amenity cabin that sleeps 16 at $4075/week. According to Simon, his favorite part of working at the camp is when he can be alone, clearing trails in the forest. He works with a lot of people during many parts of his jobs, and as an introvert, appreciates the moments of solitude he finds while on his own, in nature.

Adam is the program director at the same camp as Simon, and the subject of my second interview. He has been on staff for ten years. He is a white male, between the ages of 31 and 40. He lives in the large metropolitan city five hours south, and spends his summers at camp. His job description includes overseeing program operations for year-round camp activities, supervising staff, working on board development and managing a budget. Adam enjoys working with a lot of people, including staff, families, and board and committee members. His favorite part of working at the camp is building relationships in a wilderness setting ~ an environment that Adam believes makes getting to know people an easy thing to do.

The third interview was with Alexander. He works as Adventures Director at an urban regional park through an organization that uses outdoor sports such as biking, Nordic skiing and trail running to engage youth and adults with the outdoors as a means towards healthy living. Alexander is a black male between the ages of 51 and 60. In addition to working with this organization from 2013 to 2016, he has done similar work in his professional and personal life for many more years, including the founding of a bicycling club to engage black participants in the sport of biking and enjoyment of the outdoors. Alexander lives in a large, metropolitan city, and through a partnership with the family camp where Adam and Simon work, has brought two large groups of black
families up to camp for skiing and winter wilderness enjoyment. Alexander says his favorite part of this kind of work is “exposing new families to the possibility of using out of doors as a self-care strategy.”

Interview number four was with Katherine, Parks Visitor Services Coordinator for regional parks in a county in the southern areas of the city. She is a white female between the ages of 31 and 40, and has been doing this work for 16 years, ten of them in her current position. She grew up in a rural area in the northern part of the state, and currently resides in a small town in a neighboring state. Her job duties include park operations, customer service, special event management, volunteer coordination, workforce management and visitor center operations. Katherine’s workforce serves a county consisting of several regional parks.

Her interview mainly focused on one particular park about 20 minutes from the city center. She and I chose to focus on this park because although it is relatively close to the city, visitors need to overcome barriers such as transportation and time in order to visit. Her favorite parts of working there include having staff available to help folks who have never used the kinds of equipment available at the park, including canoes and snowshoes. Katherine loves encouraging the public to utilize free resources, helping people enjoy parks and open space. She likes to foster staff that is inspired by that mission-driven idea as well.

The final interview was with Sarah, Lead Naturalist at an urban state park in the middle of a large city. She has been in this position from 2013 to 2016, but has been working in wilderness visitor areas for about 12 years. Sarah is between the ages of 31 and 40, and she was adopted from Korea, but was raised in a suburban setting. She has
many responsibilities as Lead Naturalist, including developing and leading programs and events, coordinating volunteer work that supports resource management and interpretive efforts, leading partnership efforts between neighboring land managers and local recreational organizations and supervising and mentoring seasonal or intern staff.

Sarah says that what she loves the most about her job is working with the “regulars” – those who visit the state park over and over. It could be adults, school groups or families. Her favorite part is seeing the progression of their relationship with nature. After I collected demographic information and completed the warm-up question regarding their favorite part of their jobs, the participants and I moved on to discuss their individual perceptions of diversity in the visitors and staff of their workplace.

Interviewee’s Perceptions of Diversity of Visitors

All the participants were asked questions to gather their perceptions of the level of diversity at their outdoor place of employment. My analyses of the interview transcripts indicated that there was a general desire to increase outreach and inclusion. There were small successes, but each person expressed dissatisfaction with the current level of diversity.

The family camp staff, Simon and Adam, reported a slight increase in visitors of color during their time of employment. Both Simon and Adam also noted that there have been very intentional invitations and outreach initiatives created by the Outreach and Inclusion Committee. The camp staff in general is also well versed at intentionally creating a welcoming environment for all campers, which encourages campers to return and spread the word about the program.
Katherine noted slight increases as well at her regional park, such as large groups of families from India. She has observed that the families of European descent normally picnic in individual family groups of four or five people, while the groups from India will come with extended family, often totaling more than 20 people. She enjoys the part of her job that requires looking at how people are using the parks and how they can better serve them. In this case, adding more picnic tables was an obvious need, and an easy one to deliver.

There were similarities in level of diversity at each site based on their proximity to the large city in the state. Table 2 reviews the distances of the four locations from the metropolitan area in the state in which the study took place:

Table 2: Proximity of Wilderness Locations to the City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Wilderness Area</th>
<th>Family Camp</th>
<th>Regional Park</th>
<th>Urban Outdoor Program</th>
<th>Urban State Park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distance From City Center</td>
<td>5 Hour Drive</td>
<td>20 Minute Drive</td>
<td>In the City</td>
<td>In the City</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Simon and Adam, both work at the family camp located five hours from the city. They had the same perception of the camper base: the visitors tended to be white, liberal and upper middle class. Adam went on to say that about 93% of the roughly 3600 summer visitors at camp fit that description. This is actually a higher percentage of white visitors to wilderness areas compared to the national average of 70%, according to the 2013 report by the Outdoor Foundation (as cited by Kearney, 2013). Simon added that being a family camp, most of the families had two parents.
Katherine described a similar demographic at the regional park, located only about 20 minutes by car from the same major metropolitan city. She said the park has over 600,000 visitors annually; many come from out of state because of their campground, which serves as inexpensive accommodation for travelers coming to see the city’s sights. Sarah and Alexander’s programs are directly in the city and reported a higher representation of visitors of color, but for different reasons.

Sarah, who works at the urban state park, reported a higher level of diversity compared to the family camp and the regional park. Sarah explained that her state park, given its location in the middle of a major metropolitan city, is one of the busiest, most diverse parks in the state in terms visitors’ of ethnic and socioeconomic background. She explains that they are fortunate to be in such a convenient location, with a nearby light rail stop, as well as being connected to many parts of the city by bike trails.

The location, near a major metropolitan area, can create other opportunities that Sarah explained during her interview. She shared that when the overall state park system has something special going on, the local news stations will stop by and do a quick media blast from her location, giving that particular park a lot of publicity. Sarah also said that the park enjoys connections with urban school groups. Because they do not charge per student, and there is public transport that the school groups can utilize, it is a favorite destination for field trips. Given the location and ease of transportation, Sarah recognizes that this is not necessarily indicative of the diversity at any other state park. During these five interviews, the one participant that does not struggle with achieving a broader base in his program is Alexander.
Alexander’s work involved the most people of color in wilderness areas of any of the interviewees. The reason is because his organization is structured differently. It is not a destination, rather a program that works mainly with communities of color, especially with schools, in an urban regional park. According to Alexander, the regional park in which his program takes place does not see much diversity for self-motivated visitors who prioritize the outdoors for their recreation, even though the location is adjacent to the largest low to moderate income, and largest black population in the city. However, a success that Alexander has witnessed is that some children have gone on to ski in high school. They have gone on to continue the sport through their own initiative.

Alexander also works toward racial justice in other outdoor capacities besides the sports-based program. He reminds participants that he seeks to engage them because he “doesn’t want to be doing this on his own,” meaning that he wants to see other people of color joining him on the bike and ski trails. His bicycle club mainly focuses on engaging people of color, as do his partnerships with other community organizations. The following quote describes the difference between his programs and others that are not solely based on inclusion. “The outreach is specific, the programs are tied to populations that are significantly black, so there hasn’t been a change [in percentage of participants of color], since it’s always been based on outreach. But self-identified, self-motivating is different.” There is very little diversity in those types of visitors to the urban regional park or on the bike trails throughout the major metropolitan area. I went on to ask participants how they collect data so they may track changes, including responses to specific outreach initiatives and identifying trends.
Methods Used by the Participants to Determine Visitor Demographic Profile

Analyses of the interview data indicated that only one of the wilderness locations formally utilize evaluations to collect demographic information. The family camp has a comprehensive evaluation, yet Adam (program director) points out that the typical issues with voluntary information collection exist: not all families choose to participate in answering questions addressing ethnicity, if they even fill out the evaluation at all. When I questioned Simon and Adam about the transparency of the evaluation results, they both responded that the information is not necessarily hidden, but it is not displayed for any interested party to peruse. The reason is that the demographic information is embedded in a document nearly 250 pages long, with camper comments that include individual staff performance, something that is kept confidential.

The other three locations (the outreach organization, the regional park and the state park) do not have visitor evaluations, but rely on the larger, governing bodies that conduct separate research on those areas. Sarah (from the urban state park) surmised that asking demographic information is highly sensitive, and many people are turned off by the question. She could relate to this herself; she joked that she is a “fake Asian. I was adopted from Korea, but raised in the suburbs in the Midwest. I feel I am not necessarily a representative of Asian groups.” To her, checking that box does not capture who she is just how she looks. All participants agreed, however, that although uncomfortable to ask, that statistical information is very important when educating staff and administration as they plan programming, design and staffing.

Adam, who works with Simon at the family camp, had the most experience with fielding inquiries regarding diversity due to his role as program director. The program is
a weeklong, overnight family camp. He explains, “there have been a lot of [requests for more diversity] from our middle to upper class white liberals,” to which he questions the motives. He would rather have campers inquire about the outreach efforts, have a conversation about it, or actively help to make change. Adam describes how, “being questioned as to why there is not currently a black staff member isn’t a bad thing if it further motivates everyone involved to continue outreach and inclusion efforts.”

Adam also notes how the campers do not see the behind the scenes efforts— that he is striving for a diverse staff, and the process is gradual. Adam explains to campers that the camp staff and Outreach and Inclusion Committee are working tirelessly to meet these goals of greater diversity at the family camp. The next question asked if there had ever been any instances of racism at each organization.

According to Adam, there has never been a documented case of racism at the camp, but rather a discomfort at times by campers of color. An example Adam gave were the double-takes that may instinctually happen by white campers who are perhaps curious, surprised, or happy to seeing families of color at a place that is almost entirely white. He asserts that having more families of color will alleviate some of those situations. As opposed to Adam, who discusses various issues with campers regularly, Katherine, Simon, Alexander and Sarah explained that due to the nature of their roles and/or their programs, they are not approached by their visitors to discuss diversity issues. Once the preliminary questions were answered in the interviews, the participants and I discussed the heart of the topic: the capstone question.
The Capstone Question

The interview question was worded, “How would you describe the factors leading to the underrepresentation of people of color in wilderness areas? Please describe the factors that you think lead to the underrepresentation of people of color in your (insert name of wilderness area)?” This is the core of the research. The conversations revealed thoughtful, sensitive responses. Katherine, visitor services coordinator for regional parks, said, wishfully, “That is the million dollar question. It’s a priority to make the parks accessible to everyone. If we only knew the answer!” When I carefully analyzed the transcripts, I noticed two main themes: Historical Influence and Contemporary Barriers.

Historical Influence

At the center of Alexander’s response to the capstone question was the description of the historical influence on modern-day relationships with nature within the black community. He was the only black participant, a significant point of view because it differed from the others with the most emphasis on history. His response supported Purdy (2015), Byrne and Wolch (2009), and other authors cited in the Literature Review. Specifically, he emphasized that understanding “the creation of the urban black identity leads to understanding the relationship between blacks and nature.”

Alexander explained that before the movement of blacks from the south to the north, there was a tremendous connection with nature, hunting and fishing. He continued to explain that as the migration began, the Eugenics movement was surfacing, re-invigorating the concepts of white supremacy. Wilderness was used as a life-threat in the south, with beatings and lynching in the trees as a regular occurrence. “A narrative is being created.” Among white citizens, the preservation of the national parks and a
movement of environmental activists were appearing in the United States. Interestingly, Alexander noted that ‘whites’ as a singular group was a fairly new concept.

Alexander continued that prior to this era, there were large divides within the communities of European immigrants: the Polish, Irish, Swedish, German and other ethnic groups. During this time period, they merged and the idea of “whiteness” was solidified while the urbanization of America began, including the creation of urban identity. Meanwhile, Alexander continued, “popular culture was being equated to black culture,” with musical groups out of Motown and athletes as popular symbols, further solidifying a “black culture.” This point made me wonder how most white people perceive the reality of life as a black celebrity and life as a black citizen in the United States. In my experience, there are misconceptions by white people about both.

In the black culture described by Alexander, hunting and fishing seemed “country,” something that whites do. This view is consistent with the literature review: Krymkowski, Manning and Valliere (2014) used the same word, “country” to relate to “backwardness and poverty” (p. 40). The middle and upper class whites were consuming wilderness through mining and logging. “The idea of pristine, untouched wilderness” was identified as something precious and set aside for recreation by whites. From about 1950-1980, the environmental, black, and feminist movements were happening simultaneously, powerful drivers for creating identities. Alexander concluded that the intersection of those movements created “a very interesting formation of the idea of what it means to be black.”

Adam, who works at the family camp, had a response to the same question agreed that the underrepresentation of people of color in wilderness areas has a lot to do with
deeply systemic cultural expectations. He discussed that it has less to do with economics and more to do with what different groups of people do for their vacation. This point is contrary to what much of the literature review described as a barrier.

Adam recalls having a conversation with a woman that works to bring low- to mid-income black youth to wilderness areas. She is faced with the question of how to convince them that it is not a punishment to go outside; most of the youth had always seen going outside that way. Adam surmises that if you look historically, this is something that white, middle to upper class people have had the luxury to do, so there is not as much awareness or interest in communities of color. Adam asks, “Why would someone who may not be comfortable in their day-to-day life want to go and sleep in a tent? Everyone comes from a different context, and we have to shift that context at the ground level.” Kearney’s (2013) article addressed the same point.

During his interview, Alexander and I discussed the idea of cultural traits. I admitted, to Alexander, and to myself, that I am hesitant to address cultural traits, as my liberal education and progressive upbringing deemed it intrinsically wrong to make blanket statements (positive, negative, or neutral) about any group. He made a statement that continues to resonate with me: “We are so stuck on race, that we no longer see culture.” Alexander explained that cultural traits are real, and differ from stereotyping. According to him, stereotypes, although often rooted in some truth, are typically negative, while cultural traits are neither bad nor good.

He argues that because of the historical influence, cultural traits have emerged, and it is currently not typical for blacks to prioritize engagement with nature as a form of recreation and it is even more atypical for a black person to seek solitude in nature. To
support his view that there is a historical aspect influencing how blacks engage with nature, Alexander notes that in 1860, blacks were still African; there was not the mixing of ethnicities that exists today. For Alexander, this is significant because they were still influenced by the culture that was dominant in Africa, the place from which they were taken.

According to Alexander, the culture that was dominant in Africa had a connection to the community and to the elders that was woven deeply into life. Alexander’s organization recognizes this trait, and creates engagement strategies based on this commonly held ideology, by offering group activities and sports that take place in nature. Alexander sums up why the group dynamic is less valued by noting that “in America, it is youth culture that drives things. We do not value the aged. That is an idea that is an American, and a fundamentally European idea.”

During their interviews, Alexander (director of the urban youth program) and Simon (caretaker at the family camp) both discussed the cultural traits of people of European lineage and the influence on their engagement with nature. According to these two interviewees, typically people of European lineage have or desire a cabin up north and to spend time “at the lake.” Simon, who is of European lineage, fits that description: he lives at camp year round, which is 17 miles from the nearest small town and also owns a cabin separate from camp. Again, his favorite part of his job is when he is clearing trails, alone.

Simon credits the opportunities he had as a child: his parents taking him into nature for hiking, hunting, fishing, park and recreation programs and boy scouts, for influencing how he interacts with nature/outdoor recreation. This idea is consistent with
the literature review, when Manning (as cited by Krymkowski, et al., 2014) stated, “given the importance of childhood socialization in developing leisure preferences, this may explain why members of minority groups continue to shy away from this type of outdoor recreation; Perhaps these preferences have been passed from generation to generation” (p. 40). Simon surmises that if one is not exposed to wilderness as a child, the idea of the outdoors as a place for recreation would feel foreign.

Alexander agrees with Simon that for many people of European lineage, the idea of the individual is a defining concept. “The settlers left Europe because the rights of the individual were being infringed upon, and began a new country based on the rights of the individual.” Alexander also stated that the importance of the individual for people of European lineage was in opposition to the importance of group mentality in African cultures. He went on to say that it is not only black culture, but that Asian and Hispanic cultures also move as family groups and would never imagine an individual going out and existing in solitude in nature. He continued to explain the current narrative of who visits the wilderness by making a connection between these ethnic cultural traits and traits that have historically been informed by socioeconomic culture.

Alexander points out that in contemporary history, the relationship with nature has become a class issue. He made an interesting case, half-joking, that when you look at the identity of middle to upper class white people in the state where the research took place, it is tied to the idea of wilderness as recreation:

People do not buy two Mercedes, they buy a Mercedes and a cabin on a lake. If they are middle class, they buy a Volvo and a cabin, and if they are slightly lower income, they buy a Subaru and a cabin.
He argues that the wilderness movement itself is classist because until the industrial revolution, most everyone was deeply involved with nature in the agrarian society that dominated American life.

Alexander went on to explain that with the urbanization of lifestyles, being involved with nature became something voluntary, and a symbol of prestige: if a family had the means to intentionally take vacations in nature for recreation purposes, it was unlikely that they were working in factories or other blue collar jobs. He described that a conservation movement emerged from the educated, elite group of whites, and evolved, through modern history, not to necessarily include those low to moderate income whites who are (admittedly stereotypically) the type to grab a six pack of cheap beer and go four-wheeling, snowmobiling, or sit in a deer stand.

Alexander made the connection between classism within the white environmental movement, which emerged out of historical context, and the classist way in which some engagement strategies are “missing a whole swath of people.” Alexander described that some strategies to make the outdoors more equitable with the communities of color are often based on the stereotype that people of color are all low to moderate income. According to him, this has serious shortcomings. There are middle class black families that are not in the woods either. They have the means to prioritize the outdoors, but they do not, often basing their choices on the previously stated socioeconomic cultural traits that spending time outdoors is “country.”

Alexander gives an example of a bike sharing program with the intention to make the outdoors and the city accessible by bicycle. The organizers assumed that because it took a credit card to use the system, black people could not use it because of the
assumption that they live unbanked. With the best of intentions, they developed strategies around unbanked people. Alexander asks how many black people are actually unbanked? Only 22%, so the remaining 78% of the community, is not being served. Engagement strategies are only sustainable when considering economic diversity as well, and the cultural traits that emerged out of historical context relating to race and class, are powerful obstacles to the way in which communities view a relationship with nature.

Given the idea that there are real cultural traits based on historical influence, I then asked if it is realistic to assume that people from communities of color want to spend time in nature? According to Alexander, the idea of wanting solitude in nature is something that people may get to, but helping them find value in it is a different thing. He philosophizes that perhaps they will not get to that point; after all, there are plenty of white people who do not “do” wilderness either, but they may go for a trail run or wake boarding. He reported that new users may discover nature through an activity, but perhaps it’s not for everyone, depending on personality.

So why isn’t it in the headspace for many people of color to choose to go outdoors in wilderness? In some ways, Alexander explains, it’s just not in the sphere of things they’ve seen because it is not part of the urban black identity that has arisen out of historical context. He says, “People are always managing risk. They are looking at all the things that they could do and seeking things that would be beneficial.” Experiences such as nature based excursions or sports that build confidence are powerful, according to Alexander. He tied it all together by stating that when something is not in one’s headspace because of the cultural traits that have emerged out of history, the contemporary barriers become too great of an obstacle.
**Contemporary Barriers**

According to Alexander, given the explanation that history has informed the modern identity of people of color and their relationship with wilderness recreation, contemporary barriers only add to the systemic division of who visits outdoor spaces. Analysis of the interview data suggests that the participants in this study frame their thinking about barriers to engaging in the outdoors in two ways: one is that perceived barriers are not really obstacles, because they all have solutions and the second is that a perceived barrier equals a true obstacle because it is enough to keep people away.

Adam admits that he often creates perceived barriers that may not be there. For example, when Alexander’s group came to Adam’s camp, they arrived on a holiday, when the dining hall would be closed. It was questioned whether or not it would be difficult for the families if they were asked to bring their own food to cook in their cabin that first night. Adam explained that the families were more than happy to do so, and in fact, it felt good to be self-sufficient for a meal. A perceived barrier was actually no barrier at all; in fact, the experience of the families was enhanced because of the opportunity to create a meal as a family.

Adam believes there are always solutions to the issues of transportation or cost. He explains that if someone is unaware or uninterested, then it is possible to find people to help inform and entice them. But what if there is not a liason person to enlist people and work on overcoming barriers? How might it be different with a family, on their own, seeking an experience to spend time together? Will they prioritize a wilderness experience, and have the drive to solve perceived barriers on their own?
Katherine, visitor services coordinator at regional parks, feels there is no difference between perceived barriers and actual barriers. According to her, if someone perceives a barrier, then it is real to that person. She recalled the findings of a researcher at another nature space that sought to discover why children who lived nearby came in school groups to the facility, yet those same children never visited with families on their own. The conclusion was that perception is reality. For example, if a facility was open, yet did not have obvious signage or bright lights to indicate that it was open, it may look closed to passersby. Katherine concluded that a perceived barrier was enough to deter potential users: “if it looked closed, then it was closed.” Without the opportunity to help solve issues for her visitors, she explains that transportation, costs, and awareness are obstacles for potential visitors to her regional park, located 20 minutes from a major metropolitan area. Participants in this study describe transportation as one of the first considerations when inviting first time visitors to a nature area that is not located in the heart of the city.

Katherine explains that there is no public transportation to her park, and the rivers that divide her park from the city center have proven to be seen as barriers; the idea is that the park is “so far away . . . all the way across the river.” She also recognizes that people that live in the city have access to a lot of wonderful parks much closer to home, right in their neighborhoods or connected by light rail, bus and bike trails. Simon, caretaker at the family camp, explains that the camp has a more intensified distance issue: it is located five hours away by car, and public transport ends about three quarters of the way there. While that distance is part of the draw for the regular visitors, a drive of that length can seem like an enormous endeavor to a newcomer.
During her interview, Sarah, lead naturalist at an urban state park, echoes the sentiments that distance can be a barrier. In her experience, visitors may have the notion that “nature is something that we drive to,” and therefore, with all of the other constraints of daily life, the idea of packing up and making a day of a visit to nature is just not realistic. And while a day visit is not realistic, Sarah described how a weekend or a week visit might feel impossible. In addition to the idea that being in nature is something to drive to, Sarah’s experience is that it is a commonly held belief that camping, hiking, and geocaching are activities that people do in their free time. Sarah thinks it may be more challenging for people of diverse backgrounds to prioritize their time in a way that affords them the luxury of recreation in nature, including entrance fees and equipment.

Also addressing the issue of free time and its impact on the diversity of people interacting with the outdoors was Simon. During the interview, Simon, caretaker at the family camp, which is a significant distance from the city, estimated that many families may not have vacation time at work; considering the fact that one may need to work at a new job for a while to build up that paid time off. Even if a family can take the time off, Simon wonders if they have the funds to fill the gas tank (in the case of the family camp, at least two full tanks are needed for most vehicles to get there and back), pay for lodging, meals and any gear they may need to purchase? The cost of wilderness vacations has risen in some places, such as the family camp.

As the caretaker for the camp, Simon recognizes that there has been an increase in the quality of camp, with high quality materials for buildings and repairs (which is better, financially, in the long run) as well as better staffing. Quality costs money, and he feels that there might have been times that the staff or board members have not thought
through, to the degree necessary, “when is comfortable, comfortable enough?” to try to keep the costs affordable. Aside from practical considerations such as cost and transportation, the question of feeling emotionally comfortable once the visitors arrive remains. The data analysis stressed that one way to ensure visitors feel comfortable upon arrival is if there are staff there that look like them.

During their interviews, all of the participants described that the lack of diversity on staff is a very real barrier for visitors to feel comfortable. Katherine, who is of European lineage and the regional parks visitor services director, gave the example that when she is traveling in a foreign country, she is much more likely to approach someone who looks like her to ask for help. Her explanation for this behavior is that “the person would understand me and have a shared way of thinking that will be helpful to receiving the information I need to be successful in that space.” Katherine stated, “approachability is key in customer service.” Like Katherine, Simon also provided a concrete example of the lack of diversity on staff being a barrier.

In his role as caretaker, Simon wants all visitors to the camp to feel comfortable and welcome. He admits that he tries to welcome everybody, but sometimes feels uneasy around campers from backgrounds different from his own. He likens it to the way he interacts with teenagers: he feels he “doesn’t know the lingo, or other things about how to interact, in a real personal way with folks.” He explains that this communication difficulty sometimes impairs his ability to meaningfully connect with campers.

Like all of the other participants, Adam (of European descent, program director at the family camp) shared during the interview that he was also aware of the importance of diversifying his staff. In fact, Adam described how he was a member of a committee of
program directors from several of the other overnight camps in the state where the research takes place that are specifically working on diversifying camp staff. This committee recognizes the importance of young campers having the experience of seeing adults from their ethnic background enjoying the outdoors. Katherine and Sarah also shared an example of why the diversification of program staff was important.

As mentioned in the Participant section of this chapter, Sarah (lead naturalist at an urban state park) was raised in the United States after having been adopted from Korea. She and Katherine facilitated a naturalist program together in Katherine’s hometown, a very rural, mostly white area. In this town, there were two young girls that were adopted from Korea, just as Sarah was. For those girls, it may have been the first time they had ever seen an adult Asian person. Sarah observed how the girls were amazed as they watched her, dressed in her uniform, sharing her passion for nature. For the girls to see Sarah, a staff person who looked like them, made them realize that a career in wilderness is possible for them. Sarah and Katherine shared that the girls may never have been aware of, or considered this fact, before meeting Sarah. This experience taught Sarah that her position as a staff of color in a wilderness area can have powerful effects on young people.

During her interview, Sarah described her responsibility to serve as a role model to young people of color. She discussed a past experience leading inner city youth in a fishing program with many Hmong children. Her coworker at the time was a tall, white man, and although the Hmong children could tell that Sarah was not Hmong, it was obvious that they felt a connection to her and they were more comfortable to go to her for guidance than her coworker. Interestingly, in Sarah’s current position at the state park,
her coworker is the only Hmong naturalist at a state park in the entire state. He spends some of his time at career fairs and community events, to just be where people are, leading by example that working in an environment related position is for anyone of any background. It is unusual to have two staff of color in one wilderness destination; many similar locations strive to have staff with different backgrounds.

Katherine is another example of someone who struggles to hire a diverse staff in her regional parks. She knows what an enormous asset it would be to these locations. She strives to hire quality, qualified people, and she will interview over the phone or in person, however the workforce that rises to the top does not have a strong diversity balance. She is not sure if the physical work in the job description is intimidating or there may be cultural traits of not finding joy in turning over rocks to find insects or getting dirty.

The interviewees not only described the benefits of a diverse staff, but Adam, especially, conveyed the importance of seeing other visitors of color upon arrival in the wilderness area. While he believes that people will love being in wilderness once they get there, a lot of that experience has to do with the other people in that space. According to Adam,

If everyone in the space looks like you, and you are in a wilderness environment, then you are going to think that wilderness environment is home. If you are the only person who looks like you, you are going to think this isn’t a place for you. Adam’s belief in the need to have “. . . everyone in the space. . .” look like the visitor is why he’s coming around to the idea of a week of the summer set aside just for black families.
At first, Adam thought specific programming for black families seemed unnatural or segregation-like, however after spending a weekend at the family camp where there were eight black families, he can tell the difference in comfort level of the campers. In Adam’s experience, it is a completely different feeling if there were all white families with only one black family. Adam’s conclusion is that the ease and comfort of being in that space changes the perception of the space, and who belongs there. While it may not be common to have culturally specific programming and events, the participants described the various strategies to attract and involve groups of color at their place of employment.

According to the participants in this research, outreach initiatives in which they have been engaged have had varying success rates. For example, Sarah noted that there has been an increase in visitors of color at the state parks because of an initiative reaching out to first time visitors. In the state where the research took place, Sarah described this as the “I can” program (I can fish, I can camp, I can hike) that has the goal of introducing these activities to first timers in a positive, easy way. While Sarah explains that the state parks are fortunate to have programs in place to attract new visitors, Katherine describes the lack of resources for such strategies in regional parks.

Katherine, visitor services coordinator for regional parks, discussed how she would love to see more time and funding devoted to outreach for new visitors, specifically to underrepresented groups. She described the need for this funding because otherwise, Katherine must rely on trying to serve visitors when or if they find the park. Without such funds, Katherine has only limited ways in which she can reduce barriers,
such as offering programs or activities on the weekend or evenings, hopefully when people are free.

For example, a free family program on the first Friday night of the month is designed to reduce barriers to visitors at the regional park where Katherine works. The purpose of this free first Friday is to help alleviate the obstacle of time and money. Those barriers have been identified by the participants in this research, as well as the review of the research literature (Byrne, 2011; Golash-Boza, Noble, Treitler and Valdez, 2015), as a barrier to increasing diversity of visitors. However, the first free Friday does not address the transportation barrier, nor do other initiatives in the regional park.

In addition to first free Fridays, Katherine described that at the regional park where she works, there are scholarships available to off-set the fees associated with programming, but they are not advertised well. Katherine would love to see a better way of communicating the opportunities available for scholarships and initiatives. Currently, Katherine and others employed in the regional parks system where the research took place are required to utilize a classic governmental website for communicating with visitors. Unfortunately, according to Katherine, that governmental website is difficult to navigate with many layers to traverse.

A final obstacle that Katherine mentioned that can reduce the diversity of visitors to the regional park where she works are the waivers that participants are asked to sign. They can be intimidating if they are not accustomed to waivers, or if the visitor cannot read English well. I downloaded the waiver from the website, and agree that the form can feel very overwhelming. It begins with “[name of park] PARTICIPANT’S RELEASE AGREEMENT” and the subheading, “This Document Affects Your Legal Rights, Read
It Carefully.” The waiver is then a full sheet of (in my opinion) complicated, legal vernacular, ending with:

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I AM LEGALLY COMPETENT TO SIGN THIS AGREEMENT AND FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS CONTENTS. I AM FULLY AWARE THAT BY SIGNING THIS AGREEMENT I AM WAIVING CERTAIN LEGAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO SU.

Katherine describes how forms like this are off-putting and even frightening to visitors that are not used to waivers. However, once the barriers of awareness, free time, cost, transportation, waivers and not seeing many visitors or staff of color are met and overcome, Katherine describes how her team will do everything they can do to ensure a good experience for all visitors.

Katherine notes that if groups or visitors do come to the park with any kind of special needs, the staff will go to great lengths to accommodate. For example, a group coming from China through a local organization asked to attend a candlelight ski event. Since the group is coming from overseas, they can not pin down exactly who is coming, how many visitors there will be, and most will not have any experience with ski equipment. She invited the group to arrive earlier than the event begins, so that staff will be available to help participants get fitted with skis and boots and be given some basic demonstrations. According to the research analysis, teaming up with the local organization that supports these visitors from China is one example of how working with existing cultural groups can be highly beneficial.

Many of the participants explained that partnerships with organizations that serve underrepresented populations can be an invaluable resource. Katherine said that other
parks in the system that are located closer to the city center have such partnerships, and the collaboration can be very successful. Often a liason staff member who is comfortable in the outdoors can be the bridge between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Adam has certainly found that to be true at the family camp, when he has partnered with Alexander’s organization to bring families up to camp. Adam explains that it would have been near impossible to create an experience with eight black families who had seldomly, if ever, been in a wilderness situation to travel to a camp five hours away from the city if it had not been for the partnership between the two organizations. The literature review named telling the stories (Greenberg, 2014; McClure, 2014; Panisch, 2015) another strategy for engaging visitors of underrepresented backgrounds, a sentiment that was echoed by the participants in this study.

Sarah describes how telling the stories of wild places from the perspectives of different cultural groups is valuable in attracting diverse visitors. For example, at the state park where Sarah works, there is a progressive exhibit in the visitor center, telling the story of the area from the Native, African slave, and European settler points of view. In addition to this exhibit, Sarah has ideas of creating a gateway into the park with “welcome” written in many different languages as people enter.

Besides this welcoming gateway, Sarah also believes it would help to create signage throughout the park in Spanish as well as English. The literature review (Peterson, 2014) supports the concept of more multi-lingual signage and educational materials as a simple tactic to break down the language barrier. In addition, Sarah knows that it is a gradual process to overcome obstacles such as language, but that with time and effort, change will come.
Sarah explains that being patient and understanding helps visitors with English as their second language feel comfortable when approaching park staff. She recalls working at Katherine’s regional park many years ago: a group of elderly Russian visitors would come to walk in circles in the parking lot, but never enter the park. They just circled the parking lot until one day, they finally entered the visitor center to practice their English on the staff at the counter. That was a good day.

Chapter Summary

While the participants represented a mix of ages, ethnicities, genders and type of outdoor programs, they all had common experiences working in wilderness areas. Katherine, Simon, Alexander, Sarah and Adam are all concerned with the underrepresentation of people of color in their places of employment, and nature in general. Their organizations see a need to broaden their base and create a more equitable environment for people from all backgrounds.

All of these participants provided their insight into the current capstone question, how do people working in wilderness areas describe the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of visitors of color? I was surprised that the responses seemed to fall neatly, but not mutually exclusively, into two closely linked categories: Historical Influence and Contemporary Barriers. Other participants touched on the significance of historical influence, but it was really Alexander that explained how events in history led directly to the creation of cultural traits. He primarily spoke of black and white heritages as direct contributors to the modern day identity of these groups, as well as eluding to traits linked to Latin and Asian cultures. These traits inform how many people chose to
spend their recreational time, and for many in cultures other than white, the choice would not necessarily be a quiet hike in the woods.

In combination with the existence of these cultural traits based on historical influence, participants expressed that the presence of contemporary barriers makes wilderness feel inaccessible. Sarah spoke of the commonly held idea that nature is something that is far away. Issues of time, money, transportation, and distance can be logistical problems. The lack of visitors and staff of color in a wilderness area is enough to make people feel like they do not belong there. Participants explained that engagement strategies to entice and involve visitors of color have varying success rates, are poorly communicated, and language barriers are also significant deterrents.

In the following chapter, I present my personal reflections and conclusions to the research. I explore ideas for sharing my findings, in hopes that I might be able to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding equity and inclusion in wilderness areas.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Recommendations

Because no matter who you are, no matter where you live, our parks, our monuments, our lands, our waters — these places are your birthright as Americans.

~ President Barack Obama

Introduction

The capstone question, “how do people working in wilderness areas describe the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of visitors of color?” has led me on a journey of discovery and self-discovery. I have had to examine my own identity and biases that have been held in my consciousness and subconscious as a white child of the 1970’s in the United States. While I grew up with very little money, I was living in a middle to upper class neighborhood and attending public schools with the same demographic: middle to upper class white families, many of which held strong values regarding wilderness as a place to enjoy and to protect.

My education was liberal and quite progressive, which gave me a strong sense of justice and morality, however, there were very few, if any, people of color in the neighborhood and school system of the mid-sized city where I lived. Many of the
families were more affluent than we were, and often spent the summers sailing and the
winters skiing. While I never participated in expensive outdoor recreation, I explored the
neighborhood gully and creek, built snowmen and went swimming in the lake.

When I moved to the large, metropolitan city in the same state for university, I
became exposed to social and political issues and people from all different backgrounds.
I traveled to four different continents, sometimes for months at a time, exposing myself to
cultures and lifestyles about which I had only read in books. I became an educator and a
mother, and together, my son and I became heavily involved with the family camp in the
wilderness area, where my work on the Outreach and Inclusion Committee began. It
seemed absurd how few people of backgrounds other than mine were visiting the camp,
state parks, and other natural areas. Over time, the disparity was even more noticeable to
me because my son’s father is from Ghana, and often, he is the only person of color in
these outdoor spaces.

This capstone project has allowed me to get to the root of this problem, which
reaches far back into American history and is only slowly breaking down. Chapter One
explained my personal connection to the capstone question, and explored the current
statistics. The Literature Review was Chapter Two, which outlined the perspectives of
many other researchers that came before me. Chapter Three described the methodology
that I used to collect the data of my qualitative interview process. I then analyzed the
data from the interviews and surveys and reported the findings in Chapter Four. This
fifth and final chapter will discuss the major points I learned, how the data connects to
the literature review and possible implications of the study. I will go on to discuss the
limitations and recommendations for future research, as well as a communication plan and my personal concluding reflections.

**Major Learnings**

The most significant thing I learned in completing this capstone was how history continues to inform racial attitudes about who visits the wilderness. The literature review depicted this concept in detail. For example, Purdy (2015) and Peterson (2014) describe the framework of inequity that created American parks. The history of racial violence, as described by Livengood and Stodolska (2004) and Latour (2014) led to the way in which Taylor (2015, as cited by Havey) discussed the creation of the urban identity. Alexander, the only black participant in my study, explicitly illustrated these points during his interview. These are all critical pieces of the story: most groups of color have ties to historical persecution and exclusion from wilderness as a space to enjoy.

Furthermore, Alexander explained in his interview that “whites” as a singular group was a fairly new concept during the birth of the United States as a developing country. Prior to the era of conservation, there were many separate ethnic groups of European heritage, many of which did not live peacefully together. Subsequently, as Alexander recounted, the mid to late 1900’s brought the environmental, black and feminist movements simultaneously, which were powerful drivers for creating identities.

Alexander’s differentiation between cultural traits and stereotypes made sense to me even though I was initially uncomfortable, given my liberal upbringing, to recognize generalized statements about cultural groups. Alexander and Adam, another of my research participants, who works at the family camp both described in their interviews
how recognition of cultural traits is important because the formation of cultural identities has led to deeply systemic cultural expectations.

Alexander explained that it is embedded in the culture of people of European heritage to seek solitude in nature, a cabin up north, and to have a sense of the individual. For most other ethnic groups, the connection to the elders, extended family, and community are not as conducive to quiet walks in the woods. When history and cultural traits are paired with barriers, both perceived and real, as Katherine, Simon and Sarah, the other three study participants, described in their interviews, the current disparity between white visitors to the wilderness and visitors of color becomes clearly understandable. Harrison (2013) notes, “patterned behaviors are generationally reproduced within a context of already racialized social space. Thus, without some form of intervention or rupture, racialized structures are slow to change” (p. 321). The sentiment that children who create a meaningful connection with nature is echoed by the responses of the interview participants. The following section describes how the major learnings from the interviews were supported by the literature review in some respects, and significantly differed in others.

Revisiting the Literature Review

When comparing the literature review to the research results, I found many similarities and a key missing piece. The literature review was largely focused on barriers. For example, several authors (i.e. Krymkowski, Manning & Valliere, 2014; Weber & Sultana, 2013) discussed perceived or real obstacles such as cost, transportation, and time. According to Byrne and Wolch (2009), additional barriers are
how the design, location and programming of wild spaces were reported to cater to upper
to middle class white users.

Taylor, Grandjean and Gramann (2011), report in the *The 2008-2009 National Park Service Comprehensive Survey of the American Public* that a simple lack of awareness is a barrier. Rott (2016) describes how it feels like being a stranger in a strange land when a visitor of color sees very few, if any, other visitors of color in a wilderness area. Baker (2015) also explored the reality of outreach initiatives, especially the lack of conviction involved. She noted that not only are there few visitors of color, but fewer staff of color – a fact that can further alienate minority visitors.

The following is an example of being a stranger in a strange land at the camp where I work in the summer: I recall a week where there were two black families, and a white camper mistook the fathers of the black families for each other. Although the two men had about a foot and a half difference in height, one had a Jamaican accent, and their wives and children were very different looking from each other, they were mistaken because they had one thing in common . . . their skin color. The research results and literature review mirrored each other in one profound way, which was the connection between the racialized historical context of wild spaces and the formation of cultural identity.

In both the review of the literature and my research results, the idea was emphasized that every group of people on earth has its roots in nature, and that somewhere along the way that connection was severed, often due to the interference and influence of whites. Byrne and Wolch (2009) and Weber and Sultana (2013) described the prime example of the displacement of Native Americans at the time of national park
creation. The authors also noted that the Native Americans that were able to remain found themselves with restricted traditional hunting and gathering practices and involvement in legal battles over sites such as Devils Tower and Rainbow Bridge National Monuments.

Peterson (2014), Matthews (2015), Golash-Boza, Noble, Treitler and Valdez (2015) and other authors described the racism that people of color have continually encountered as they traveled in the United States and visited wilderness areas, both locally and nationally. The authors explained that this discrimination has led to a lack of use by people of color. Furthermore, the disparity is perpetuated when a person of color does visit a wild space. According to Taylor (2000), “many [white] users are uncomfortable when they encounter people of color in wild lands . . . this discomfort may manifest itself in hostility directed toward ethnic minority wild land users” (p. 174).

Edmondson (2006) indicated that all of these factors lead to the unfortunate truth that the cycle of connection to nature has been broken, and parents of color are highly unlikely to self-prioritize wilderness as a means of wellness and recreation compared to white parents unless steps are taken to break down this construct. One of the research participants, Simon, echoed this sentiment in his interview and stated that in his experience, children who do not grow up with wilderness values are much less likely to develop into adults that hold and perpetuate those values, which is needed for sustainability in preservation of wild spaces.

The one point that was lacking in the literature that I reviewed was the recognition of the cultural traits of whites. In particular, how these traits are specifically conducive to using and protecting wilderness areas in accordance to the way the spaces were created.
These ideas were discussed at length in the interviews with Alexander and Simon. I am led to wonder if the authors in the review of my literature omitted that information, perhaps unintentionally. I have noticed that the writings on this particular topic, which one would hope would be working toward racial justice, are Anglo-centric without noticing. Perhaps the authors assume the readers will be white, and therefore it seems unnecessary to spell out what white cultural traits are and where they come from.

It seems ironic, given the lack of elaboration on white cultural traits and history, that it is the white park visitors, staff and administration that need to examine their own identity and biases and how that shapes the current statistics of who visits the outdoors. For example, this is illustrated not by the author, but by the readers’ comments that followed Rott’s (2016) article discussing the lack of Hispanic visitors to Saguaro National Park in Tucson, AZ. Rott (2016) is comfortable describing the cultural traits of Latinos, but fails to point out the cultural traits of whites and how they are conducive to the idyllic John Muir ideology of “rugged individualism” (¶ 17) of the national parks. The comments made by white readers highlight the traits of white visitors and the viewpoint of whites about Latinos using the parks:

The whole point for me was to get away from the city (including relatives) and here comes along a huge group of families with all the relatives next to our campsite. And sure enough, they had the music blasting at nighttime while most of us were in our tents. I love music and my relatives, but the last thing I want is to put up with people’s music and be reminded of certain relatives of mine in beautiful Zion. (¶ 34)
Another reader’s comment expresses a similar sentiment as he describes Latino park visitors:

They like the social aspect of it - most of the picnic tables at the local state parks are usually full of Hispanics on the weekends, cooking food, socializing, and playing sports. It's pretty cool in its own way, but my point is that maybe their culture is different and they prefer to enjoy the outdoors in a different way. As a white man, I prefer to use the outdoors to get away from people. (¶ 35)

The recognition of cultural traits of whites, if mentioned at all, was not discussed with the same level of detail and explanation as the traits of other cultures in the literature.

For example, Buijs, Elands, and Langers (as cited by Weber & Sultana, 2013) described in 2009 how “whites are said to value nature and wilderness more than minorities” (p. 444), but does not provide any research or context to back up the statement, which then appears as a derogatory statement against “minorities.” Washburn and Wall (as cited by Chavez, 2000) noted in 1980 that “blacks preferred urban-recreation experiences” and Chavez, Winter and Mainieri (as cited by Chavez, 2000) generalized in 1993 that “Hispanic Americans . . . prefer to participate in larger groups” (p. 183). The authors go on to hypothesize explanations for these traits, citing many studies and conclusions of their own. As a researcher and social justice advocate, my belief is that it is imperative to address historical and cultural traits of whites as well as people of color. This will allow for working through issues of inequity, broadening exposure and enjoyment of nature to everyone, and reconnecting all humans to their nature-based roots. Combining the major learnings with the literature review has led me
to examine the significant impact of creating an equitable experience for all visitors to wilderness areas.

**Possible Implications of the Study**

The sustainability of American wild spaces, both public and private, is in jeopardy if the base of supporters is not broadened. In the literature review, Panisch (2015), Kong (2015), Lovitt (2011) and many other authors discuss the statistics showing that a large percentage of the visitors at national parks are aging and white. Engaging youth and people of color in a love of outdoor spaces is critical to ensuring that there will be future generations for funding and advocating on behalf of these places. Furthermore, every human has an obligation and responsibility to get involved with the preservation of the natural environment.

Baker (2015) explains that everyone living on planet Earth consumes resources; everyone chooses convenience over environmental protection at some point or another. In the following quote, she hypothesizes what will happen if everyone is not involved in the discussion about resource consumption. She states,

> If we are not all involved in discussion about how to stop the damage we have collectively created, then we are all doomed – black, white, brown, everyone. We cannot survive on a planet that has begun to force feed us back the shame we have fed it for decades. (¶ 2)

In the following quote, she goes on to discuss the non-discriminatory characteristics of nature. “We have all had a hand in disturbing the natural evolution of this planet. It is only fitting that we all lend a hand in healing” (¶ 4).
In addition to the environmental responsibility of everyone, the physical and mental health of the human race is severely affected by what Louv (2005) has coined, Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD). He points out that the slew of physical, intellectual, and emotional health issues that accompany NDD can largely be prevented with regular periods of uninterrupted time in nature. Through his books and his organization, the Children & Nature Network, Louv (2005) educates readers that the influence of nature on the development of children from all cultures and backgrounds is universal. Study after study show how nature heals emotional ailments as well as helping to speed up recovery of physical illness and injury. When considering the importance of this capstone topic, my hope is that researchers will continue seeking solutions and testing the progress that is being made in wilderness accessibility. In the following section, I discuss limitations and ways in which I would suggest edits or amendments to the interview protocol that I used.

**Limitations/Ideas for Future Research**

The major limitation of this study is that it was a snapshot of a moment in time, with five particular people from one particular state. It would be fascinating and important to conduct this study in different states comprised of different demographics during different times in the future. There are many variables at play with the specific wilderness areas on which I chose to focus; each had different distances and associated costs. An interesting take on the study might be to remove one of those differences, for example, focus on programs all with the similar costs to attend. Another limitation is that the family camp is the only one of the five places that conducts a comprehensive evaluation including collection of demographics. Perhaps more insight would be gained
from working solely with destinations and programs that collect demographic information.

Repeating the study on a regular five-year cycle is significant, as the field of study related to racial justice is constantly evolving. I believe that one of the reasons for this is the acknowledgement of white privilege. According to the Race Exhibit at the Science Museum of Minnesota (2016), it is taught that racism is something that oppresses people, but less talked about is the flip side of racism: white privilege, which is just as damaging of a construct.

As people working in wilderness areas or policymakers that deal with environmental issues become more aware of the presence of white privilege and how it informs equity and inequity, my intuition tells me that things will continue to slowly evolve. I suggest that researchers continue the study of this capstone question. To gain additional insight, my recommendation is to include the following question:

- Do you believe that white privilege and/or white cultural traits are a contributing factor to the under-representation of people of color visiting wilderness areas?
  - Why or why not?
  - If so, how does white privilege and/or white cultural traits impact the usage of wild spaces by people of color?
  - What do you think can be done in regards to white privilege to move towards equity in wilderness areas?

It is also important to note that my own background may be a limitation of this study. I look at this capstone question with the eye of who I am: a white mother with a son of mixed ethnicity. I experience white privilege everyday, and that privilege tends to
block my awareness at times that he will not have the same experience walking through this world as I do.

At the family camp, for example, no one does a double-take when they see me. They may not even recognize me right away. Returning campers identify my son immediately, and then look to see if I am nearby. He stands out. A mother with a similar situation expressed that it is helpful for her son and her to see another family with a similar makeup. I wonder how my son’s identity will be affected when he realizes that, for better or worse, we “stand for something” instead of being part a norm of a more integrated wilderness area. The use of my research discoveries will be described in the following section.

**Communication Plan**

The original intent of this capstone project was to further my work on the Outreach and Inclusion Committee at the wilderness camp where I work. I have shared my findings with the committee throughout this year, with revelations from the Literature Review, conducting the research interviews, and speaking to various interested people, both formally and informally. I intend to create copies of the capstone for interested parties involved.

The committee then shares our work with the board of the camp. As a result of sharing the committee’s work with the board, more families of color have come to camp through initiatives that are growing each year. The Outreach and Inclusion Committee has also encouraged board development through educational opportunities that our committee has been able to put together, such as a group visit to the *Race Exhibit* (2016) at the Science Museum of Minnesota followed by a facilitated conversation. But beyond
those tangible experiences are the conversations that we have with each other and then with our families and community members.

Unexpectedly this year (2016), issues of racial justice have become a topic at the Montessori school where I am on faculty. I am able to draw from my experiences with the capstone project to be of service to furthering this portion of our mission. The administration of the school is working with the YWCA to do a baseline assessment of our school, both from the standpoint of the organization and from the individual’s perspective. From there, we will have staff trainings, training of trainers, parent talking circles, and especially address ways in which to talk with children about race: both in reactive situations (reacting to a statement or situation that arises spontaneously) and proactive situations (intentionally incorporating ideas of racial justice into our daily curriculum).

Conclusion

As I reflect on my personal connection to the capstone question, I remember that there were many years that I did not consider my involvement to be personal while I was helping to re-connect more people of color to the wilderness. I simply felt the injustice, and I knew that not participating in this dialogue was as good as perpetuating the problem. Even though I am white with a child of color, it didn’t register with me that progress in this area would not only developmentally benefit my son in the creation of his personal identity, but also potentially protect him from danger. That was my white privilege influencing my thought process: it had not crossed my mind that a child of mine would face discrimination (or worse) in the wilderness.
As my son and I had opportunities to spend time with a large group of people of color at the family camp, and as I have worked through this capstone process, I have seen how critical it is for my son to see people that look like him participate and lead others in a wilderness setting. What did not occur to me until now is that engaging with these friends was not only important for my son so he can form a healthy identity with peers and look up to his elders as role models, but that there is safety in numbers: whether that is safety from the emotional damage of discrimination, or the physical safety from hate crimes.

The history of the relationship between people of color and nature is long and deeply rooted. While white privilege and exploitation of other cultures has, essentially, turned a large percentage of people of color away from nature and created the idea that nature is for whites only, the law states otherwise. Foreman, as cited by Green, Tarrant, Raychaudhuri, and Zhang (2005) reminds the readers that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states:

No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. (p. 32)

This section of the Civil Rights Act makes it the law that every citizen, regardless of ethnicity or race, has the absolute right to visit national parks, work in national parks, and enjoy the benefits that come from being in and near nature. These spaces belong to everyone.
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# Appendix A

## Demographic Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
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**Age Range** (circle one): 18-25  26-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  60+

**Which of the following best represents your racial or ethnic heritage?**

Circle all that apply:

- Non-Hispanic White or Euro-American
- Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American
- Latino or Hispanic American
- East Asian or Asian American
- South Asian or Indian American
- Middle Eastern or Arab American
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Other:

**Type of Wilderness Area** (circle one): camp  state park  national park  nature center  environmental learning center  other (please specify):

**Job Title:**

**Brief Description of Job Duties:**

**Number of Years Working at This Job:**

**Total Number of Years Working in Wilderness Areas:**
Appendix B

Letter of Informed Consent

Informed Consent to Participate in Demographic Survey and Qualitative Interview

January 15, 2016

Dear ______________,

I am a graduate student working on an advanced degree in Environmental Education at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota. As part of my graduate work, I am conducting research with staff working in wilderness areas from December 2015-January 2016. The purpose of this letter is to request your participation.

The topic of my master’s capstone (thesis) is the perception of wilderness area staff regarding the under-representation of people of color as visitors to their place of employment. Participants who agree to be interviewed for the study will complete a short demographic survey, and subsequently complete a recorded, 45-minute, semi-structured qualitative interview. The focus of the interview is their perspectives and experiences with outreach and inclusion as it pertains to their place of work.

This research is public scholarship; the abstract and final product will be cataloged in Hamline’s Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository and it may be published or used in other ways, such as included in an article in a professional journal or a session at a professional conference. The research could be useful to members of outreach and inclusion committees in various wilderness or outdoor recreation areas to be used for training their staff or learning more about the causes of this disparity.

There is little to no risk if you choose to complete the demographic survey or be interviewed. The topic is one that is part of the professional dialogue in the field of working in wilderness areas. All results will be confidential and anonymous, and pseudonyms for the camps, parks, and participants will be used. The interviews will be conducted at a place and time that are convenient for you. The research materials will be kept in a secure location to which only I have access, and raw data will be destroyed after completion of my study.

Participation in the the demographic survey and the 45-min interview is voluntary, and, at any time, you may decline to be interviewed, stop the interview, or to have your interview/demographic survey content deleted from the capstone without negative consequences.

At the December meeting of the Hamline School of Education Human Subjects Committee, I have received approval to conduct this study.
If you agree to participate, keep this page. Prior to being interviewed, please fill out the duplicate agreement to participate on page two and return it to me by mail, copy the form in an email to me, or give it to me the day of the interview. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Jessica Ostrov
636 Mississippi River Blvd S
Saint Paul, MN 55116
612.423.8699, jostrov01@hamline.edu
Informed Consent to Participate in Demographic Survey and a Qualitative Interview

Participant Copy (Keep this page for your records.)

I have received the letter describing your research study to explore with staff working in wilderness areas their perceptions regarding the under-representation of people of color as visitors at their place of employment. I understand that my participation would involve completing a short demographic survey and participating in recorded, 45-minute, semi-structured interviews. I understand that completing the demographic survey and being interviewed poses little to no risk for me, that my identity will be protected, and that I may withdraw from the project at any time (after completing the demographic survey, during or after the interview) without negative consequences.

___________________________________  __________________
Signature                                  Date

Informed Consent to Participate in Demographic Survey and a Qualitative Interview

Researcher Copy

I have received the letter describing your research study to explore with staff working in wilderness areas their perceptions regarding the under-representation of people of color as visitors at their place of employment. I understand that my participation would involve completing a short demographic survey and participating in recorded, 45-minute, semi-structured interviews. I understand that completing the demographic survey and being interviewed poses little to no risk for me, that my identity will be protected, and that I may withdraw from the project at any time (after completing the demographic survey, during or after the interview) without negative consequences.

___________________________________  __________________
Signature                                  Date
Appendix C
Questions and Prompts

The survey questions are as follows:

• What is your favorite part of your job?

• Given that you have worked in wilderness areas for (insert the number of years), help me understand your perception of the level of diversity at (insert name of park, camp, wilderness area).
  o Potential prompts:
    ▪ What percentage of visitors do you estimate is from ethnic backgrounds other than white?

• If I wanted a break down of the demographic information of visitors, including ethnic diversity to your (insert name of park, camp, wilderness area), would I be able to obtain this information because it is collected?
  o Potential prompts:
    ▪ How is this information collected?
    ▪ Is it available to the public?
    ▪ In what ways does your organization make use of this information?

• In the time you’ve been working in wilderness areas, describe to me any noticeable differences in the level of diversity among the visitors to your (insert name of park, camp or wilderness area)?
  o Potential Prompts:
    ▪ What do you feel are the explanations for any differences?
    ▪ Have you had any feedback from visitors regarding diversity at your (insert name of park, camp or wilderness area)?

• How would you describe the factors leading to the under-representation of people of color in wilderness areas? Please describe the factors that you think lead to the under-representation of people of color in your (insert name of park, camp or wilderness area).
  o Potential Prompts:
- Have there been any reported incidents of a feeling of unwelcome or racism that you can remember or have been documented by your organization?
- Do you have any evaluations or surveys for visitors that include questions regarding diversity?

- Does your place of work participate in any outreach and inclusion initiatives? Help me understand any outreach and inclusion initiatives that your (insert name of park, camp, wilderness area) may be involved in or thinking about.
  - Potential Prompts:
    - Does your organization have any initiatives for attracting visitors from different backgrounds?
    - Does your organization have any initiatives for attracting staff from different backgrounds?
    - Is the idea of diversity discussed among administration and staff?
    - How much of a priority is it to your organization to create not only equal access, but also a welcoming feeling to participants from under-represented populations?
Appendix D

Reflection Template

To be completed by the researcher within 24 hours of the interview:

1. Note the name and job title of participant, as well as the date, time, and location of the interview.

2. In general, how did the interview go? Did it proceed as expected or was there a surprise in the process?

3. What is the most memorable part of the interview? (Maybe something the participant revealed or an event of some sort that occurred during the interview.)

4. What was the best interview question? Why?

5. What new questions would I be sure to ask if I were to meet with the interviewee again?

6. Has the interview changed my attitude toward the subject in any way?

7. Did I find out what I had expected to by doing the interview? (Provide at least two examples of information I expected to learn and subsequently did learn in the interview, and two examples of information I wasn’t expecting.)

8. What are the top five words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) you would use to effectively describe the interviewee, and why?

9. How did the interview conclude? Did both parties walk away feeling like it was a worthwhile experience?

I will send a note of gratitude to each participant, thanking him/her for their time and commitment to this project within a week of the interview.