

## ABSTRACT

SANTUCCI, DAVID CHRISTIAN. A Qualitative Study of National Park Service Visitor Services Staff Perceptions of Strategies to Encourage Visitor Diversity at Urban National Parks: A Tale of Two Rivers. (Under the direction of Dr. Myron F. Floyd).

As the U.S. becomes more racially and ethnically diverse the National Park Service (NPS) is faced with the challenge to overcome the disparity in visitation between racial and ethnic minorities and White visitors (Solop, Hagen, & Ostergren, 2003; Taylor, Grandjean, & Gramann, 2011). The NPS has employed several strategies to help overcome the disparity in visitation such as establishing National Recreation Areas as a means to bring the “parks to the people.” Despite their establishment few studies have examined these strategies that encouraged greater visitor diversity. The purpose of this study was to explore NPS visitor services staff perceptions toward efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity at two urban national park units. During the summer of 2010 in-depth interviews were conducted with a range of staff from superintendent down to frontline staff with visitor services responsibilities at Cuyahoga Valley National Park and Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. Each of the interviews ( $N=18$ ) were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interview data were coded in three stages (open coding, axial coding, and selective coding) using the grounded theory method. Three themes emerged from the data. The first theme, catch and release, describes whether targeted programs primarily meant for local youth were an effective means to make lifelong park visitors. The second theme, the green and gray, describes whether the organizational culture of the NPS had an effect on visitor diversity strategies. The last theme, talking the talk, describes some of the perceived struggles related to adequate funding and training to implement diversity programs. The results from this study suggest that the employees at these parks have a desire to increase visitor diversity.

The results also suggest that for visitor diversity strategies to be successful more resources and support from upper management within the NPS are needed to overcome organizational constraints. Further research is needed to help the NPS negotiate organizational constraints that affect strategies to encourage greater visitor diversity.

A Qualitative Study of National Park Service Visitor Services Staff Perceptions of Strategies  
to Encourage Visitor Diversity at Urban National Parks:  
A Tale of Two Rivers

by  
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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to all my friends and family members who have helped me along the way. Most importantly this thesis is dedicated to my dog, Harlem, who suffered the most. His constant attempts to help me write my thesis offered much needed humor.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Dave Santucci calls Vermont home, but he was born and raised in the Panhandle of Florida. He is a graduate of the Rubenstein School for the Environment and Natural Resources at The University of Vermont (UVM), where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies and a minor in Political Science. While at UVM he had the privilege to work with Dr. Robert Manning for four years in his Park Studies Lab. During the summer while helping collect visitor surveys at national parks Dave anecdotally noticed that visitors were primarily White. This experience spurred his interest not only in parks and recreation management, but research on race and ethnicity at national parks as well.

Upon graduating from UVM Dave worked for former Vermont Governor Howard Dean. In 2009, Dave moved to Raleigh, NC to pursue his Masters of Science in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management at North Carolina State University (NCSU). While at NCSU he was involved in several research projects and presented at a variety of conferences. Also during his time at NCSU he co-founded the Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management Graduate Student Association.

Dave currently lives in the Boston metropolitan area where he works as an Interpretive Park Ranger at Boston Harbor Islands National Park Area.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Background

The U.S. is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Data from the 2010 U.S. Census show that the population grew by 27.3 million between 2000 and 2010. Hispanics (or Latinos) accounted for 55.5% of this growth; non-Hispanic Asians and other groups were responsible for 22.5%; and African Americans accounted for 13.7% of population growth (Murdock, in press). Non-Hispanic Whites accounted for only 8.3% of U.S. population growth over the past 10 years. Demographic projections from the U.S. Census Bureau (2008) indicated that by 2050 the Hispanic population and non-Hispanic African Americans, Asians and other groups will comprise 54% of the U.S. population. An increasingly more diverse U.S. population presents critical policy implications for the National Park Service (NPS) given its mission is to protect significant natural and cultural park resources of the U.S. for the enjoyment for *all* Americans.

Research dating back to the civil rights era has shown that racial and ethnic minorities do not visit national parks at the same rates as Whites and more recent studies confirm this trend (Solop, Hagen, & Ostergren, 2003; Taylor, Grandjean, & Gramann, 2011). A variety of other reports available from the NPS Visitor Services Project (VSP) show that on average visitor groups at many national park units are overwhelmingly White, non-Hispanics (90% or greater). These statistics hold for VSP surveys conducted before 2000 (Floyd, 1999) and for surveys conducted between 2000 and 2009 (Appendix A). The 2000 NPS Comprehensive Survey of the American Public (2003) found that 36% of non-Hispanic

Whites had visited a national park in the past two years compared to 27% of Hispanics and 13% of African Americans (Solop et al., 2003). The 2008-2009 NPS Comprehensive Survey found that 53% of non-Hispanic Whites, 32% of Hispanics, and 28% of African Americans had visited a national park in the two years prior to the survey (Taylor et al., 2011). Compounding the problem of low national park visitation by racial and ethnic minorities is the almost two decade decline in general visitation to national parks (Gramann & Allison, 1999; Pergams & Oliver, 2006). Reducing the disparity in visitation between racial/ethnic minority communities and non-Hispanic White Americans has become a key goal of the NPS (Murphy, 2004/2005).

A potential strategy to increase racial and ethnic diversity among park visitors involves promoting national park experiences in urban national recreation areas close to large cities with diverse populations. While often associated with the 1970s, NPS involvement in establishing national recreation areas near large cities can be traced back to the New Deal era. In *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History*, Sellars (1997) cited a 1936 internal memo stating the NPS sought “to ‘enlarge its field of usefulness’ through increasing the viability and social utility of the national park system and making it more accessible to and popular with the public” (p. 133). NPS commitment to expanding emphasis on recreational aspects of park management is perhaps best exemplified by Mission 66 under the direction of Conrad Wirth. Mission 66 was a 10-year program implemented in 1956 to refurbish deteriorating facilities, expand the national park system, and provide more recreation opportunities for a growing nation.

The Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) was also instrumental in expanding of national recreation areas. Its 1962 report called for the establishment of a Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR) under the Department of the Interior to coordinate federal recreation programs to meet the burgeoning demand for recreation (Rockefeller, 1962). Further, the Recreation Advisory Council, formed by the ORRRC, established a policy framework creating National Recreation Areas (NRAs) in 1963 in a move to bring the *parks to the people* (U.S. Department of the Interior, 1968).

Even though national recreation areas and urban national parks were established as a way to bring the parks to the people, visitor surveys show residents from historically disadvantaged communities were underrepresented at many of these units. For example, a 2003 visitor study at Gateway National Recreation Area's Floyd Bennett Field found that 15% of visitors identified themselves as Black/African American (Shields, Littlejohn, & Hollenhorst, 2004), yet the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) reported that 35.8% of the Brooklyn, NY population was Black or African American. The same pattern of visitation disparity was found for Hispanic Americans with only 9% of respondents identifying as Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino (Shields et al.) even though 19.8% of Brooklyn's population was Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau).

The history surrounding the creation of urban national parks has been somewhat controversial since their inception. On one hand, some within the NPS believed that only land with scenic beauty should be preserved as national parks and that urban national parks diluted and degraded the significance of national parks (Runte, 1987). On the other hand,

individuals also advocated for urban national parks as a means to conserve areas that were being threatened by urban sprawl. Urban national parks were also seen as a way to address the lack of access most Americans had to remote western national parks. As Foresta (1984) stated, “With urban national parks, there were specific questions of management and policy, to be sure, but beyond these questions was the more basic one of whether the Park Service should be involved with cities in the first place” (p. 169). More recently the debate emerged in *Backpacker Magazine* when the editor-in-chief, Jonathan Dorn (2011), suggested that Cuyahoga Valley National Park and other “less-wild” parks should be replaced by more traditional backcountry areas that deserved protection.

The NPS has recognized that diversity is “no longer just a sound public policy,” but “a strategic imperative for the long-term survival of the National Park System” (Murphy, 2004/2005, p. 15). Floyd (2001) reiterated Murphy’s statement stating, “That nearly one-third of the U.S. population are largely invisible in the national parks raises questions about the parks’ future relevance, meaning, and protection in a multicultural society” (p. 50). More recently the Department of the Interior, the NPS, and their partners have proposed a strategic vision to overcome the question of relevancy with three major reports: (a) *America’s Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations* (2011); (b) *Advancing the National Park Idea: The National Parks Second Century Report* (2009); and (c) *The Future of America’s National Parks* (the Centennial Report) (2007). The NPS’s *A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement* (2011) brought together the points made in these three major reports to “commit to concrete actions” (p. 6). In the *Call to Action* the

NPS identified four goals to accomplish by 2016: (a) connect people to parks; (b) advance the NPS education mission; (c) preserve America's special places; and (d) enhance professional and organizational excellence. This *Call to Action* also laid out several measurable actions the NPS must do to achieve each goal by 2016.

According to Taylor et al. (2011), "Despite efforts by the National Park Service and its partners to engage underserved populations, these visitation differences by race/ethnic group seem not to have changed much over the past decade" (p. 17). Despite the various ways the NPS has tried to remain relevant, there is limited social science information on effective means for increasing racial/ethnic diversity in parks in general and even less at urban parks. Research on increasing diversity at urban national recreation areas should be a priority given that barriers often associated with non-visitation among minority groups to national parks (e.g., distance, transportation, costs) are less salient.

### **Previous Studies at Urban Parks**

A majority of studies in leisure research has relied heavily on quantitative approaches to data collection (Henderson, Presley, & Bialeschki, 2004) and the same holds true for research on race/ethnicity in leisure (Floyd, Bocarro, & Thompson, 2008). Washburne's (1978) seminal article on the marginality-ethnicity hypothesis greatly influenced subsequent research on race/ethnicity in parks and outdoor recreation settings. The majority of research, however, continues to focus on quantitative differences in activity participation, activity preferences, and constraints (Floyd et al., 2008). Following Washburne's approach, research has focused to a large extent on documenting statistical differences in participation or

preferences between Whites and minority groups. Yet researchers in the field have called for more qualitative research to be conducted. For example, Arnold and Shinenew (1998) suggested that qualitative approaches to data collection allow for better understanding of constraints affecting urban park visitation. Byrne, Wolch, and Zhang (2009) noted that qualitative approaches could discover the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes of those who do not visit urban parks. Qualitative studies could also give greater insight into preferences and participation among user groups at urban parks (Payne, Mowen, & Orsega-Smith, 2002). Similarly, Gobster (2002) suggested qualitative studies could further understanding of the community a park serves. Mixed-methods have also been recommended to complement or balance reliance on quantitative approaches in order to provide a more complete understanding of race and ethnic influences on leisure behaviors. Henderson (2006) stated, “In general, researchers using qualitative approaches analyze data beyond mere description and focus on explanations within a particular context” (p. 30).

A limited number of studies of urban parks and racial and ethnic diversity have applied qualitative approaches. In *Rethinking Urban Parks*, Low, Taplin, and Scheld (2005) used several qualitative approaches to study urban park use by people of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds in New York City and Philadelphia. For example, one of the studies consisted of a rapid ethnographic assessment at Jacob Riis Park, part of Gateway National Recreation Area. This study confirmed previous work by Kornblum (1983) which found that visitors voluntarily segregated themselves by racial/ethnic/cultural/social groups on the beach. As a means to understand a decline in visitation at Jacob Riis Park, the NPS

asked Low et al. to help them understand the preferences and concerns of park visitors, especially those of new immigrant users. Low et al. interviewed visitors to determine how the NPS could meet their needs, while still providing opportunities for current visitors and protecting the historic resources. Their results showed that different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups not only preferred different park features (e.g., educational programs, lifeguards, picnic areas), but these groups appeared to develop an attachment to their historically self-segregated territories or “niches” in the recreation area. Erickson, Johnson, and Kivel (2009) used archival research and in-depth interviews at Rocky Mountain National Park and confirmed that historical and cultural factors resulted in less park visitation by African Americans.

In a qualitative study conducted at Boston Harbor Islands National Park Area, Makopondo (2006) identified challenges and barriers that affect participation in partnerships among racial and ethnic minority groups. Schuett and Bowser (2006) conducted interviews of park managers and administrators at several urban national parks to get preliminary feedback about serving racially and ethnically diverse visitors. Their results led to four suggestions on how to engage with racial/ethnically diverse visitors: (a) interaction with local community; (b) commitment to workforce diversity; (c) employee recruitment programs; and (d) identification of visitor needs/programs. A recent study by Stanfield McCown (2011) evaluated initiatives to engage diverse youth in NPS programs using Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and Boston Harbor Islands National Park Area as case studies. From her results a model of deep engagement was developed which goes “beyond

short-term outreach activities to provide in-depth, hands-on learning and a continuing pathway for deepening park-community relationships” (Stanfield McCown, Tuxill, Laven, Mitchell, Manning, & Jewiss, 2011, p. 3). The model identifies six cyclical and interconnected processes: (a) skilled staff; (b) supportive leadership environment; (c) working with schools and communities; (d) community service and giving back; (e) recruitment of park stewards; and (f) knowledge of local culture. Data collected by qualitative approaches like these often offer deeper understanding of complexities beyond the reach of more traditional quantitative methods.

### **Problem Statement**

Previous studies of race and ethnicity at national parks have offered substantial empirical evidence to show a disparity in visitation and visitor preferences by race and ethnicity, but there is a lack of research on the methods to increase visitor diversity. Qualitative studies to better understand some of the underlying issues that influence visitation at urban national parks are also needed. Research on methods to increase visitor diversity in parks could help park managers develop policies and programs to encourage visitation by more diverse racial and ethnic groups. A qualitative study at urban national parks would not only add to the limited qualitative research in the field, but also give researchers and park managers insights into how the NPS and similar organizations can respond to lack of visitor diversity. The majority of previous research has examined barriers and constraints to visitation using the individual as the unit of analysis. Few studies look at issues affecting visitation from the organizational level. Studies conducted at the organizational level have

included qualitative studies which examined organizational barriers to work-force diversity (Allison, 1999) and organizational barriers to inclusion (Allison & Hibbler, 2004). However, there is a limited amount of research on identification and evaluation of organizational strategies to encourage visitor diversity (Schuett et al., 2006; Stanfield McCown, 2011).

### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

To date, there have been limited studies of how to increase racial and ethnic diversity among visitors at parks. There has also been a dearth of empirical studies addressing how organizations, such as the NPS, can overcome constraints to visitation by racial/ethnic minorities. The purpose of my study was to explore NPS visitor services staff perceptions toward efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity at two urban national park units.

Research questions guiding this study were:

- (a) What strategies and policies have been implemented at these units to encourage visitor diversity?
- (b) What policies and practices from the perspective of NPS staff have been effective and ineffective in encouraging visitor diversity?
- (c) What factors related to the administration of the two units explain why policies and practices are effective or ineffective?

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of my study was to explore NPS visitor services staff perceptions toward efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity at two urban national park units. This literature review will discuss previous research that relates to this study. The first section reviews the evolution of theoretical perspectives often used to address racial and ethnic disparities in visitation to parks at the visitor or individual level. Relevant empirical studies will also be discussed. A subsequent section briefly examines selected studies from the organizational behavior literature related to workforce diversity within public organizations. The last section of the literature review builds upon the previous two and reflects on recommendations for further research.

### **Race and Ethnicity Research at the Individual Level**

Compared to other topics in leisure and recreation research, the study of race and ethnicity has been relatively under researched. Over the last two decades substantially more studies of race and ethnicity have appeared in the literature, but they remain a relatively small subfield within leisure studies (Floyd, Bocarro, & Thompson, 2008). A majority of these studies have focused on the individual and more specifically their rates of activity participation, preferences, and constraints. The following section provides an overview of previous research on theoretical perspectives used to understand racial and ethnic factors and individual outdoor recreation participation and park visitation patterns.

**Marginality and ethnicity/subcultural hypothesis.** One of the earliest studies that found differences in participation in outdoor recreation in public and private lands between

African Americans and White Americans came from the ORRRC reports (Hauser, 1962; Mueller & Gurin, 1962). Following the ORRRC studies, research on race and ethnicity in leisure gained momentum as public policy makers began to address racial inequality in a wide range of areas (e.g., education, employment, and housing) and outdoor recreation in response to the political unrest during the 1960-1970s. A major outcome of these events was the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which included provisions to make it unlawful for park and recreation agencies to discriminate on the basis of race. Leisure research on race during this era focused mostly on documenting the extent Blacks and Whites had equal access to parks and recreation areas.

Washburne's (1978) seminal study of disparities in outdoor recreation participation between African Americans and Whites was one of the first major studies about race and recreation participation. Washburne offered two hypotheses to explain racial differences in recreation participation: marginality and ethnicity. The marginality hypothesis suggested that outdoor recreation participation among racial and ethnic minorities was limited by historical discrimination and socio-economic barriers. The ethnicity hypothesis suggested that differences in recreation participation among racial and ethnic groups resulted from distinct subcultural values, cultural traditions, and leisure socialization patterns that lead to distinct preferences in leisure. Washburne also highlighted policy implications of these two hypotheses. As a means to address the marginality hypothesis Washburne suggested that programs were needed to reduce socio-economic barriers to participation. This recommendation assumed that removal of such barriers would lead to greater equality in

participation rates between racial groups. On the other hand, the ethnicity hypothesis suggested that programs that reflected the cultural preferences of minority groups should be developed. According to this perspective programs that encourage participation in programs generally seen as a “White” activity would not be effective because of cultural differences. Instead, efforts should be made to support programs of interest to minority populations.

Allison (1988) stated that, “The majority of the data to date do not support the marginality hypothesis” (p. 248) because multiple factors beyond social class affect participation. Several comprehensive reviews of race and ethnicity research support her conclusion and advocate for the ethnicity hypothesis (or subcultural explanation) (Floyd, 1998; Manning, 2011). Similar to Allison, other researchers have strongly criticized the marginality and ethnicity hypotheses as the dominant framework for race and ethnicity research (Arai & Kivel, 2009; Floyd, 1998; Hutchison, 1988). The main areas of criticism are (a) these hypotheses as developed do not identify specific racial or ethnic factors responsible for intergroup differences; (b) they rely on given fixed racial or ethnic racial categories without acknowledging that the meanings of race and ethnicity are fluid and subject to changing historical and social contexts (Arai & Kivel, 2009); (c) the hypotheses do not address other factors beyond race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic variables; and (d) as addressed in my study, the role of recreation agencies and organizational factors is not acknowledged.

Even though the marginality hypothesis and ethnicity/subcultural hypotheses have limitations, they can give park managers information on to how to better address the needs of

diverse clientele. Programmatically, for example, managers could ensure that fees remain affordable for all potential users in response to constraints related to marginality. To address subcultural differences, managers could direct more effort to educational programs and incorporating ethnic culture in park programs. While at the regional or system-wide level, managers need to understand the historical context in which racial/ethnic groups have been marginalized. For example, individuals living in historically marginalized communities have had unequal access to parks. To combat these historic differences, policy makers could help to ensure community members have the same access to parks by promoting equitable distribution of parks, addressing transportation barriers, or providing programs of interest to those in the community.

**Assimilation hypothesis.** Because of increases in the Hispanic/Latino American and Asian American populations, and increased presence of these populations in park and recreation areas, interest from researchers and managers began to go beyond “black-white” differences in outdoor participation and preferences. Alternative theoretical perspectives were also applied. One alternative perspective to emerge was the assimilation hypothesis. The assimilation hypothesis described how ethnic minority populations would eventually acquire the cultural traits of the majority ethnic population and become incorporated in the dominant society (Yinger, 1981).

Studies in outdoor recreation have used Gordon’s (1964) acculturation and structural assimilation hypotheses (e.g., Carr & Williams, 1993; Floyd & Gramann, 1993). Acculturation (or cultural assimilation) occurs as a minority population acquires cultural

traits (e.g., language, food, religion) of the majority population, while structural assimilation is the degree to which social interaction between minority and majority population occurs in primary (e.g., small groups) and secondary groups (e.g., schools and workplace). Floyd and Gramann's (1993) study of Mexican-Americans in Arizona determined that structural assimilation affected visitation to specific sites on the Tonto National Forest while acculturation affected general activity preferences. Mexican-Americans exhibiting greater acculturation were similar in preference and behaviors to Anglo-Americans. Similarly, a study at two national forests in Southern California found that in sites where Anglo recreationists and Hispanic recreationists both visited Hispanics exhibited higher rates of acculturation than those sites where the two groups remained separate (Carr & Williams, 1993). Shaul and Gramann (1998) also applied the acculturation hypothesis to compare perceived recreation benefits among Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites in California. They found that Hispanics exhibiting high acculturation were more similar to Whites on nature enjoyment (as a perceived benefit). However, Hispanics who were categorized as "bicultural" placed greater emphasis on family-related benefits than Whites and less acculturated Hispanics. This finding demonstrated that some aspects of recreation behavior resisted assimilation pressures.

Sasidharan, Willits, and Godbey (2005) conducted a multiethnic comparison of outdoor recreation participation among six different population subgroups (i.e., White, Hispanic, African American, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean) from Atlanta and Philadelphia. The study found that several differences and similarities in outdoor recreation existed among

the six subgroups. They also found acculturation variations in activity participation and type of urban park visitation among Hispanic, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese groups. For example, increased weekday park usage was associated with greater acculturation. The assimilation hypothesis appeared useful for helping park managers address the disparity in visitation by racial and ethnic minorities. For example, managers should be aware of the cultural, racial, and ethnic make-up of the surrounding communities to ensure programs reflect the values and needs of the community they serve. Assimilation studies were also significant because they demonstrated the extent of diversity within ethnic minority groups. A limitation however was the inherent Anglo-conformity bias in early assimilation research (Floyd, 1999). Early assimilation theories such as Gordon's (1964) work assumed that minority groups inevitably become more like the Anglo majority. More recent theories recognized that minority groups can exhibit selective acculturation where minority group members assimilate some cultural traits while retaining other core ethnic traits. Shaul and Gramann's (1998) study findings were in line with the selective acculturation pattern.

**Multiple-hierarchy stratification perspective.** The multiple-hierarchy stratification perspective (MHSP) started making inroads in leisure studies during the 1990s. The perspective suggests that multiple sources of inequality (e.g., age, gender, socio-economic status) affect quality of life more so than a single source (Markides, Liang, & Jackson, 1990). Riddick and Stewart (1994) applied this perspective to study retirement and life satisfaction among Black and White women as a way to understand how age, gender, and race interacted. Shinew, Floyd, McGuire, and Noe (1995) investigated how race, gender, and subjective

social class was associated with leisure activity preferences. In a study focused on park use, Lee, Scott, and Floyd (2001) found that respondents who were elderly, non-White females, without a college degree, and who make less than \$20,000 a year were the least likely to participate in outdoor recreation close to home, away from home, and at state parks. A second study of park use constraints using the same sample of respondents found that with the exception of time, elderly females or minority respondents with a lower socio-economic status saw distance to parks, knowledge of parks, lack of people to go with, being afraid, family members or themselves in poor health, not interested in outdoor activities, and not approving of other people's activity within the park as important constraints to outdoor recreation (Shores, Scott, & Floyd, 2007). In a study of wildlife-dependent recreation, Lee and Scott (2011) found that race/ethnicity was the best predictor of wildlife watching among the multiple stratification variables used in their study. However, they concluded that the MSHP was better in predicting participation in wildlife watching away from home compared to close to home. Studies applying the MSHP supported Allison's (1988) contention that effects of multiple sources of stratification on leisure experiences of minority groups should be studied. In practical terms, these studies show that developing strategies to encourage visitor diversity should not only focus on a single factor, but should address multiple facets to overcome constraints to participation or visitation.

**Discrimination hypothesis.** The discrimination hypothesis is not a new concept in the field, but it has lacked empirical testing (Floyd, 1998, 1999; Floyd, Gramann, & Saenz, 1993; Stodolska, 2005; West, 1989). The discrimination hypothesis differs from the

marginality hypothesis since it focuses on contemporary discrimination (i.e., actual, perceived, or institutional) from visitors and management instead of historical discrimination. Perceptions of discrimination among African American have been associated with less use of regional parks in Michigan (West, 1989). Chavez (1993) found that Latino national forest visitors were more likely than Anglo-American visitors to report discrimination experiences. A study at Lincoln Park in Chicago found that 10% of respondents faced some form of discrimination at the park, with 4.5% coming from police or park staff (Gobster, 2002).

Institutional discrimination has also been identified as an explanation for lack of visitor diversity among national park visitors (Floyd, 1999). This form of discrimination is “embedded in the structure, policies, or procedures of organizations” (Floyd, 2001, p. 49). Institutional discrimination is an important issue that park managers need to address (Gobster, 2002; Gramann, 1996), yet it has been under researched (Floyd, 1998, 1999) or in the case of the NPS nonexistent (Floyd, 2001). According to Allison (1999), organizational policies can unwittingly contribute to policies that discriminate against racial and ethnic minorities. These policies can range from subtle actions such as inappropriate program offerings (e.g., activities not preferred by some cultural groups) or regulatory signage directed towards one specific group (e.g., keep out signs only in Spanish).

Scott (2000) provided an effective argument on the importance of considering how institutional discrimination can affect delivery of recreation and leisure services. Using the concept of “past-in-present discrimination” developed by Feagin and Feagin (1986), Scott discussed how organizational policies that appear to be neutral in the present can reproduce

discriminatory practices from the past. He pointed to the increasing use of entrepreneurial and market driven practices in municipal parks and recreation as an example of the way current policies perpetuate social disadvantages. Such approaches do not cater to low-income groups that might be disproportionately from minority populations.

Researchers have been encouraged to work with practitioners to identify potential sources of institutional discrimination in their organizations (Floyd, 2007). Scott (2000) aptly stated, “In the future, I would hope that leisure researchers would frame their thinking and research about leisure barriers in terms of institutional settings rather than simply focusing on individual constraints” (pp. 136).

Some researchers have approached institutional discrimination through research on organizational barriers and workforce diversity. For example, Allison and Hibbler (2004) conducted qualitative interviews of recreation professionals to determine what barriers to recreation programs existed for racial and ethnic minorities. One of the barriers they identified was staff and management stereotypes towards racial and ethnic minorities. A recommendation to address organizational barriers was to have a workforce that reflects the demographics of the community it serves. Aguilar (2008) argued that a diverse workforce not only “increase the chance that your organization will be knowledgeable about and responsive to the needs of a diverse customer base” but “many customers are eager to spend their money with companies that mirror the diversity in the marketplace” (p. 220).

These findings suggest that diversity strategies in national parks should consider the range of ways discrimination can affect visitation by racial and ethnic minority populations.

As Rees (1987) noted, most organizational leaders do not believe that their policies and practices contribute to prejudice and discrimination. However, most agencies inherently practice some form of discrimination ranging from the subtle to blatant acts (Allison, 1999). More research on this issue is needed to identify how different forms of discrimination affect park visitation.

**Leisure constraints.** Extensive research has been conducted on constraints to leisure (Jackson, 2005). Constraints studies attempt to “investigate factors that are assumed by researchers and/or perceived or experienced by individuals to limit the formation of leisure preferences and/or to inhibit or prohibit participation and enjoyment in leisure” (Jackson, 2000, p. 62). The seminal work by Crawford and Godbey (1987) identified three types of constraints: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural. Intrapersonal constraints relate to psychological attributes that inhibit the formation of leisure preferences (e.g., fear of the outdoors). Interpersonal constraints include the availability of other individuals or social groups as co-participants. Structural constraints refer to barriers to participation associated with social and economic factors (e.g., time, money, distance). A hierarchical model of the three types of constraints was developed by Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey (1991). Crawford et al. argued that despite the research attention focused on structural constraints these constraints were the least important because structural constraints were the most distant from the individual. Intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints, meanwhile, were more important because of their proximity to the individual. Jackson, Crawford, and Godbey

(1993) took the hierarchical model one step further and suggested that despite feeling constrained, individuals find ways to negotiate around constraints to participate in leisure.

Several studies have examined constraints to leisure among racial and ethnic minority populations (Schneider, Shinew & Fernandez, in press). Researchers have suggested that further research is needed to understand the constraints that affect racial/ethnic minorities (Floyd, 1998; Phillipp, 2000). Previous studies have examined constraints to park use from the perspective of racial and ethnic populations but have reported mixed results. For example, Shinew, Floyd, and Parry (2004) surveyed urban park users and found that White park users perceived more constraints than African American park users. Although this finding contradicted their research expectations, the researchers speculated that Whites perceived greater constraints because of a greater sense of entitlement and privilege. In a study that examined outdoor recreation constraints by gender, race, and rural residence, Johnson, Bowker, and Cordell (2001) found that women were the most likely to be constrained, while race was not a significant constraint factor for participants. However, African-Americans who were non-participants were more likely to be constrained than Whites. Rural residence was not an important factor. Scott and Munson (1994) reported results based on 13 constraint items related to urban park use. Their results indicated that race was only associated with “costs” as a constraint to urban park visitation. Income was related to all 13 constraints items including crime, poor health, transportation problems, and costs. One particular finding with relevance to this study was that 64% of respondents with annual family incomes of less than \$15,000 reported agreement with “Develop parks closer

to home” as a policy change that might encourage greater park visitation. Sixty-one percent of this income group agreed that public transportation would result in greater park usage. About 44% (44.2) and 19.5%, respectively, of respondents with incomes of \$50,000 or more expressed agreement with this statement. These findings suggest that park managers should focus on structural barriers as one way to encourage participation among racial and ethnic minority groups. Bustam, Thapa, and Buta (2011) advocated that managers use such findings to develop “target markets” that align with specific types of constraints in order to develop strategies to help visitors and potential visitors mitigate intrapersonal, interpersonal, and/or structural constraints.

Looking specifically at national parks, researchers (e.g., Solop et al., 2001; Taylor et al., 2011) have sought to understand why people (i.e., visitors and non-visitors) do not visit NPS units more often. The results from both studies showed differences by race/ethnicity, where White respondents were less constrained than other racial/ethnic groups. The majority of the response options dealt with structural constraints (e.g., “It takes too long to get to any NPS unit from my home”), though one of the top responses regardless of race/ethnicity was “I just don’t know that much about NPS units,” which is an intrapersonal constraint. A study that examined the constraints to visitation at Congaree National Park (Lawton & Weaver, 2008) found that over half of the respondents from nearby Columbia, SC had never visited and that African-American residents were more likely to be non-visitors. To help potential visitors negotiate constraints to visitation the authors suggested that park managers should do

a better job of promoting the park and encouraging visitation by those who have not yet visited the park.

Constraints research is grounded in the notion that “latent demand can be converted to participation if the impacts of constraints can be eased” (Scott & Mowen, 2010, p. 538). Yet, few studies have addressed how strategies that alleviate intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints affect participation or visitation. In a study of infrequent park users in Northeastern Ohio, Scott and Mowen found that people constrained by transportation and access reacted favorably to park managers’ strategies to overcome these constraints to visitation, while those who perceived time constraints were less responsive to agency facilitation strategies. Scott and Mowen also suggested that structural constraints, not intrapersonal or interpersonal constraints, may have a greater effect on participation and visitation. It should be noted, however, that there has been little indication that constraints research is being applied by park managers to overcome constraints (Jackson & Scott, 1999).

### **Organization Perspectives**

As suggested previously, substantial leisure research has been conducted at the individual perspective. Research at the organizational level is more limited, especially research on managerial issues within the context of race and ethnicity. Research using an organizational perspective could help leisure service organizations and land management agencies, like the NPS, plan for visitor diversity. Previous research suggested institutional and organizational barriers can affect individual activity participation and park visitation (e.g., Allison, 1999). These institutional barriers may result in institutionalized

discrimination which could lead to ineffective communication and discriminatory policies, structures, and procedures that affect an organization's ability to fulfill its mission. The following section provides a selective overview of these institutional and organizational barriers.

**Workforce diversity.** Similar to researchers studying organizational barriers in leisure studies, scholars in organizational behavior have tended to focus on workforce diversity as a means to address the growing racial and ethnic diversity within the United States. Early studies on workforce diversity in organizational behavior primarily focused on what Pitts (2009) called the "trifecta" (affirmative action, equal employment opportunity, and representative bureaucracy) and generally involved a discussion of legal cases on affirmative action and equal employment opportunity policies (Naylor & Rosenbloom, 2004). Affirmative action and equal employment opportunity programs required that organizations act as representative bureaucracies, which would apply democratic ideals to bureaucratic structures to ensure "all interests are represented in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs" (Selden & Selden, 2001, p. 309). A few scholars moved away from the issues surrounding affirmative action and equal employment opportunity to try to determine the benefits of employee diversity (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998), but the study results have been mixed. In a review of literature covering 40 years, Williams and O'Reilly concluded that employee diversity has a negative effect on performance and social cohesiveness. Pitts and Wise (2010) disagreed and argued that little empirical evidence

existed showing an association between employee diversity and performance. They suggested future research needs to determine the nature of this complex relationship.

The majority of current research on workforce diversity has focused on diversity management programs (Pitts & Wise, 2010). Researchers began to notice that despite affirmative action programs, determining the benefits of diversity was hard because the culture of the organization remained the same (Konrad, 2003). To overcome the organizational culture barriers, Thomas (1990) suggested that organizations need “to learn to manage diversity – to move beyond affirmative action” (p. 109). Thomas went on to explain, “The goal of managing diversity is to develop our capacity to accept, incorporate, and empower the diverse human talents of the most diverse nation on earth” (p. 117). In a study of 160 federal agencies (including the NPS), Kellough and Naff (2004) tried to determine the extent to which diversity management programs were developed. They found that 90% of U.S. federal agencies had an established diversity management program, yet some of these management programs did not depart from the original affirmative action and equal employment opportunity procedures. Unfortunately, they received an incomplete survey questionnaire from the NPS. A workforce diversity management plan for the NPS is mentioned under Director’s Order #92 (Jarvis, 2010). To date that plan is still under development.

Regardless of what approach to diversity management practitioners implement, public organizations have the ability to act as agents of social change. Under the assumption that “diversity is inherently valuable,” Selden and Selden (2001) suggested that, “public

organizations not only have the opportunity to address and meet the needs of a changing constituency, but the social responsibility to be active participants in social change as well ” (p. 323).

In a systematic literature review of the 12 major public administration journals, Pitts and Wise (2010) argued that “diversity-related studies tends [sic] to be limited to a subset of public administration journals, a couple of diversity dimensions, and a few theoretical frameworks” (p. 62). They further contended that only a small percentage of the research from the past decade provided any empirical data that practitioners can use. Pitts (2009) lamented, “The literature on diversity management is replete with theoretical assumptions” (p. 330). Pitts and Wise warned practitioners to not implement strategies that relied on the limited empirical data from previous studies because “we know little about what is happening inside the black box of organizational context” (p. 63).

**Visitor diversity and the NPS.** My study sought to address two limitations previous researchers have identified with respect to race and ethnicity in leisure (Floyd et al., 2008). First, more studies were needed to better understand organizational barriers to leisure and issues surrounding environmental justice, institutional discrimination, and agency non-responsiveness (Allison, 2000; Floyd & Johnson, 2002; Scott, 2000). The literature has suggested ways to encourage greater visitor diversity, but a common recommendation is workforce diversity (Goldsmith, 1994; Roberts & Rodriguez, 2008; Schuett et al., 2006; Scott, 2000). Moreover, most studies focus on racial and ethnic differences from the perspective of visitors or park users. Only a few empirical studies have focused on

individual agency leaders because they do not want to be “exposed as having a subpar diversity management program or discriminatory organizational culture” (Pitts & Wise, 2010, p. 61). Only a handful of studies (e.g. Byrne et al., 2009; Erickson et al., 2009; Schuett et al., 2006) have examined the effects of organizational culture, structure, and policies/procedures of the NPS on visitor diversity. For example, Roberts and Rodriguez (2008) in a study at Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) found that structural constraints to visitation included the culture of the NPS, lack of ethnic minority staff, and the perception that RMNP is meant for middle to upper class Whites. As Roberts and Ross (2009) stated, “National parks that seek continued success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must swiftly and unambiguously diversify their workforce in order to build their capacity for diversifying tomorrow’s park constituencies” (p. 1).

The second limitation of past studies that I addressed was to use qualitative data to focus on racial and ethnic diversity in national parks. My qualitative approach provided more depth of insight than could be obtained through quantitative surveys.

**Organizational culture.** Organizational culture is deeply rooted within an organization, though it is often times hard to determine which aspects make up the culture. Organizational culture can include the shared values, beliefs, symbols, and attitudes within an organization. The founders of an organization often influence the culture of an organization. “They have a vision of what the organization should be. They are unconstrained by previous customs or ideologies” (Robbins & Judge, 2008, p. 253). Over

time employees buy into the culture through socialization and further develop the culture by passing on stories, symbols, and rituals.

Culture is often difficult to change, especially those organizations with a strong culture. According to Robbins and Judge (2008), “A strong culture demonstrates high agreement among members about what the organization stands for. Such unanimity of purpose builds cohesiveness, loyalty, and organizational commitment” (p. 250). They went on to note four conditions in which cultural change can occur: (a) a dramatic crisis exists or is created; (b) turnover in leadership; (c) young and small organizations; and (d) weak culture (p. 259). Even with these factors in place organizational change can be a slow and lengthy process.

Organizational change is often increasingly more difficult in the public sector due to the hierarchical structure of organizations (Morgan, 2006). Fernandez and Rainey (2006), though, outlined eight factors to successfully manage organizational change in the public sector: (a) ensure the need; (b) provide a plan; (c) build internal support for change and overcome resistance; (d) ensure top-management support and commitment; (e) build external support; (f) provide resources; (g) institutionalize change; and (h) pursue comprehensive change.

A strong culture exists within the NPS. The agency has a long and storied history. The NPS holds a unique position among public lands management agencies as the protector of America’s “crown jewels.” There are many shared symbols, stories, and values within the NPS. The arrowhead emblem, green and gray uniforms, and flat hats are a few examples of

the symbols shared by NPS employees. It is not uncommon for NPS employees to live in remote wilderness areas where their neighbors are their fellow NPS employees. It is also not uncommon for NPS employees to work several seasons as a temporary employee before being hired as a permanent NPS employee. These are some examples that show some of the commitment that NPS employees have to the NPS. This kind of commitment suggests a strong organizational culture exists within the NPS.

### **Chapter Summary**

Studies have shown that racial and racial ethnic minorities in the U.S. do not visit national parks at the same rates as White Americans. Several theories have been developed to guide research on park visitation by minority populations. A substantial literature has grown around empirical tests of the theories. Most studies supported the ethnicity or subcultural hypothesis that suggest that racial and ethnic differences in park use and recreation behavior generally were influenced more by cultural traditions and socialization patterns than by income. At the same time, research also shows that multiple social factors (e.g., race, gender, income, etc.) affect park visitation and constraints. Although, a substantial literature exists on these topics, the research is limited by reliance on the individual as the main unit of analysis. Few researchers have investigated organizational factors in studies of race and ethnicity and leisure. Specifically, few researchers have attempted to identify how organizational factors might be related to programs designed to increase visitor diversity in national parks. Further, quantitative approaches have been most often used to study race and ethnicity in relation to national park visitation. Qualitative

approaches to study organizational factors could yield important insights to learn how visitor diversity programs can be improved. Applying qualitative methods in this way also could increase understanding of how organizational factors shape leisure experiences for diverse visitor audiences.

Therefore, my study sought to explore NPS visitor services staff perceptions toward efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity at two urban national park units. Research questions guiding this study were:

- (a) What strategies and policies have been implemented at these units to encourage visitor diversity?
- (b) What policies and practices from the perspective of NPS staff have been effective and ineffective in encouraging visitor diversity?
- (c) What factors related to the administration of the two units explain why policies and practices are effective or ineffective?

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The purpose of this study was to explore NPS visitor services staff perceptions of efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity at two urban national park units. To understand and assess strategies for increasing diversity a qualitative study was conducted. A qualitative study afforded the opportunity to explore “what is happening or has happened” at these parks from the perspective of park employees. The following sections describe the study settings, data collection process, and data analysis procedures.

### **Study Settings**

This study focused on two different units within the National Park System: Cuyahoga Valley National Park and Chattahoochee River NRA. These particular units were selected for the following reasons: (a) both parks were established as NRAs around the same time; (b) both units also had similar characteristics: they were both linear parks with a focus on recreation and were mandated to protect the scenic, natural, and recreational values of the river that runs through each park and the adjoining land; and (c) both are in close proximity to large metropolitan areas with similar racial/ethnic demographic characteristics (National Park Service, n.d. b).

**Cuyahoga Valley National Park.** Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CUVA) with almost 33,000 acres is located between Cleveland and Akron, OH and receives over 2.1 million visitors annually (Figure 1). The park was established in 1974 as a National Recreation Area (Cuyahoga Valley National Park Establishment Act, 1974) in response to the “needed recreational open space necessary to the urban environment” and was renamed

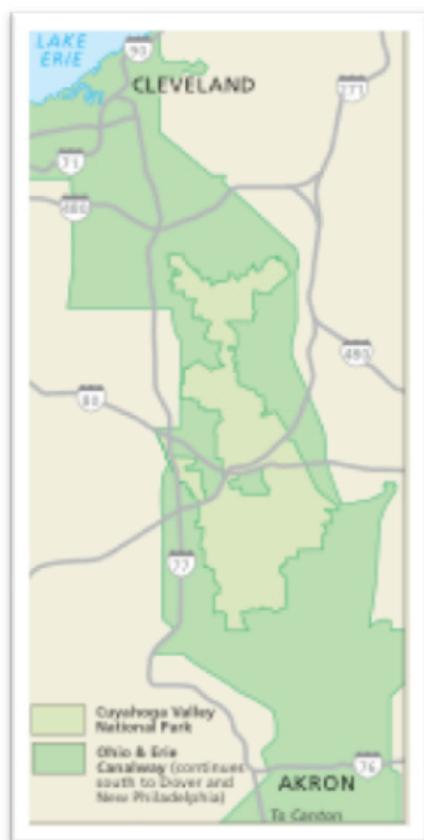
Cuyahoga Valley National Park in 2000. Recreation was the main focus at CUVA. The park's Towpath Trail, part of the Ohio & Erie National Canalway, is a popular spot for walking, biking, and running. The park also contains over 40 miles of hiking and horseback riding trails.

Before being established as a NRA in 1974, the land and the river in the Cuyahoga Valley between Cleveland, OH and Akron, OH were used as a means to escape the urban centers. In the late 1800s urban residents used the Cuyahoga River for boat trips and the Valley Railway, which was laid down later, as a means to escape the cities. The idea of setting the land aside as a park originated from the creation of the Cleveland and Akron metropolitan park districts. Through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century private developers bought any land that was not preserved as a park. The urban sprawl of the 1960s became the impetus to protect what undeveloped land that was left. After President Nixon's 1972 "Parks to the People" policy, citizens in the area lobbied to make Cuyahoga Valley the next national recreation area. The citizen's lobbying efforts met several dead ends, including harsh words by the NPS Director Ronald Walker (National Park Service, n.d. c.) who stated, "I will tell you one thing [The Cuyahoga Valley] will be a park over my dead body" (p. 1).

With enough public support the citizens of Cuyahoga Valley were eventually able to garner support from their congressional delegation to push President Ford to sign the bill creating Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area on December 27, 1974. Though the signing of this bill granted Cuyahoga the naming rights to be part of the NPS, it was the hard work of Ohio Congressman Ralph Regula that brought in over \$200 million to help establish

the park. In 2000, with continued partnerships and citizen engagement, Regula also championed the name change to Cuyahoga Valley National Park making it more prominent within the National Park System (National Park Service, n.d. c).

The prominence of Cuyahoga Valley National Park is reflected by its almost 2.1 million annual visitors. A visitor study conducted in 2005 showed that 97% of visitors identified as Caucasian (Le, Meldrum, Littlejohn, & Hollenhorst, 2006), which does not reflect the racial/ethnic make-up of the nearby metropolitan areas of Cleveland and Akron, OH. The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) reported that Cleveland's population was 55.2% Black or African American and 10% Hispanic or Latino (see Table 1 and Table 2) and that Akron's population was 33.8% Black or African American and 2.1% Hispanic or Latino (Table 3 and Table 4).



<b>Designation</b>	Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area - December 27, 1974 Cuyahoga National Park – October 11, 2000
<b>Acreage</b>	32,947.07 acres
<b>Visitation (2009)</b>	2,161,185
<b>Units within Park</b>	4

Figure 1. Map and park statistics for Cuyahoga Valley National Park

Table 1

*Demographic Profile of Cleveland, OH by Race Alone or in Combination With One or More Other Races*

<b>Race</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage<sup>a</sup></b>
White	156,136	39.3
Black or African American	219,027	55.2
American Indian and Alaska Native	4,008	1.0
Asian	8,705	2.2
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	582	0.1
Some Other Race	17,502	4.4

Note. <sup>a</sup>Percentage totals equal more than 100 percent because individuals can report more than one race. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

Table 2

*Demographic Profile of Cleveland, OH by Ethnicity*

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	39,534	10.0
Not Hispanic or Latino	357,281	90.0

*Note.* Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

Table 3

*Demographic Profile of Akron, OH by Race Alone or in Combination With One or More Other Races*

<b>Race</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage<sup>a</sup></b>
White	129,298	64.9
Black or African American	67,240	33.8
American Indian and Alaska Native	2,083	1.0
Asian	5,081	2.6
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	189	0.1
Some Other Race	2,114	1.1

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>Percentage totals equal more than 100 percent because individuals can report more than one race. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

Table 4

*Demographic Profile of Akron, OH by Ethnicity*

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	4,255	2.1
Not Hispanic or Latino	194,855	97.9

*Note.* Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

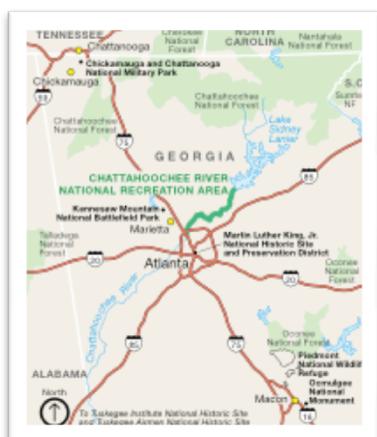
**Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area.** Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CHAT) currently contains almost 10,000 acres along the Chattahoochee River just North of Atlanta, GA and receives over 3.1 million visitors annually (Figure 2). The park was established in 1978 to preserve unique geological formations along the river and several cultural sites “from developments and uses which would substantially impair or destroy them” (Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area Establishment Act, 1978). The enabling legislation emphasized that Chattahoochee River NRA provide recreation opportunities for urban residents including those who did not have a car. Recreation at the recreation area included water-based recreation, fishing, picnicking, and almost 50 miles of hiking trails (National Park Service, n.d. a).

The area where the present day Chattahoochee River NRA was located had been Cherokee tribal land until the tribe was forcefully and tragically relocated to Oklahoma in 1838 as part of the Trail of Tears. After the removal of the Cherokee people the area soon became prime agricultural land until the boll weevil wreaked havoc on the cotton crops leaving much of the land fallow during the Great Depression. The city of Atlanta also grew during this agricultural boom. The Chattahoochee River was not only a source of water and power for Atlanta, but after World War II the corridor was valued for suburban development and recreation. Atlantans escaped the city during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to use the corridor for fishing and hunting with several fishing and hunting lodges built along its banks. In the late 1960s tourists came to the area for the natural beauty, physical enjoyment, and historical/cultural activities. One of the most popular recreational activities at the time was

“Shoot the ‘Hooch’” or whitewater rafting, which started in the 1950s but gained greater popularity after the 1972 movie “Deliverance.”

The surrounding land quickly was developed as the city of Atlanta grew. The river and land needed to be protected from developers not only for recreation and cultural heritage, but also as a water source for the region. On August 15, 1978 President Jimmy Carter established the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area by executive order. In 1984 with the help of former President Carter the park size was increased to protect an almost 50 mile segment of the river. After more than 15 years of negotiating with local landowners, local organizations, and the Trust for Public Land, the park size was almost doubled from 6,800 acres to 10,000 acres in 1999 (Gerdes, Messer, & Jones, 2007).

The popularity of Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area is reflected by its almost 3.1 million annual visitors. The popularity is likely to continue as the population of Atlanta continues to grow. A visitor study conducted in 2010 showed that 93% of visitors identified as White (Blotkamp, Holmes, Morse, & Hollenhorst, 2011), which did not reflect the racial/ethnic make-up of the Atlanta metro area, which the park serves. The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) reported that the population of Atlanta, GA was 55.2% Black or African American and 39.7% White (see Table 5) and 5.2% Hispanic or Latino (see Table 6).



<b>Designation</b>	Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area – August 15, 1978
<b>Acreeage</b>	9,205.53 acres
<b>Visitation (2011)</b>	3,161,297
<b>Units within Park</b>	15

Figure 2. Map and park statistics for Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

Table 5

*Demographic Profile of Atlanta, GA by Race Alone or in Combination With One or More Other Races*

<b>Race</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage<sup>a</sup></b>
White	166,869	39.7
Black or African American	231,948	55.2
American Indian and Alaska Native	3,363	0.8
Asian	15,954	3.8
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	458	0.1
Some Other Race	10,835	2.6

Note. <sup>a</sup>Percentage totals equal more than 100 percent because individuals can report more than one race. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

Table 6

*Demographic Profile of Atlanta, GA by Ethnicity*

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	21,815	5.2
Not Hispanic or Latino	398,188	94.8

Note. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

## **Data Collection**

Before data collection began the study protocols and data collection materials were approved by the North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix B). I also was granted scientific research and collecting permits from both NPS units (see Appendix C and D). Data collection at Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area occurred in 2010 from May 30<sup>th</sup> through June 4<sup>th</sup> and at Cuyahoga Valley National Park June 26<sup>th</sup> through July 2<sup>nd</sup>. Data collection occurred as a three-step process.

Prior to data collection visits to the parks, archived materials, and key government documents were identified. Examples of these documents included enabling legislation, Director's orders, and general management plans. Library databases, the NPS website, and the Library of Congress were used to identify these materials. The documents were then searched to identify strategies and policies in place to encourage visitor diversity. Having knowledge of these strategies and policies helped guide the interview questions.

Second, informal observations were conducted at each park unit. Informal observations were used to give me a better understanding of the parks. Prior to my data collection visits I had not visited either park. Each park had several different land units within their boundaries and I visited each of these land units to informally observe the visitors, staff, facilities, interpretive signs, and the bookstore selection. The short informal observations familiarized me with the parks and gave me a context for conducting in-depth interviews.

The length of time spent informally observing varied depending on the land unit. For example I spent more time at visitor centers and areas with way signs than in more remote and less visited locations. Field notes and photographs were used to describe and record observations. Examples of some observations recorded were the ease of finding locations, conditions of trails and visitor centers, and the presence of signage. While these observations were not analyzed they did provide me with greater familiarity with the park. The observations also helped during the interviews as I was able to experience the park first-hand and ask questions with some direct knowledge based on my observations in the parks.

Last, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with NPS staff at each park unit. Staff were contacted using purposive sampling. For my study the interview sample was limited to NPS staff with interpretation or visitor service responsibilities because they had the most contact with visitors. Also, this level of staff was most directly responsible for implementing programs designed to encourage visitor diversity. The sample also included park superintendents as they oversaw the division responsible for interpretation and visitor services. Each park was contacted to identify potential respondents that fit study criteria.

Ten employees were identified at CHAT and twelve were identified at CUVA. The employees identified represented a variety of positions ranging from visitor-use assistants to superintendents. Once this list was compiled I emailed each employee a letter seeking his or her participation in the study (see Appendix E and F). I scheduled interviews immediately upon receiving their consent for participation in the study. Those who did not respond to the initial email requests were contacted by phone using a predesigned phone script (see

Appendix G). Additional employee participation confirmations were made during data collection visits at each park unit.

The semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted at a location pre-determined by the study participants and lasted anywhere from 45 minutes up to two hours. At Cuyahoga Valley National Park ten employees were interviewed and at Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area eight employees were interviewed. The number of respondents was similar to other studies using in-depth interviews of employees in recreation agencies. Sample sizes in these studies have ranged from  $N=11$  (Shinew & Hibbler, 2002) to  $N=18$  (Allison, 1999; Allison & Hibbler, 2004). Each interview was audio recorded with notes also taken during the interview. Questions were asked according to an interview guide developed for the study. The following interview guide was used during the interviews:

- How long have you been working for the NPS? What positions have you held with the NPS?
- How long have you been working at this park? Describe your current position?
- For what reasons do you believe people visit this park? What is unique about this park that might encourage visitation?
- Based on your observations, how would you describe the people and their characteristics that visit this park?
- Explain why attracting diverse visitors might be important at your park?
- Describe policies that you believe attract diverse visitors at your park.
  - How did you find out about these policies? Were they part of an employee manual/orientation? How are these policies conveyed to the employees?
  - How are these policies implemented at your park?
  - Do you believe these policies seem to be working?
- Describe procedures that you believe attract diverse visitors at your park.
  - How did you find out about these procedures? Were they part of an employee manual/orientation? How are these procedures conveyed to the employees?
  - How are these procedures implemented at your park?
  - Do you believe these procedures seem to be working?

- Describe programs that you believe attract diverse visitors at your park.
  - How did you find out about these programs? Were they part of an employee manual/orientation? How are these programs conveyed to the employees?
  - How are these programs implemented at your park?
  - Do you believe these programs seem to be working?
- Describe what you believe constitutes a successful strategy at your park?
- Describe what you believe constitutes an unsuccessful strategy at your park?
- What suggestions might you suggest to improve these policies/procedures/programs?
- What systems are in place to monitor these policies/procedures/programs? If none, why?
- Describe how you believe the park can encourage greater visitor diversity.
- What might be some reasons from your perspective to explain the lack of visitation by racial/ethnic minorities?
  - How can the park service overcome these barriers/constraints?
- What else can you tell us that might be helpful to better understand how your unit and the NPS have attempted to increase visitor diversity?

Probing questions such as “please tell me a little more,” and “can you give an example” were also used to illicit more detail and to clarify points (Henderson, 2006).

Immediately after each interview I wrote notes to document the details about the interview. These notes included information about how the interview went, described the interview locations, and noted any events that occurred during the interview. At the end of each day, I typed up and organized all field notes from that day.

Before the interviews started all interviewees signed and received a copy of the informed consent form (see Appendix H) describing their rights and notifying them that their identity would be kept strictly confidential. To ensure confidentiality of participants, each participant was given a pseudonym. All data linked to the given pseudonym and any record associating these names were destroyed after data collection. Considering the size of the

staff and the public nature of their occupation, additional levels of protection were taken when presenting the results to ensure participants remained anonymous by using generic identifiers (e.g., employees, respondents, staff, etc.) instead of pseudonyms. Further efforts were also made to remove any other identifiers that could link the participants to the park (e.g., their gender, race, place of residence). The results were also not analyzed to find differences between race, ethnicity, or gender of respondents.

Several techniques were used to help build rapport with the interviewees. One technique was having the participants pick the location in which they were most comfortable doing the interview. Another technique that built rapport was a discussion about my background and the purpose of the study that took place prior to the interview. The sequence in which the questions were asked also helped build rapport. For example, easier and more personal questions were asked first. Subsequent questions delved deeper.

### **Data Analysis**

Data from the two units were analyzed independently. The archival research data were used in conjunction with the informal observations and interview data to provide construct validity and triangulation (Yin, 2009). The in-depth interview questions were supplemented by the policies identified during the archival research process and through the context of the informal observations. The archival research and informal observations allowed me to not only ask employees about specific policies, procedures, and programs, but also allowed me to ask about certain aspects of the park that I observed. For example, I asked respondents about their opinion of the “Parks to the People” idea, if the lack of signage

made different park areas hard to find, or if a public park programs (e.g., birding program) drew a diverse audience.

After the interviews were conducted, the audio-recorded data from the in-depth interviews were transcribed verbatim. To ensure the transcripts were accurately transcribed I listened to each audio recording after transcription and verified it. All data were then imported into MAXQDA 10, a qualitative data management software program, to help manage and organize the data.

The transcribed interviews from each park were coded independently following the grounded theory method, in which the data formed the foundation for emerging theory (Charmaz, 2006). During the coding process, the data were categorized, organized, and sorted. The first step was open or initial coding of the data, in which common words and phrases were analytically labeled to lead to major categories. Next, the data were axial or focus coded, which combined or condensed these categories into like topics. Lastly, the data were selective coded to determine the relevant themes and the emerging theory from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Notes and memos that were made during the data collection and coding process to develop the emerging themes were also analyzed.

The independently coded interview data from the two park units were then cross combined to help draw conclusions from the two NPS units. Conclusions were drawn by comparing the axial coding between the two park units (Yin, 2009). These patterns were also analyzed to determine if there were different employee perceptions of strategies to encourage

visitor diversity based on location. As noted earlier, to conceal identities of the respondents I did not attempt to analyze responses by gender, ethnicity, or age of the respondents.

Steps were taken to ensure trustworthiness. The selection of two park units with similar characteristics helped with dependability because it allowed for easier comparison between the two park units. Notes and memos were also taken to help develop the emerging themes. During the coding process I also met with members of my committee after each step to discuss the data as a way to enhance trustworthiness. These meetings allowed us to discuss the process, the codes, and the emerging themes. Direct quotes and thick descriptions were also used to support the themes that emerged from the data.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter reports the results of the qualitative data analysis of interviews with NPS visitor services staff and park managers. The purpose of this study was to explore NPS visitor services staff perceptions of efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity at two urban national park units. Three themes emerged from the interview data: (a) *catch and release*, the challenge of retaining park program participants beyond initial visits and contact with the parks through off-site events; (b) *the green and gray*, perceptions that NPS traditions and organizational culture were barriers to implementing diversity initiatives; and (c) *talking the talk*, the perception that NPS visitor services staff do not receive adequate support from the upper administration of the NPS to carry out diversity initiatives. NPS visitor services employees at both parks largely shared similar perceptions of visitor diversity initiatives. There were few, if any, differences between the staff's perceptions at either park.

Given the small number of respondents in this study, specific description of the study respondents (gender, race, age, and job position/title) is not provided to ensure confidentiality. The following results are based on interviews with 10 individuals from Cuyahoga Valley National Park and eight staff members from Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area.

### **Catch and Release**

When respondents were asked to describe initiatives at their parks to increase visitation by racial and ethnic minority groups and comment on their effectiveness, one major theme that emerged was described as *catch and release*. While not a perfect analogy, catch

and release is the practice of catching a fish and upon capture, the fish is unhooked and returned to the water. Respondents in this study described how the majority of visitors to the parks were White and visitors of racial and ethnic minority backgrounds were often limited to those who came through targeted programs meant to increase visitor diversity. Many respondents were concerned with the lack of success in getting targeted visitors to become general visitors (i.e., visitors that come on their own without participating in a special program). Many employees at the parks mentioned trying to get diverse visitors “hooked” through targeted programs. Upon completion of these targeted programs, employees hoped program participants would then choose to attend the park on their own. Yet many respondents observed that visitors from racial and ethnic minority groups targeted through special programs were not coming back to the parks, at least not right away. The following section gives an overview of the variety of targeted programs and then describes the catch and release nature of targeted programs.

The majority of targeted programs described at each park by respondents were meant for local youth and more specifically, inner-city youth. While respondents did mention other programs that may appeal to racial and ethnically diverse visitors (e.g., interpretation of slavery, concerts, special events), these programs were not targeted for people of color, but were open to the general public. When asked why there was so much emphasis on youth programs, many employees suggested that youth were the future visitors and stewards of the NPS. For example one respondent said, “they [youth] are going to be the ones that protect these lands in the future.” Other respondents offered reasons why the focus has been targeted

toward inner-city youth. One respondent said kids were the focus because, “They’re not set in their ways. They don’t already have an image of this place that their parents might have.” By targeting kids at a young age respondents were hoping to “get ‘em hooked” and to make the “park a part of their lives.” The variety of targeted youth programs offered by the parks ranged from education based programs to volunteering to internships. These targeted programs were meant to inform and get youth excited about the park so they could eventually become “stewards of the park.”

For most minority youth, NPS visitor staff believed that targeted programs offered a first visit to a national park. Study respondents indicated that often times these visits were limited to one-time programs (e.g., field trips, day camps, volunteering, or special events) which made these initial first-touch experiences the first and only opportunity for park staff to introduce the park and its stories to these targeted groups.

To overcome the issue of retention, NPS employees sought to make a lasting impression with diverse youth by trying to make the visits positive experiences. However, many respondents criticized the park programs that provided one-time visits because they believed such programs did not provide enough time for youth to develop an appreciation for the park. Because the experiences were so limited and brief, respondents believed visitors rarely returned. One ranger said, “I feel like if it's just a one-time opportunity, it's less likely to have a repeat visit.”

At the same time, other respondents did acknowledge that these one-time visits could be seen as successful because they afforded the opportunity for diverse youth to be exposed

to the parks. However, some expressed doubts about the long-term success of such programs. An example of this concern was offered by one respondent: “I mean we're getting that first time initial visit with so many, but it's then whether they are coming back and I don't know. I just sometimes don't know.”

Targeted programs that offered diverse youth continual experiences (e.g., curriculum based educational programs, summer camps, temporary employment) were the most preferred by many staff interviewed. Continual experiences were those that provided prolonged exposure for diverse youth. The hope was that with multiple visits, activities, and experiences diverse youth would learn about and appreciate everything the park offered. After investing time and money into these programs, it was up to the youth to determine if they would like to come back to the park. Despite this investment, employees believed they were not necessarily seeing youth coming back as general visitors. It should be noted, however, that the parks did not conduct any evaluations to document their observations.

Park employees also described curriculum-based educational programs. Curriculum-based education program such as ecology and history were specifically designed to meet state department of education curriculum guidelines. The NPS staff explained that teachers from area schools could choose to bring their classes out to the park where park rangers would use the “park as a classroom” to teach children in a fun and engaging way. Although park-based education programs were available for any school, respondents said that special attention was given to attracting Title 1 schools (i.e., those with a large percentage of

students from low-income families). When asked to describe why Title 1 schools were targeted several respondents gave similar responses like this one:

We actively engage in Title I schools. These are schools with a very large percentage of low-income students and these students often receive free or reduced priced lunches and at some schools, they also receive breakfast. We realize that some of these students are really underfed and need nourishment to keep their brains going. The schools also tend to have the greatest diversity, so we actively try to get them to sign up for programs when we have grant money for transportation. Those are the schools we target.

Making a connection with schools and teachers often was perceived as difficult. Inability to connect with schools thwarted attempts to introduce targeted youth populations to initial park experiences. Several study respondents described that they had to convince the schools and teachers about how the park could supplement classroom experiences. For example, as one respondent explained, “We need to have the teachers understand that it is actually something important. They don’t understand this if they have never been to the park.” The importance of getting schools and teachers on board was reflected by several other respondents. For example, one employee suggested:

Get on the agenda [at teacher meetings] and just do something fun and engaging that will make them realize, ‘Hey, you know, this person could really add to my curriculum.’ And to be professional and show how what you're doing is really going to assist them in their curriculum objectives.

Some teachers were perceived as really understanding the value of parks. For example, several respondents mentioned that they had “Teacher-Ranger-Teachers,” described as:

...a wonderful program model that one park came up with that's now gone to the whole National Park Service is recruiting teachers from school districts with underrepresented populations to work as Rangers for the summer and then go back [to the classroom] and be ambassadors.

Respondents who described Teacher-Ranger-Teacher programs praised the program because the teachers had extensive experience with teaching inner-city youth. According to one respondent these teachers, “...can help us to figure out a way to better reach people and develop programs.”

Lack of transportation was also a barrier to creating opportunities for multiple park visits for youth. Many interviewees said that getting to the park was especially hard for Title I schools. One respondent said, “the big issue is paying for the buses to get the students to us.” The parks received grants from outside organizations such as the National Park Foundation to make targeted programs possible by providing funds to help transport kids to the parks. According to study participants the majority of Title 1 grant funding was allocated for transportation to the park. Without funding for transportation, the schools were not able to transport youth to the parks. Having the funding to provide transportation appeared to directly affect the success of the programs.

Other employees, however, suggested an alternative strategy to bringing the kids to the park. They suggested that parks could be brought to the kids (i.e., park staff would travel to the school to provide programs in the classroom).

While the majority of the targeted programs were meant to hook diverse students in grades K-12, the staff also targeted college-aged students by hiring them in temporary staff positions at the parks. The study respondents described the variety of benefits associated with hiring college-age students from diverse racial and ethnic minority backgrounds. Respondents explained that these temporary positions exposed diverse students to the national parks. They also described how student employment gave students from minority backgrounds a chance to learn about career options available within the NPS. These responses revealed the related concerns about increasing workforce diversity. For example, when talking about one particular student hired as a temporary seasonal employee that had never been to the park before, one ranger stated: “She had no idea this could be a job. She thought it might be a cool job in the future. It's opening their eyes.” These temporary student positions were seen as a possible pathway to a career with the NPS.

Nevertheless, respondents also noted their limited success with seasonal hires. One respondent observed:

We have some crackerjack seasonals that come in. And they graduate in December and literally the day they graduate, ‘Here’s your termination papers.’ Some of them, all they want to do is work for the Park Service. And now you have to compete with everybody else.

Staff members were concerned about the number of diverse students the parks were recruiting to fill temporary positions because there was no clear pathway to a career with the NPS. One respondent expressed:

And that's what I said, you've got to stop managing it. You get them [diverse students] all in this [temporary student hiring program]. You suck them up like this and then it's this one job. And you have all these people who you've trained and trained and trained and you cannot offer them anything. And I think you should really limit the numbers that you're bringing in.

Therefore, similar to other targeted programs designed to increase visitor diversity, barriers to hiring diverse seasonal staff included the dearth of full-time opportunities. College students from diverse backgrounds were recruited and hired to work for the NPS, yet upon graduation they were let go because these positions did not necessarily lead to permanent employment. If the students decided they wanted to work for the NPS in a permanent position they did not receive any help when applying through the competitive hiring process.

In summary, the data suggest that the NPS visitor service staff at both parks experienced some success in implementing programs to increase visitor diversity through youth programs and through hiring college-students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds in temporary positions. Results from the interviews showed, however, that because of funding and difficulties in connecting with local schools, retention or conversion of first-time park visitors or program participants to long-term or repeat visitors did not seem

to occur. The lack of permanent positions and resources to help temporary student hires apply for permanent positions made it difficult to bring on employees from racial and ethnic minority groups. The catch and release analogy seemed to describe the successes and difficulties experienced by the NPS staff at the two parks. The results suggested an area where the NPS can work to support recruitment and retention of diverse visitor groups.

### **The Green and Gray**

A second theme to emerge from the interview data was the role of NPS traditions and organizational culture. Green and gray referred to the traditional colors of NPS uniforms, which reflect its military past when U.S. Army soldiers protected the parks. The history of the NPS uniform evolved as the NPS sought to find its own identity. Not until the NPS was established in 1916 and the development of the Uniform Regulation of 1920 did uniform standards get serious attention. The green and gray theme that emerged from the data speaks of respondent perceptions of how the role of NPS organizational culture and traditions affect implementation of diversity initiatives.

The culture of the NPS is rooted in its long and storied history. A longstanding and contentious issue in the NPS concerns the dual use mission of the NPS. The Organic Act of 1916 states that the NPS's mission is:

...to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

NPS initiatives such as the *Call to Action* recognized that the NPS must do more to address the use and “enjoyment of future generations” in light of the current visitation demographics to national parks. Responses from several NPS staff indicated that different interpretations of the “preservation-use” mandate within the NPS affected how visitor diversity initiatives were viewed and implemented. This section outlines how study participants described how the NPS traditional culture affected diversity initiatives.

Several respondents suggested two different distinct cultures exist within the NPS. These two distinct cultures may represent a continuum of views within the NPS. On one end the culture can be described as traditional or conservative in the view of how national parks should be managed and how programs should be delivered. In contrast, respondents described other NPS employees who were open to change and new ways to promote park programs. One respondent when discussing what they called “the old traditionals” said:

There is definitely a segment of the Park Service that is like, ‘This is how it's always been. We’re the National Park Service. People will come to us because we are the National Park Service and we are the most beautiful places on earth and we have the best stories and we tell what this nation is all about.’ And there’s truth to that, but there are people in parks and places that won’t ever budge from that idea.

By contrast, NPS staff more open to change were seen by respondents as being “a little more progressive,” and understood that the “demographics of America are changing.” As one respondent expressed:

Declining visitation is happening at all National Parks. It appears to me and I think it appears to a lot of people who are trying to be a little more progressive that the traditional model is not working. Your traditional sign interpretation, ranger behind a desk, is not working.

Several park staff explained how the “old traditionalists” created a barrier when it came to increasing diversity because they were reluctant to change. For example, during the interviews several staff discussed the reluctance of the NPS to embrace technology as a tool to promote park experiences to broader audiences. One interviewee stated, “It's like it hasn't changed in 20 years. It's like, they're afraid of change.”

The different cultures within the NPS were seen by a few respondents as generational differences. When describing the generational differences, one respondent suggested that older rangers said, “Nope, we're not going to do that. We're going to do it *this* way. It's going to be this way for the next 10 years. I've been doing it this way for 20 years.” This same respondent also suggested that, “In the next five years, you're going to see an amazing transformation, ‘cause all those folks are going to be retiring.”

Historically, the majority of employees of the NPS have been White men. While Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 began to help women seek jobs with the NPS, it was not until 1978 when women were allowed to wear the same uniform as their male counterparts (Engle & Janney-Lucas, n.d.). Recruitment strategies during this period brought more female employees to the NPS, including a few of the female employees interviewed in this study.

Further, despite passage of Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity laws the Office of Personnel Management reported that in March 2012 the majority of NPS employees were still White (81.19%) with 18.81% identifying as a minority (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2012). Respondents brought up the lack of workforce diversity in relation to the culture of the NPS. Several employees thought that not only should visitors reflect the diversity in the population they serve, but the staff should also reflect the population of the urban areas the parks serve. When talking about the nearby city one respondent said:

When you look at our demographics that's not who's coming. When you look at our workforce that's not what we represent. This division [interpretation] does the best at trying to be more representative of the American people in our staffing, but not with our permanent full-time staff.

This quote underlines the lack of full-time employee diversity. At the time of data collection only one full-time employee at either park was from a racial or ethnic minority group within the interpretation division. Respondents gave several reasons why the workforce should reflect the community in which they serve and several respondents said that “diversity is important” and offered phrases like, “diversity breeds diversity” and “diversity is an ethic.” However, a common reason given by several study participants was that diverse visitors feel more comfortable around diverse staff. For example, one staff member said:

If there is a group of African-American kids and they see an African-American ranger they respond differently. Whereas when they see me, well that's what they've always seen and I look like every other police officer out there, as far as they're concerned and 'Whatever, cool.'

The culture of the NPS also described by respondents included the standard operating procedures and traditional tasks for NPS visitor services staff including the uniform. For example, several NPS staff interviewed identified the standard green and gray NPS uniform as having a negative effect on visitation by members of racial and ethnic minority groups. The uniform's resemblance to a police uniform acted as a barrier to greater visitation within diverse communities. One study participant explained how the uniform also could be seen as a barrier when trying to do outreach into inner-city neighborhoods because, "Seeing a uniform in your neighborhood, when the only time you see uniforms, at least for this segment that we we're working in is when they're responding to an incident." Respondents who saw the traditional green and gray uniform as a barrier suggested wearing less formal dress (e.g., polo shirts and ball caps) in place of the uniform.

Some staff did not see the uniform as a barrier. They saw the green and gray uniform and flat hat as identifiable symbols of NPS rangers. One employee put it this way, "It's not a barrier if you ask me. I think people are like, 'Oh, that's a Park Ranger. We can ask him this crazy question about this poop that we found.' Anything that comes to their mind." Some respondents also described how wearing the uniform acted as a conversation starter. One respondent said that, "They just think it's the coolest thing to have this uniform on. And

when I go into my community, they just think it's so cool and they want to work for the Park Service also.”

Another sign of the tension between traditional and more progressive cultures was seen in interpretation activities. The traditional approach to interpretative programs expected within the NPS included programs such as wildflower walks, birding hikes, and campfire talks. Programs such as these were designed according to overall interpretive themes developed to tell the parks' story to the public. As one respondent mentioned, “we have a practice of letting those themes drive our choices.” Several staff described the amount of effort and time that went into planning and putting together their schedule of events. One employee said:

Oftentimes the things you hear about the National Parks are those traditional programming type things and we spend a lot of time training our staff to do traditional programs. Stand up in front of a group of people at a beautiful location and talk for an hour and a half. And we still focus a lot of energy on doing it that way.

Despite this effort and time, many respondents noted that traditional programs tended to only draw traditional NPS visitors (i.e., White people). For example, one employee stated:

I think we, as a park, our programming for a long time has been that standard National Park Service programming of, ‘we're going to have hikes, we're going to have nature talks, we're going to have campfires, there you go!’ And I don't think

that appeals to an inner-city audience at all, if you think about it. And so it's more of a suburban thing.

One participant warned, “If you do what you always did, you’ll get what you always got.”

Another respondent said:

When we kind of, ‘Here’s our schedule of events. Come to it if you want.’ That’s not as successful. Because the things in here are largely the stories we the Park Service feel are important to tell. If people at least don’t think they have a connection to that specific program, they’re probably not going to come.

A few employees also noted that not only did these programs draw the same crowd, but often times they saw “the same faces over and over and over and over.”

Other respondents were critical of the amount and frequency of the current offerings. When discussing the schedule of events, one respondent described the amount of offerings as “overkill” and said, “it’s like my *God* [respondent added emphasis], do you have to do all of this? What about these things that might only get five people on a Saturday?” The employees did understand that they still had to offer programs to traditional visitors, not just programs for diverse visitors, saying, “You don’t want to ignore everybody that’s already coming. You’ve just got to find the balance that works for everybody.” As described in the previous theme, many study participants noted that programs targeted for a diverse audience increased diversity, but traditional programs meant for the traditional audience did not. In other words, the respondents suggested that the programs offered should include popular traditional programs but some efforts should be refocused on more targeted program options.

Several employees described how traditional destination national parks (e.g., Yosemite and Yellowstone) were different than urban parks like Chattahoochee and Cuyahoga. The study participants noted that at destination parks most visitors travelled long distances. Meanwhile visitors at Chattahoochee and Cuyahoga were quite the opposite. Many employees indicated that the majority of the visitors were locals who used the park often. According to the staff, visitors mostly came to recreate (e.g., hike, bike, or picnic). Staff also offered that their park had multiple units and access points to the park, which allowed visitors to easily come and go as they please without much, if any, interaction with park employees. They perceived that visitors who went to traditional destination parks often sought out NPS rangers for programs and advice.

The interview data revealed another distinction between traditional destination parks and these urban parks: the role of the visitor centers. Upon arrival at destination parks visitors are greeted with a main entrance with “a full functioning huge Visitor Center and they kind of say, ‘These are the hikes you can do. And this is where you can go. And here’s where you can stay. And here’s where you can eat...’ A few park staff offered criticism of their own visitor centers. One said, “We need one centralized Visitor Center.” While another said, “The visitor center is less successful because you're waiting for people to come to you.” Using the traditional visitor center model of employees sitting behind a desk was seen by study respondents as ineffective for promoting visits from diverse groups. Since most visitors do not enter the visitor centers, several employees recommended greater emphasis should be put on rangers roving through the parks.

National parks generally have a traditional and standard way of informing visitors about events, programs, education, and rules. The NPS has traditionally relied on printed materials (e.g., schedule of events, maps, educational pamphlets, etc.) at visitor centers to inform visitors. Many employees interviewed in this study noted that this way of informing the public was not effective. They explained that relying on printed material meant people had to go to the park if they wanted to find out about programs available. One respondent offered, “I don't think we should just post it on a bulletin board and things like that, because it's just the same people that come here to enjoy the park that see that information.” Some employees explained that in the past the NPS has relied heavily on assuming people will come to the parks, no matter what. As one respondent said, “I think for a long time we've really just kind of, ‘This is what we're doing. And if you're not coming, you're not coming.’”

Several employees did offer more innovative ways their parks had tried to promote experiences to reach visitor groups. A frequently mentioned option among respondents was increasing their parks' Internet presence. But at the time of the interviews, mostly their website was used. To reach a larger and more diverse audience, many staff said that they would like to use social media. However, they were not allowed by the NPS Washington office. This caused frustration among several of the respondents:

About six or nine months ago we got a nasty-gram e-mail from the Chief of Communications from the regional office saying that, ‘Facebook and social media’ are not authorized. Policy hasn't been set, unless it's approved by Washington. If you have an account in the park's name you need to stop using it.’ I mean, it was really a

negative message. Instead of that, my feelings are, they should be spending time getting Washington to “get off the pot.”

Another respondent said:

You know, for a long time we didn't even have access to Facebook and Twitter. And then we were kind of hearing, “No, you can't go create your own Facebook page for the park. Even though we know that youth are underrepresentive [sic] and the way you communicate with youth is through social media, but you can't do it.”

Despite the slow adoption of social media, a few park employees expressed that they would like to have it as an option available in their toolbox.

In addition to adopting social media, many staff expressed concern with their traditional model of marketing. The employees knew that they needed to reach out to the community instead of waiting for people to come to the parks. When marketing specific programs a few staff offered that they would “target neighborhood newspapers, churches...” Other employees suggested the use of what one respondent called, “guerilla marketing,” where they spent “a lot of time just handing out flyers, talking to people, going to places...”

In summary, the role of NPS traditions and organizational culture was a salient theme in the NPS staff perceptions of the visitor diversity programs and their effectiveness. The interview data suggested diverging views on how the NPS should promote park experiences and conduct outreach with broader and diverse audiences. It seemed clear that respondents recognized the effects that traditional approaches to providing NPS programs had on visitation by members of racial and ethnic minority groups. In response, some respondents

found it necessary to use alternative ways to get messages about NPS experiences to new audiences, particularly youth and ethnically diverse populations.

### **Talking the Talk**

A third theme to emerge from my data was the notion that the NPS was “talking the talk, but not walking the walk” with respect to efforts to increase visitor diversity at national parks. Respondents expressed the view that the NPS was not following through on the goal statements in strategic documents such as the *Call to Action* and other policy directives. Data from the archival research and the interviews showed that the NPS had introduced initiatives focused on increased visitor diversity (e.g., *Call to Action* and *National Parks Second Century Report*), yet the employees in this study noted that individual parks were not always given the necessary resources at their park to successfully fulfill these initiatives. Several staff said that the NPS was only “talking the talk” with these initiatives because the parks were not given the support they needed. This theme described how study respondents discussed the need for the NPS to “walk the walk.” Their perceptions concern three areas: issues surrounding communication, funding, and operational tools.

**Communication.** Respondents spoke about how visitor diversity was seen as important to the future of the NPS. They confirmed that the NPS leadership had been pushing for diversity. However, according to the respondents, park managers and staff at both parks felt that the NPS Washington office did not provide clear policies and support for diversity initiatives. When asked to identify specific policies from the Washington office to support visitor diversity, a number of respondents could not identify a single policy by name.

One respondent suggested the need for better communication from the Washington office and offered this as advice to the NPS:

More communication is needed rather than just reading it. If it really is an important step that the Park Service is doing or the region wants done then that should be communicated in a small briefing or staff meeting or multiple little meetings. I feel like sometimes just reading it, you read it, it's gone, you file it, and that's it. So I think for some of these [diversity initiatives] to really have that level of importance and you want to retain and really gain it then we need to have an open forum where you can ask questions and stuff. I don't quite get all the jumble-jingle that comes down from Washington, so sometimes I'm left going, 'I didn't quite get what they meant.' And so I think allowing staff to have time to talk it through in little groups or big groups just to digest it and feel out some questions and concerns about things.

Even though the NPS pushed the parks to increase visitor diversity, some staff wanted the NPS to do more to make these strategies successful. One respondent suggested:

A little more time and thoughtfulness and it could be really good strategies for getting people here. But sometimes I feel like when things come down the line and we are just told to do things without some involvement and input. It's hard to be successful without the input and ownership of it.

**Funding.** Despite the NPS's priority to increase visitor diversity, respondents indicated that funding did not support some of these initiatives. As one respondent

suggested, “there's a lot of ‘talking the talk,’ a lot of encouragement, but no funding in place for the kind of creative ideas that might really help implement [initiatives] on the ground.” For example, the staff in the parks were trying to engage with the largest underserved audience by targeting programs to diverse youth, but these targeted programs depended on grants to support these initiatives. One supervisor expressed frustration with the budget stating, “All your work and effort gets focused on maintaining that flow of soft funding, instead of trying to increase programming.”

Several staff in my study expressed concern over the uncertain nature of using soft money to fund targeted programs. When discussing one of the target programs, one respondent expressed this uncertainty: “It is consistently grant funded. As with everything though, that's the soft nature of it that makes it, you never know.” Other respondents expressed the same uncertainty of relying on grant funding with responses like:

There were rumors out there that he [NPS Director, Jon Jarvis] still might try to find the money somewhere. So maybe that would get funded, but that’s a barrier for growth. At some point in time you have donor fatigue for these initiatives.

While lack of funding appeared to be a concern with many respondents, a few respondents recognized that there would never be enough money and did not blame the upper administration of the NPS. One employee explained, “it's not that Washington doesn't want to give it to us. It's just the pie is this big [made hand gesture meaning small] and the need is this big [made hand gestures meaning large].”

Several respondents even seemed frustrated by the number of priorities coming down from the NPS national headquarters with some calling them “unfunded mandates.” One employee suggested the NPS needed to, “set priorities. We can’t do it all.” Another respondent was equally frustrated with the NPS’s prioritization:

Because we all have limited resources and there's always going to be new things that are important. It's not everything is a number one priority. It's, if this is important then we'll focus on it, but everybody has to understand that this, this, this, this, and this aren't going to get finished.

The limited park funding also affected the amount of staff the park managers could hire. Study participants felt that to successfully increase visitor diversity, more staff were needed. Several staff described how they were busy, with a few that said they were even too busy to be concerned with diversity initiatives. As one study participant offered, “We are all scheduled up to our eyebrows right now, just trying to tread water. And it would require people dedicated to make that [outreach] happen for a while.” A few employees commented that they barely had enough time to successfully keep up with day-to-day operations let alone reach out into the community. When describing how little time the staff had, one individual lamented, “I’m too busy to be able to... I’ve got enough other things going on my plate just on a day-to-day basis that I’ve got to make happen.”

Despite budget constraints several of the park employees interviewed for this study offered suggestions relating to current staffing changes that could be made. Several employees suggested adding staff positions dedicated to community outreach and

engagement. For example, one employee said, “I think we need to have somebody who is dedicated in the park to reaching out to community groups, to reaching out to churches, to reaching out to the inner-city. I think that's what we need to do.” Some of the staff also discussed that there needed to be less emphasis on temporary employment to help with “continuity” of frontline programs. One employee explained that the park was trying to figure out, “how can we make this [targeted program] work with [currently funded] permanent positions so that there's that continuity.” The main reason for lack of continuity as described by another staff member was, “it takes a while to cultivate relationships.” The staff at both parks wanted to increase visitor diversity, but indicated that they just did not have enough funding to hire employees to be successful.

**Operational tools.** Another concern that some employees saw was the lack of support from the regional and NPS national offices by not giving park staff the tools necessary to increase visitor diversity. These staff felt that tools like increased training and education and having access to technology would make them more successful at reaching out to the diverse communities near their parks.

Additional training was one specific tool that was suggested by study respondents to help increase visitor diversity. In particular, some respondents suggested “cultural competence” training and a few wanted “cultural training” to enhance their ability to develop programs for diverse visitor groups. These suggestions for training came from NPS staff with past experiences working with urban youth. For example, when asked why diverse visitors did not come to the parks, many respondents offered responses like, “because the

park is located in White neighborhoods and some of them aren't as comfortable coming in“ or “There were kids who were afraid of finding lions, and tigers, and bears in the woods. So that might be part of it. They're not comfortable with being in the outdoors.” Yet, many respondents who were not sure and gave responses like, “I don't know” or “I can't really identify with them [racial/ethnic minorities] too much, because I grew up in suburbia.” Some respondents acknowledged that they did not really receive “much formal training” to help understand the difficulties faced by inner-city youth. As another employee explained, “So, yes they [park staff] are trained. Do we do continuing training? No, but they have their initial training.”

In view of the growing Hispanic population in America, a few of the employees suggested that the NPS provide “Rosetta Stone or language programs to their employees” so the staff could learn Spanish. When discussing the benefit of learning Spanish, one respondent said, “I think that would be great, if we could have more people who could communicate better with the Spanish speaking population.”

### **Chapter Summary**

The findings of my study suggested NPS employees perceived that their parks experienced some success in providing programs to attract visitors from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Despite this success, however, the respondents observed that the programs were not successful in retaining visitors or converting one-time program participants to repeat park users. This theme was labeled *catch and release*. A second theme, *the green and gray*, suggested that NPS traditions and culture affect how diversity

initiatives are supported and implemented. A primary issue was the unwillingness among some NPS employees to adopt new and progressive ways to provide visitor interpretation and outreach to audiences beyond traditional park users. A third theme, *talking the talk*, expressed the respondents' perceptions that diversity initiatives that originated in regional and national headquarters often came to the individual parks without adequate support for program development and implementation. Respondents perceived that policies were not clearly communicated, funding was not provided, and operational tools were lacking.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The NPS (2011; 2007) has acknowledged that for national parks to remain relevant in an ever growing multicultural society, the NPS must make efforts to overcome the disparities in visitation by racial and ethnic minorities. Urban national parks and national recreation areas have historically been seen as the type of national park units that can bring the parks closer to urban and diverse populations. Yet visitor surveys conducted by the NPS at individual parks and data from national surveys show that racial and ethnic minority populations are significantly less likely than White Americans to visit national parks generally and urban park units. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of NPS visitor service staff toward efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity at two urban national park units. This study sought to explore NPS visitor services staff perceptions toward efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity at two urban national park units. Three research questions guided the study. First, what strategies and policies have been implemented at these units to encourage visitor diversity? Second, what policies and practices from the perspective of NPS staff have been effective and ineffective in encouraging visitor diversity? Finally, what factors related to the administration of the two units explain why policies and practices are effective or ineffective?

In-depth interviews were conducted with NPS staff at Cuyahoga Valley National Park and the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. Three themes emerged from the data obtained from interviews: (a) catch and release, the difficulty of retaining park program participants beyond initial visits or initial contacts with the parks through off-site events; (b)

the green and gray, perceptions that NPS traditions and organizational culture were barriers to implementing diversity initiatives; and (c) talking the talk, the perception that individual parks do not receive adequate support from upper administration of the NPS to carry out diversity initiatives.

My study addressed two limitations of past research on race, ethnicity and national park visitation. Following recommendations of previous researchers, I used a qualitative approach (Arnold & Shiner, 1998; Byrne et al., 2009; Floyd et al., 2008). The use of in-depth interviews permitted me to probe responses from study respondents to gain deeper understanding of their perceptions related to visitor diversity in national parks. Second, this study focused on organizational factors rather than perceptions of individual recreationists. While it is appropriate to understand the attitudes and behaviors toward national parks among individuals' from racial and ethnic minority groups, few researchers have studied organizational level factors to identify potential constraints or facilitators to national park visitation. As Allison (1999) stated, "Throughout the years, leisure researchers have learned a great deal about the would-be participant, but we know very little about how agencies and programs themselves respond to the needs of 'people of difference,' including their workforce and constituents" (p. 98).

This chapter is divided into three sections. The next section summarizes and discusses the three themes from the study results. The subsequent section provides recommendations for program development based on the study results. The chapter concludes by describing strengths and limitation of the study and offering suggestions for future research.

**Catch and Release.** Results showed that NPS staff were aware of the lack of racial and ethnic diversity among visitors to their parks. They perceived that targeted programs meant particularly for youth and diverse populations were a successful facilitation strategy to encourage greater visitation by individuals and groups from minority backgrounds. Employees were concerned, however, over whether the targeted programs were successful in creating park experiences that would lead to repeat visits by diverse groups to the parks and their enduring interest in park programs. Respondents were concerned about the short-term nature of the programs which tended to provide fleeting one-time visits. Instead, the respondents recognized that programs should provide visitors with prolonged continual or multiple exposures to the park. Employees also suggested that targeted programs should focus on youth to instill the parks as part of their lives.

Data from several previous studies suggested that multiple exposures to natural settings or exposures to a variety of natural environments are critical to fostering long-term interest and involvement in nature-based recreation (e.g., Bixler, Carlisle, Hammitt and Floyd, 1994; Bixler & Morris, 2000; James, Bixler, & Vadala, 2010). For example, Bixler et al., (1994) documented the range of fears that urban children experienced during first-time visits to natural areas. They recommended that nature centers “adopt” youth groups to guarantee that the youth would receive regular contact with outdoor environments during their adolescents. A study of adolescent youth from four states (i.e., KY, NC, SC, and TX) found that youth that used a greater variety of outdoor play environments exhibited greater environmental competence and preference for wildland environments (Bixler, Floyd &

Hammitt, 2002). Such studies support the criticisms reflected in the study respondents' comments about the brief, one-time programs used in their parks. Other studies (Chawla, 2009; Chawla & Flanders Cushing, 2007; Wells & Lekies, 2006) identified early life experiences as a way to promote positive adult attitudes and behaviors towards the natural environment. Therefore, the focus on youth as a targeted population for programs is warranted.

Those at the NPS could view this continuum of outdoor socialization experiences over the life course as a model to deliver programs to encourage greater visitor diversity. Stanfield McCown (2011) took this idea a step further and suggested that NPS units develop a model of *deep engagement* to effectively engage traditionally underserved audiences. This model shows on a continuum that as traditional engagement programs (e.g., traditional marketing and one-time events) move towards deep engagement programs (e.g., employment in the NPS) the amount of resources and time needed increases. Results from the NPS sites in my study showed that a move toward deeper engagement was occurring (e.g., temporary hiring). At the same time my study suggests that neither of the parks were consistently moving toward *deep engagement* and instead relied on traditional engagement.

The study results also showed that other organizational barriers affected the parks' ability to make targeted visitors regular visitors. One type of organizational barrier related to the targeted programs was that they were "special programs," which was a problem noted by Allison and Hibbler (2004) in their study. Similar to my study, Allison and Hibbler interviewed recreation professionals to identify their perceptions of issues and barriers within

their agencies that hindered program access by people of color. In their study, the special programs were not integrated into a systematic approach to program planning. They were perceived as being delegated to minority staff and they were of low budget priority. Allison and Hibbler found that despite the good intentions of recreation providers these special programs were often misguided and ineffective because of their low budget priority. As such, these programs were seen as merely symbolic and lacking substance. In the case of my study, the targeted programs designed to *hook* diverse visitors could be seen as symbolic and lacking substance. One example of how the targeted programs could be considered symbolic and lacking substance in my study came from respondents' discussion about the apparent low budget priority for targeted youth programs. The respondents mentioned that targeted programs were funded using grant money and were currently not supported by the operational budget of either of the parks. The low budget priority could also be reflected by the hiring priorities. A large number of the employees responsible for running the targeted programs were temporary seasonal employees. Meanwhile the employees responsible for more traditional general audience programs were permanent NPS employees.

**The Green and Gray.** The terms green and gray were chosen to represent the affect that NPS organizational culture and traditions as exemplified by the NPS uniform had on diversity initiatives. The results from my study suggested that in most cases the NPS employees perceived the culture of the NPS and its traditions as a barrier that impeded the success of diversity initiatives.

The primary organizational barrier related to NPS culture and traditions that affected programs to increase visitor diversity at the park was reliance on traditional ways of visitor interpretation and promoting park experiences. The results from my study showed that employees perceived that barriers to providing programs arose from unwillingness of some other employees within the NPS to try new things to reach new audiences. For example, the traditional NPS visitor center staffed with a NPS ranger behind a desk was used at both parks. According to park staff this traditional model may be more effective at destination NPS units. They felt that at urban parks where most of the visitors are local and return users there is less need for staffed visitor centers and more need for rangers roving throughout the park.

Another example of NPS tradition discussed by park employees was the reliance on traditional NPS programs (e.g., nature walks), despite the limited interest in such programs among diverse audiences. A previous study (Schuett et al., 2006) concluded that NPS employees needed to identify and provide programs of interest to diverse audiences. While the NPS will need to continue to provide traditional programs that current visitors have come to expect (e.g., nature walks), some park employees in my study suggested decreasing the amount and/or frequency of their current offerings. For example instead of offering a traditional program like bird watching every Saturday, park employees suggested limiting it to every other week. Decreasing traditional program offerings could allow park rangers more time to develop and provide programs that might interest people of color.

Traditionally, program development at the parks was guided by interpretive themes developed for the entire park to tell the story of the park, but a more successful strategy would be to develop audience focused programs, as suggested by the park employees I interviewed as well as by Chavez (2000). Cuyahoga's "Get Up, Get Out, and Go!" program is a prime example of an audience focused program. This program provided free outdoor recreational activities for middle school-aged children and their families during the summer months along the parks' Towpath Trail. The success of Get Up, Get Out, and Go! in Akron was due in part to the high level of community and youth involvement in the design and implementation of the program from the beginning (Floyd, 2008). Park employees suggested that community designed programs were inherently successful because the program had community support and buy-in. An evaluation showed that program activities supported by the communities were associated with significant increases in youth participants' awareness of national parks and intentions to re-visit the parks after the program (Hoehner et al., 2010).

Sellers (1997) confirmed that the strong culture of the NPS has long been perpetuated by its traditions. While having a strong culture allows employees and visitors to bond over shared images and traditions, the issue of concern is that people of color have not traditionally been a part or even allowed to be a part of the NPS. Employees at the parks in my study identified strategies and initiatives to expose their park to diverse populations, but they felt that the NPS traditions and their traditional standard operating procedures hindered success. Researchers have cautioned that organizations with strong cultures, like the NPS, are generally resistant to organizational change, but change could be possible if managers

actively realigned their traditional culture (Denhardt, Denhardt, & Aristigueta, 2009; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Robbins & Judge, 2008). Salk, Bartlett, and Schneider (2008) recommended that recreation agencies adopt an organizational learning approach to understand how to effectively align its core mission with diversity goals. In particular, Salk et al. highlighted the potential for reflection on current practices to take corrective actions.

Another concern among NPS employees was the lack of diversity within the NPS the workforce, especially among permanent employees. Despite equal opportunity and affirmative action policies, current documents showed that 80% of NPS employees consisted of non-Hispanic Whites (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2012). This statistic does not reflect the demographics of the U.S. currently and into the future. The employees in my study expressed frustration with the current federal government hiring process. Some suggested that the process actually made hiring diverse candidates more difficult. Respondents felt that having a diverse workforce would help increase visitor diversity because diverse visitors may feel more comfortable talking to diverse staff. Previous research (Allison, 1999; Allison & Hibbler, 2004; Patrick & Kumar, 2012; Schuett et al., 2006) has confirmed the importance of having a diverse workforce. However, there has been no empirical research on the relationship between workforce diversity and visitor diversity.

**Talking the Talk.** The final theme reflected in my interviews was the idea that the NPS did not “walk the talk” when it came to clear communication about diversity and providing resources to individual parks for diversity programs. In one respect, this is another example of what respondents in Allison and Hibbler’s (2004) study described. In particular,

their description of special programs being supported by small budgets and “sparse resources” was similar to the results in my study.

In another respect, what the NPS respondents described called into question to some extent the commitment of the NPS to increase visitor diversity. Allison (1999) stated that, “an organization’s commitment to diversity is reflected in the extent to which diversity policies and procedures are mutually understood and communicated” (p. 87). The study respondents from the two parks did not perceive that diversity initiatives were clearly communicated. Also, my results were similar to what Allison found in her interviews with recreation professionals. Similar to my results, Allison found that when respondents were asked to identify specific diversity policies of their agencies they could not. In her study, these kinds of responses were under a theme labeled “policy and practice: symbolism or substance?” Even though a majority of employees could not identify a single NPS diversity initiative by name, they could point to programs that their park was doing to increase diversity. The lack of knowledge of NPS diversity initiatives could be due in part to inconsistent messages from several strategic reports that advocate for increasing visitor diversity (e.g., *Advancing the National Park Idea: The National Parks Second Century Report* (2009); and *The Future of America’s National Parks (the Centennial Report)*, (2007)). Previous studies have found that diversity strategies need to be communicated throughout an organization in order to be effective. For example, Patrick and Kumar (2012) found in their study of 300 information technology employees that one of the best strategies for workforce diversity is communicating effectively and ensuring employees understand.

My results also reflect what Allison (1999) called “institutional inertia.” Institutional inertia occurs when organizations are “not responsive to change or programmatic initiatives” (Allison, 1999, p. 78). In her study the inertia was caused by other pressing budget priorities, perceptions that agencies were resistant to trying innovative outreach programs, and “fear and discomfort” with diversity. In my study, respondents discussed how lack of funding limited the parks’ ability to provide programs particularly related to transporting youth to and from programs. While lack of funding is nothing new for the NPS (National Park Conservation Association Center for Park Research, 2011), respondents were concerned with adding responsibilities to increase visitor diversity on top of their already limited budgets and full workloads. Grant opportunities were provided by NPS partners for targeted programs, but that led to uncertainty and a lack of long-range planning to ensure long-term program success.

The NPS as a whole has been resistant to change according to those employees interviewed in my study. Respondents, though, did believe the situation was getting better. In some instances staff at the parks reported that they were allowed to try new ways to engage with diverse populations, but employees also explained they were not allowed to because of a “this is how it has always been” mentality. For example, the NPS as an agency has encouraged employees at individual parks to actively engage with the community, especially youth (Stanfield McCown et al., 2011). Despite that youth increasingly use social media to communicate, (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010), according to the NPS

employees in my study the NPS has been reluctant to embrace new technology and social media that could appeal to a younger audience.

Finally, staff recognized the importance and significance of increasing visitor diversity, yet they felt they were not given training and operational tools necessarily to be effective. To better understand, serve, and appreciate the recreation needs of racial and ethnic minority populations the staff need to not only be adequately trained (Scott, 2000), but also needed ongoing training related to diversity (Kivel & Kivel, 2008).

### **Research Implications**

The overall results and the specific themes in my study demonstrated the importance of race and ethnicity research in recreation and leisure from an organizational perspective. The substantial amount of research on race and ethnicity in the field has increased knowledge of factors that affect individuals' outdoor recreation participation including park use (e.g., marginality, subculture, discrimination, and constraints; Floyd et al., 2008). Few empirical or conceptual studies have examined the role of organizational factors in relation to activity participation or park use among racial and ethnic minority populations (e.g., Allison & Hibbler, 2004; Schuett & Bowser, 2006). This lack of research exists despite calls for more research that focus on the responsiveness of recreation agencies to diverse populations (Allison, 1999; Floyd, 1998; Philipp, 2000; Scott, 2000). As a result, conceptual models at the organization level to guide research and to identify factors that may affect effectiveness of diversity programs have not been developed. Thus, one recommendation from this study is that researchers develop concepts and theories that can be applied in diversity research at

the organizational level. The results from my study suggest several avenues for further empirical research. For example, similar studies of NPS employees should be completed at other types of national park units to get a better understanding of perceptions of strategies to increase visitor diversity. This study only included staff at park units located near large urban areas. As a result the staff at the parks have more opportunity to engage with diverse communities and the expectations and perceptions may be different from NPS staff stationed in more remote national parks. Given the perceptions among respondents concerning lack of clarity in communication and lack of resources provided to implement diversity initiatives, research should also seek to compare perceptions from staff at different levels of the organization.

To further understand organizational constraints to visitation, research could also be conducted at other land management agencies (e.g., U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) where visitor diversity has been emphasized. Additional research should also examine how individuals from racial and ethnic minority groups perceive organizational constraints to visitation and how they compare to NPS staff perceptions.

### **Program Implications**

Program related implications can be derived from my study findings. Following Allison (1999) and Allison et al. (2004), my study proposes that for diversity initiatives to be effective, organizations need to not only help individuals negotiate constraints to leisure, but also find ways to overcome organizational barriers. The NPS or other recreation providers must look introspectively at their organizations to ascertain ways to overcome organizational

barriers to provide programs for diverse visitors. Allison et al. warned that “one of the greatest challenges of any organization is to identify, through systematic analysis, the types of barriers and biases that may exist in program delivery and organizational policies and practices” (p. 264). The following implications derive from the three themes: (a) catch and release; (b) green and gray; and (c) talking the talk as they relate to organizational barriers.

**Catch and Release: Achieving long-term results.** Results from my study showed that the parks have grappled with how to transition racial and ethnic minority visitors from targeted programs to general visitors. Despite their best efforts with these targeted programs, employees at the parks generally have not seen a return on their investments in programs because diverse visitors have not returned. Employees suggested a variety of strategies, but the results from my study suggested that to be successful the NPS should find ways to limit organizational barriers that affect diversity initiatives. Based on the findings, areas that should be targeted for building an ongoing program that would be more likely to achieve the goal of creating new visitors include identifying new partners and grant sources, and adopting schools and youth groups that can provide ongoing exposure to park experiences similar to what was suggested by Bixler et al. (1994). To address the problem of too few opportunities for permanent NPS positions for college-age students, the parks could plan to hold workshops or trainings on how to apply and become competitive for federal jobs. Most students come to the NPS through the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP), which is a jobs program for high school or college students. Another outlet, the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP), provides students with valuable work experience

directly related to their academic field of study by offering formal work opportunities designed to lead to employment with a Federal agency after college completion. However, as the study respondents described, there were few opportunities for permanent positions and the students tend to be left to themselves to navigate the Federal hiring process. As a part of the STEP or SCEP, training should include specifics on all aspects of Federal hiring and guidance on how to get hired in the NPS.

**The Green and the Gray: Add technology and new connections to traditions.**

One specific criticism associated with traditional thinking within NPS as expressed by the respondents was the hesitance of the NPS to use social media as a tool to connect with youth. Given the prevalence of social media among youth, and the culture generally, policies governing use of social media for community outreach should be reviewed. The policies could be reviewed with an eye toward identifying rules that would potentially hinder individual parks' ability to reach out to specific groups they could serve.

The results also suggest that employees need to design programs *with* racial and ethnic populations, not just *for* them. In other word, the NPS should seek input from diverse communities to find out what the parks could do for them. The "I" triad offered by Chavez (2000) would be a useful tool for NPS employees. According to the "I" triad, employees must first invite diverse communities to use park services, then include their opinions at the organization, and then agencies should actively include members of the diverse community into the organization (e.g., as employees, board members). Going one step further, the NPS could also begin developing connections and partnerships with local community

organizations, churches, and other faith organizations. These partnerships should go beyond traditional environmental conservation organizations.

**Talking the Talk: Going beyond rhetoric.** Results within this theme indicated that diversity goals of the overall NPS and leadership were not clearly communicated and were not accompanied by resources to support diversity initiatives. Respondents in my study suggested that many employees do not have the necessary competencies to effectively engage with diverse populations. Employees need continuing diversity training to best serve racial and ethnic populations (Kivel & Kivel, 2008). Trainings could be developed service-wide for all visitor service staff and specific types of trainings could be developed for urban national parks employees where a greater potential to connect with racially and ethnically diverse audiences exists. My results also showed that the employees felt that individuals from minority groups might be more comfortable talking to people who looked like them, which is problematic considering that the overwhelming majority of the parks' staff were White. Because Whites are the majority, the NPS should do what it can to have a workforce that reflects the population it serves (Allison & Hibbler, 2004).

The NPS and other recreation providers must prioritize and support diversity policy initiatives if they want to succeed at making their organization more diverse, otherwise these policies are just symbolic (Allison, 1999).

## **Conclusion**

Overall, my study showed that staff at these two urban national parks understood the significance of increasing visitor diversity in a multicultural society. Despite this

understanding the park staff perceived constraints at their parks that affected the success of programs to increase visitor diversity. To ensure program success the NPS should facilitate ways to overcome possible constraints perceived by staff. The data also suggested that the NPS staff members must go beyond symbolic diversity policies if they really want to commit to increasing visitor diversity.

This study had some limitations. The study sample was only limited to visitor services employees at two urban parks. Data from other divisions within the parks could have produced different results, as these staff may not have the same amount of visitor interactions or other divisions may have more diverse staff. Data from more rural or wildland parks could produce different results because staff at these parks may not see the same rate of visitation or diversity of visitors as seen in urban parks.

Despite these limitations, my study had two primary strengths that should be noted. First, it used an organization perspective to examine factors affecting park visitation among racial and ethnic minority groups. My study explored employees' perspectives on strategies to encourage visitor diversity. Few studies have been conducted on organizational factors and visitor diversity. Second, this study used a qualitative approach. The use of in-depth interviews allowed me to gain insights through extended conversations and probing that would not have been possible with a larger scale quantitative survey. From a practical perspective, this approach also allowed me to identify a range of organizational factors and issues (e.g., funding, transportation, traditions, etc.) that affected programs to increase diversity at the study parks.

An ideal outcome of this study would be that the results can help visitor services employees at Cuyahoga Valley National Park and Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area become more effective in how they serve racial and ethnic minority communities by addressing the organizational constraints to visitation identified in this study. I also hope that these results will help the NPS and other land management agencies develop effective and holistic diversity initiatives, rather than merely symbolic gestures. If the NPS does not increase visitor diversity, according to NPS Director Jon Jarvis, “the national parks risk obsolescence in the eyes of an increasingly diverse and distracted demographic” (2012, p. 155).

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**APPENDICES**

## Appendix A

Reported Visitor Demographics from the University of Idaho Visitor Services Project, from 2000-2009

<b>Research Year</b>	<b>Park Unit</b>	<b>Demographic Data</b>
Summer 2009	Women's Rights NHP	Less than 1% of visitors were Hispanic or Latino, and 95% were White.
Summer 2009	Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial	Three percent of respondents were Hispanic or Latino, and 97% were White.
Summer 2009	Minuteman Missile NHS	Two percent of visitors were Hispanic or Latino. Ninety-seven percent of visitors were White.
Summer 2009	Homestead National Monument of America	One percent of visitors were Hispanic or Latino, and 97% of visitors were of White racial background.
Summer 2009	Fort Larned NHS	Two percent of visitors were Hispanic or Latino. Ninety-eight percent of visitors were of White racial background and 2% were American Indian or Alaska Native.
Winter & Spring 2008	Everglades NP	Seven percent of winter visitors and 5% of spring visitors were of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. Ninety-eight percent of both winter and spring visitor groups were White.
Winter 2008	Yosemite NP	Sixteen percent of visitors were of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Ten percent were Asian and 3% were American Indian or Alaska Native. Among the visitor groups of Asian ethnicity, the most common backgrounds were Chinese (39%), Japanese (21%) and Korean (18%).
Summer 2007	Rainbow Bridge NM	Five percent of visitors were of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity and 2% were Indian American or Alaskan Native.

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Summer 2007	Fort Union Trading Post NHS	Two percent of general visitors and 1% of Rendezvous visitors were Hispanic or Latino. Race was most often White (general visitors 94%, Rendezvous visitors 95%) and American Indian or Alaska Native (3% general visitors, 5% Rendezvous visitors).
Spring & Summer 2007	Glen Canyon NRA	Two percent of spring respondents and 5% of summer respondents were of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity.
Spring 2007	Big Cypress National Preserve	Three percent of visitors were of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity and 96% reported their race as White.
Spring & Fall 2006	Zion NP	5% of summer respondents and 1% of fall respondents were of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity.
Summer 2006	Monocacy National Battlefield	Three percent of respondents were of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. Ninety-six percent of respondents were White, 3% were Asian, and 1% were American Indian or Alaska Native.
Summer 2006	Yellowstone NP	Three percent of respondents were of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. Ninety-five percent of respondents were White, 3% were Asian, and 2% were American Indian or Alaska Native.
Summer 2006	Devils Postpile NM	Nine percent of respondents were of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. Ninety-three percent of respondents were White and 5% were Asian.
Summer 2004	Manzanar NHS	Four percent of visitors did not speak English as their primary language. Seven percent of visitors were of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. The most common racial backgrounds of visitors were White (69%) and Asian (31%). Within the Asian race group, most visitors were Japanese (81%).
Fall 2003	Mojave National Preserve	Seven percent of the visitors were of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. Most visitors were of White racial background (96%).

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Summer 2003	C & O Canal NHP	Three percent of the visitors were of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. Most visitors were of White racial background (93%). American Indian/Alaskan Native, African American, and Asian races made 11% of the population.
Spring 2003	Cowpens National Battlefield	Two percent of the visitors were of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. Most visitors were of White racial background (98%). American Indian/Alaskan Native, African American, and Asian ethnicities made up four percent of the visitor population.
Spring 2003	Gateway NRA – Floyd Bennett Field	Nine percent of the visitors were of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. Of these, 55% were Puerto Rican, 5% Cuban. Forty-one percent identified themselves as of "other" Hispanic ethnicity. Most visitors were of White racial background (82%), followed by Black/African American (15%) and Asian(5%).
Fall 2002	Stones River National Battlefield	One percent of the visitors were of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. Most visitors were of White racial background (94%). American Indian/Alaskan Native and Asian ethnicity made up of one percent each of the population.
Summer 2002	Sequoia and Kings Canyon NP	Ten percent of visitors were of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, of which 65% were Mexican, Mexican American or Chicano. Most visitors were of White racial background (93%), followed by Asian (6%) and other racial backgrounds. Most visitors (86%) spoke English as their primary language, although 14% of visitors listed 14 other languages they spoke and read.
Summer 2002	Pipestone NM	One percent of visitors were of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. Most visitors were of White racial background (94%), followed by American Indian (6%) and smaller proportions of other racial backgrounds.

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Summer 2002	Pinnacles NM	Seven percent of visitors were of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. Most visitors were of White racial background (94%), followed by Asian (8%) and other racial backgrounds. Most visitors (92%) spoke English as their primary language, although 8% of visitors listed 12 other languages they spoke and read.
Summer 2002	Everglades NP	Five percent of visitors were of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino ethnicity. Most visitors were of White racial background (96%), followed by Asian (2%) and other racial backgrounds.
Summer 2001	Crater Lake NP	Three percent of the respondents were of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. The most common racial backgrounds of respondents were White (92%), Asian (5%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (3%).
Summer 2000	Mount Rainier NP	Two percent were of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Most (94%) were of White racial background; 6% were Asian and 5% were of other backgrounds. Most visitors (90%) spoke English as their primary language; 10% spoke 28 other languages.

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*Note.* Retrieved from <http://www.psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.reports.htm>

## Appendix B

## North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

North Carolina State University is a land-grant university and a constituent institution of the University of North Carolina	Office of Research and Innovation Division of Research Administration
<b>NC STATE UNIVERSITY</b>	
Campus Box 7514 Raleigh, North Carolina 27695-7514 919.515.2444 (phone) 919.515.7721 (fax)	
From: Carol Mickelson, IRB Coordinator North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board	
Date: April 1, 2011	
Title: A case study of strategies to encourage visitor diversity at urban national parks: A tale of two rivers	
IRB#: 1890	
Dear Mr. <u>Santucci</u> ,	
The project listed above has been reviewed by the NC State Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research, and is approved for one year. <b>This protocol will expire on March 2, 2012 and will need continuing review before that date.</b>	
NOTE:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. You must use the attached consent forms which have the approval and expiration dates of your study.</li><li>2. This board complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429.</li><li>3. Any changes to the protocol and supporting documents must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.</li><li>4. If any unanticipated problems occur, they must be reported to the IRB office within 5 business days by completing and submitting the unanticipated problem form on the IRB website.</li><li>5. Your approval for this study lasts for one year from the review date. If your study extends beyond that time, including data analysis, you must obtain continuing review from the IRB.</li></ol>	
Sincerely,  Carol Mickelson NC State IRB	

## Appendix C

## Scientific Research and Collecting Permit from Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

 <p><b>SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND COLLECTING PERMIT</b>          Grants permission in accordance with the attached general and special conditions          United States Department of the Interior          National Park Service          Chattahoochee River NRA</p>	<p>Study#: CHAT-0086          Permit#: CHAT-2011-SCI-0001          Start Date: Mar 01, 2011          Expiration Date: Mar 01, 2012          Coop Agreement#: n/a          Optional Park Code: n/a</p>
<p><b>Name of principal investigator:</b>          Name: David Santucci Phone: 919-515-3276 Email: dsantucci.dave@gmail.com</p>	
<p><b>Name of institution represented:</b>          North Carolina State University</p>	
<p><b>Co-Investigators:</b>          Name: Myron Floyd Phone: 919-513-8026 Email: myron_floyd@ncsu.edu</p>	
<p><b>Project title:</b>          A Case Study of Strategies to Encourage Visitor Diversity at Urban National Parks</p>	
<p><b>Purpose of study:</b>          The purpose of this study will be to perform a case study at Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area to examine how the NPS has attempted to increase visitor diversity. Research questions guiding this study are:          a) What policies, procedures, or programs are in place to encourage visitor diversity?          b) How are these policies, procedures, or programs implemented?          c) From the perspective of park employees, do these policies/procedures/programs seem to be working?</p>	
<p><b>Subject/Discipline:</b>          Recreation / Aesthetics</p>	
<p><b>Locations authorized:</b>          Interviews will be held on-site in a private area away from the employee's work space.</p>	
<p><b>Transportation method to research site(s):</b>          Access to the park will be by car (where permitted). If access by car is not allowed to reach some employees, access will be by foot.</p>	
<p><b>Collection of the following specimens or materials, quantities, and any limitations on collecting:</b>          n/a</p>	
<p><b>Name of repository for specimens or sample materials if applicable:</b>          n/a</p>	
<p><b>Specific conditions or restrictions (also see attached conditions):</b>          n/a</p>	

Recommended by park staff (name and title): <u>Ally RL, Biologist</u>	Reviewed by Collections Manager: Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Approved by park official: <u>Patty Wisinger</u>	Date Approved: <u>4/19/11</u>
Title: Superintendent	
<b>I Agree To All Conditions And Restrictions Of this Permit As Specified</b> (Not valid unless signed and dated by the principal investigator)	
<u>[Signature]</u> (Principal investigator's signature)	<u>4/19/11</u> (Date)
<b>THIS PERMIT AND ATTACHED CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS MUST BE CARRIED AT ALL TIMES WHILE CONDUCTING RESEARCH ACTIVITIES IN THE DESIGNATED PARK(S)</b>	
PacBio/CREAF-2011-SCT-000 Page 2 of 2	

## Appendix D

## Scientific Research and Collecting Permit from Cuyahoga Valley National Park

<p align="center"><b>SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND COLLECTING PERMIT</b></p> <p align="center">Grants permission in accordance with the attached general and special conditions</p> <p align="center">United States Department of the Interior National Park Service Cuyahoga Valley NP</p>	<p>Study#: CUVA-11601 Permit#: CUVA-2011-SCI-0002 Start Date: Mar 15, 2011 Expiration Date: Nov 30, 2011 Coop Agreement#: n/a Optional Park Code: n/a</p>
<p><b>Name of principal investigator:</b> Name: David Santucci Phone: 919-315-3276 Email: santucci.dave@gmail.com</p>	
<p><b>Name of institution represented:</b> North Carolina State University</p>	
<p><b>Co-Investigator:</b> Name: Myron Floyd Phone: 919-513-8026 Email: myron_floyd@ncsu.edu</p>	
<p><b>Project title:</b> A Case Study of Strategies to Encourage Visitor Diversity at Urban National Parks</p>	
<p><b>Purpose of study:</b> The purpose of this study will be to perform a case study at Cuyahoga Valley National Park to examine how the NPS has attempted to increase visitor diversity. Research questions guiding this study are:      1. What policies, procedures, or programs are in place to encourage visitor diversity?      2. How are these policies, procedures, or programs implemented?      3. From the perspective of park employees, do these policies/procedures/programs seem to be working?</p>	
<p><b>Subject/Discipline:</b> Management (Administration)</p>	
<p><b>Locations authorized:</b> Interviews will be held on-site in a private area away from the employee's work space.</p>	
<p><b>Transportation method to research site(s):</b> Access to the park will be by car (where permitted). If access by car is not allowed to reach some employees, access will be by foot.</p>	
<p><b>Collection of the following specimens or materials, quantities, and any limitations on collecting:</b> n/a</p>	
<p><b>Name of repository for specimens or sample materials (if applicable):</b> n/a</p>	
<p><b>Specific conditions or restrictions (also see attached conditions):</b> n/a</p>	

Recommended by park staff (name and title): <u>Jennie Vasarhelyi Chief IEVS</u>	Reviewed by Collections Manager: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Approved by park official: <u>[Signature]</u>	Date Approved: <u>3-14-11</u>
Title: <u>Chief, Resource Management</u> Superintendent	
<b>I Agree To All Conditions And Restrictions Of this Permit As Specified</b> (Not valid unless signed and dated by the principal investigator)	
<u>[Signature]</u> (Principal investigator's signature)	<u>3/9/11</u> (Date)
<b>THIS PERMIT AND ATTACHED CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS MUST BE CARRIED AT ALL TIMES WHILE CONDUCTING RESEARCH ACTIVITIES IN THE DESIGNATED PARK(S)</b>	
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## Appendix E

## Letter to Participants at Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

<p>North Carolina State University is a land-grant university and a constituent institution of the University of North Carolina</p>	<p><b>Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management</b></p>
<p><b>NC STATE UNIVERSITY</b></p>	
<p>May 9, 2011</p> <p>NAME TITLE Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area 1978 Island Ford Parkway Sandy Springs, GA 30350</p> <p>Dear NAME:</p> <p>We are writing to ask your help in a thesis research study (Permit # CHAT-2011-SCI-0001) focused on urban national park units being conducted by researchers from North Carolina State University. The study focuses on learning how urban parks can be effective in increasing visitation by ethnic minority groups. Because your position title suggests you have responsibilities related to visitor services, we are contacting you to ask your participation in an interview.</p> <p>The purpose of the interview is to assess your perceptions of policies or programs in place at Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area that encourage visitor diversity. The interview would tentatively take place the beginning of June depending on what dates work best for you and should last between 45 and 60 minutes. You will also be asked about your professional experience with the NPS and background information about the Chattahoochee River NRA.</p> <p>Your interview responses will be kept confidential and transcripts from your interview will be made available if you would like to confirm your responses. Your responses will be kept anonymous and pseudonyms will be given to each respondent to help ensure anonymity. Participation in this study is voluntary and subject to your approval.</p> <p>Results from this case study will be used to recommend ways that the National Park Service and other land managing agencies, particularly in urban proximate locations, can encourage greater participation by ethnic minority groups.</p> <p>If you can provide an interview for the study, please contact me at <a href="mailto:dcsantuc@ncsu.edu">dcsantuc@ncsu.edu</a> or at (203) 470-0587. We would like to set up a time we can meet during our visit to the park between May 29<sup>th</sup> and June 4<sup>th</sup>. We will follow up with a phone call or e-mail in the next few days. If you have any questions or comments about the study, we would be happy to talk with you.</p> <p>Thank you very much and we hope that you can participate in the study.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>	<p>College of Natural Resources Campus Box 8004 Raleigh, NC 27695 919.515.3276 919.515.3687 (fax)</p>
<p>Myron F. Floyd, PhD Professor</p>	<p>Dave Santucci Graduate Student</p>

## Appendix F

## Letter to Participants at Cuyahoga Valley National Park

<p>North Carolina State University is a land-grant university and a constituent institution of the University of North Carolina</p>	<p>Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management</p>
<p><b>NC STATE UNIVERSITY</b></p>	
<p>May 9, 2011</p> <p>NAME TITLE Cuyahoga Valley National Park 15610 Vaughn Road Brecksville, OH 44141</p> <p>Dear NAME:</p> <p>We are writing to ask your help in a thesis research study (Permit # CUVA-2011-SCI-0002) focused on urban national park units being conducted by researchers from North Carolina State University. The study focuses on learning how urban parks can be effective in increasing visitation by ethnic minority groups. Because your position title suggests you have responsibilities related to visitor services, we are contacting you to ask your participation in an interview.</p> <p>The purpose of the interview is to assess your perceptions of policies or programs in place at Cuyahoga Valley National Park that encourage visitor diversity. The interview would tentatively take place the beginning of June depending on what dates work best for you and should last between 45 and 60 minutes. You will also be asked about your professional experience with the NPS and background information about the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.</p> <p>Your interview responses will be kept confidential and transcripts from your interview will be made available if you would like to confirm your responses. Your responses will be kept anonymous and pseudonyms will be given to each respondent to help ensure anonymity. Participation in this study is voluntary and subject to your approval.</p> <p>Results from this case study will be used to recommend ways that the National Park Service and other land managing agencies, particularly in urban proximate locations, can encourage greater participation by ethnic minority groups</p> <p>If you would like to provide an interview for the study, please contact me at <a href="mailto:dcsantuc@ncsu.edu">dcsantuc@ncsu.edu</a> or at (203) 470-0587. We would like to set up a time we can meet during our visit to the park between June 19<sup>th</sup>-June 25<sup>th</sup>. We will follow up with a phone call or e-mail in the next few days. If you have any questions or comments about the study, we would be happy to talk with you.</p> <p>Thank you very much and we hope that can participate in the study.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>	<p>College of Natural Resources Campus Box 8004 Raleigh, NC 27695 919.515.3276 919.515.3687 (fax)</p>
<p>Myron F. Floyd, PhD Professor</p>	<p>Dave Santucci Graduate Student</p>

## Appendix G

### Scripts for Initial Phone Conversation with Employees

My name is Dave Santucci and I am a graduate student in the Parks and Recreation program at NC State University. I am doing a research study to learn how urban parks can be effective in increasing visitation by ethnic minority groups and connecting with under-served communities. This is where I am asking for your help by being a part of this research study. I would like to interview you for probably about an hour to understand your perceptions of policies/procedures/programs in place at {NAME OF PARK} to encourage visitor diversity. You will also be asked questions about your background with the NPS and information about the Park. Although I have been granted approval from the Park to do this study and employee supervisors have given permission for me to ask employees to participate, no one will be informed if you agree to participate, or not, in this study. The interview will take place at the park between {DATES OF VISIT}, in a private area away from your workspace or at a location of your choice. If you are interested in possibly being part of this study let me explain to you a little bit more about what I will be doing.

I will be interviewing park employees, like you, with interpretation or visitor service responsibilities about their perceptions of ways to encourage visitor diversity. In my final report, responses will be described, however pseudonyms will be used rather than your real name and all information will be kept strictly confidential.

If this is something you would like to be part of, I would like to set up a time we can meet during my visit to the park. During my visit I will also have a consent form for you to fill out. Thank you so much for your time!

## Appendix H

### Informed Consent Form

**North Carolina State University**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH**  
**This form is valid March 2, 2011 to March 2, 2012**

Title of Study: A Case Study of Strategies to Encourage Visitor Diversity at Urban National Parks

Principal Investigator: David C. Santucci

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Myron F. Floyd

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The purpose of this case study is to understand how the NPS (National Park Service) has attempted to increase visitor diversity at urban national parks. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an audio recorded interview. The study is interested in how NPS staff interprets strategies and policies that encourage visitor diversity and outreach to underrepresented groups. Participation in this study is not a requirement of your employment and your participation or lack thereof, will not affect your job. Although I have been granted approval from the Park to do this study and employee supervisors have given permission for me to ask employees to participate, no one will be informed if you agree to participate, or not, in this study. In fact, we ask that you do not discuss your participation in this study with co-workers, supervisors, or the park superintendent.

Ideally 11-18 employees will be interviewed. The interview will be held on site in a private area away from your work space or at a location of your choice and will last about 45-60 minutes. Each interview will be audio recorded with notes taken during the process. You will be asked a variety of questions dealing from: your background with the NPS, information about the Park, and your perceptions of Park policies, procedures, and programs to encourage visitor diversity. To ensure credibility, member checks will occur with interviewees. You could expect a copy of your interview transcription emailed to your personal private email address from the researcher to see if you have anything else to add. These checks should be done at home, rather than at work.

Participation in the study involves no foreseeable psychological, social, physical, financial, or legal risks or discomforts. This study offers no direct benefit to the participant. It does offer a benefit to the NPS or other organizations interested in understanding how to encourage increased visitation from racial and ethnic minority groups. This information will be useful in training staff involved in interpretation and visitor services.

Information in the study records will be kept confidential. Your name will not be associated with the data collected. You will be given a pseudonym as a participant and no data will be linked to your name. Data will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet in a locked campus office. No reference will be made in written or oral reports that will link you directly to the study. Audio-tapes and other interview notes will be coded and securely stored away from the study setting in the principal investigator's office. One year after the conclusion of the data collection all audio files will be erased and/or destroyed.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, David Santucci, 3026 Biltmore Hall, NCSU, Raleigh, NC 27695, or (203) 470-0587. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Myron Floyd, at (919) 513-8026. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Debra Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919) 515-4514.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed at your request.

#### **CONSENT**

"I have read and understand the above information. I confirm I am at least 18 years of age. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled."

**Study Participant signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Investigator's signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_