

ABSTRACT

EDMONDS, DIQUAN ANTHONY. Perceptions of African-American Outdoor Experiences (Under the direction of Dr. Michael B. Edwards).

Research suggests that African-Americans participate in outdoor recreation less frequently than other racial/ethnic groups. With an increasing U.S. minority population, there is a need to better understand the perceptions and experiences of African-American outdoor recreation participants for several reasons. First, outdoor recreation is associated with positive health and wellness outcomes. Additionally, lack of access to public lands raises environmental justice concerns. Lastly, as demographics shift, the outdoor industry needs to increase in relevancy with minority groups.

Racial and ethnic disparity in outdoor recreation participation is well-documented in the literature and is often attributed to several different leisure constraints. Despite these leisure constraints, some African-Americans are still participating in outdoor recreation activities. The purpose of this research was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of these African-Americans' outdoor recreation experiences. By taking an exploratory approach, various issues related to outdoor recreation experiences such as constraints, negotiation tactics, experiences, and motivations were explored.

Using a qualitative research approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with fourteen African-American outdoor recreation participants. Findings outlined the ways in which these individuals are participating in outdoor recreation activities despite the constraining factors they face. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations for future research were provided. Additionally, recommendations for outdoor recreation practitioners and industry stakeholders were provided in order to make outdoor recreation more inclusive.

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Perceptions of African-American Outdoor Experiences

by
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to anyone who helps inspire others to enjoy the outdoors.

BIOGRAPHY

Diquan was born in Atlantic County, New Jersey where he spent the majority of his formative years growing up near the Jersey Shore. When his mother received a job in North Carolina, Diquan and his family moved from South Jersey to Cary, North Carolina. He has been entrenched in the Triangle region of North Carolina ever since. Diquan received his undergraduate degree from North Carolina State University in Sport Management. After the completion of his undergraduate degree, Diquan served in many roles with recreation-related organizations before deciding to come back to NC State to pursue his Master of Science degree.

During his time at North Carolina State University in the Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management Department, Diquan has been heavily involved on campus. He served as the Graduate Student Association's Master's Co-President for the 2018-2019 school year. Through his graduate research assistantship with the North Carolina Recreation and Park Association, Diquan has had the chance to communicate with hundreds of association members regarding the health and wellness benefits of parks and recreation. In his free time, you'll likely find Diquan spending time outdoors, or cheering on his favorite Philadelphia sports teams.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	4
Participation in Outdoor Recreation.....	4
Ethnicity and Marginality Perspectives.....	9
The Hierarchical Leisure Constraints Theory.....	11
Historical and Cultural Factors	15
Relationship between African-Americans and the Outdoors	19
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	22
Study Design.....	23
Participants	24
Instrumentation	25
Procedures.....	26
Analysis Plan	28
Research Positionality	28
Trustworthiness.....	29
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.....	30
Constraints	30
Involvement	38
Motivations.....	47
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION	52
“At Least We Have Each Other” - Outdoor Recreation Affinity Groups	53

Progression Within Outdoor Recreation: An Environmental Socialization Approach.....	56
Persisting through Leisure Constraints.....	59
Outdoor Recreation Consumer Culture as a Barrier	61
Limitations	63
Recommendations	64
Implications for Practice.....	64
Significance & Future Research	68
Conclusion	69
REFERENCES.....	71
APPENDICES	84
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	85
Appendix B: Sample Recruitment Email	86
Appendix C: Interview Consent Form	87

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Outdoor recreation is an important part of many individuals' leisure experiences. In 2016, 48% of the American population participated in outdoor recreation activities at least once (Outdoor Foundation, 2017). Conversely, 33% of African-Americans participated in outdoor recreation activities in the same year. When compared with 50% of Whites, 48% of Hispanics, and 51% of Asians, African-Americans are underrepresented in outdoor recreation spaces (Outdoor Foundation, 2017).

Research has demonstrated that underrepresentation in outdoor recreation activities by African-Americans may be attributed to several factors. Historically, African-Americans have had less access to outdoor recreation opportunities. Throughout the Jim Crow era, African-Americans were extremely limited in the areas which they could stay while traveling, making trips to remote parks difficult (Algeo, 2013). This is just one of the many examples of African-Americans experiencing restricted access to outdoor recreation activities throughout history. Unfortunately, the ramifications of these historical factors still exist today.

Currently, African-Americans disproportionately suffer from a variety of negative health outcomes. Evidence shows that African-Americans experience high levels of hypertension, in addition to being at a higher risk of developing heart failure and heart disease compared with other racial groups (Mozaffarian et al., 2015). Individuals who participate in outdoor recreation activities can reap a variety of health benefits from their time spent outdoors (Godbey, 2009). Outdoor recreation has been proven to result in increased physical activity levels (Rosenberger, Bergerson, & Kline, 2009). Outdoor recreation has also been shown to decrease stress and obesity levels, as well as lowering the risk of several life-threatening ailments (Godbey 2009). Given the positive overall health benefits associated with outdoor recreation activities (e.g.,

Wilson & Christensen, 2012), time outdoors may be another useful resource to help combat against these issues.

Current literature has demonstrated the importance of ensuring that outdoor recreation activities are inclusive for all. Environmental justice concerns have been raised throughout the literature (Waye, 2005; Floyd & Johnson, 2002; Rigolon & Flohr, 2014; Tarrant & Cordell, 1999). According to Waye (2005), “what is at stake is that a historically underprivileged group is not experiencing one of the most important communal environmental benefits in this country, a benefit that their tax dollars are helping to fund and that is supposed to be available to all” (p. 126). Waye argues that African-Americans do not have equal access to the National Parks. Empirical statistics support this claim and show that African-Americans are underrepresented in National Park Service visitation (Vaske & Lyon, 2014). Due to the observed inequity in National Park Service visitation, research has implied that the park service is falling short of one of their principal missions, to ensure that all people have access to and participate in the enjoyment of the National Parks (Waye, 2005; Jones, Shipley, & Ul-Hasan, 2017).

In 2017, outdoor recreation accounted for \$887 billion dollars in consumer spending (OIA, 2018). This figure ranks outdoor recreation as one of the largest industries in the country. While the outdoor industry is currently thriving, an opportunity and moral obligation for growth looms. As the United States minority population continues to grow, a better understanding of the perceptions and experiences of minority groups will become increasingly important (Burns, Covelli, & Graefe, 2008). The need for outdoor recreation to increase in relevancy amongst all racial and ethnic groups may be a crucial key to sustaining a healthy outdoor industry for years to come.

Over the past few decades, literature on race and ethnicity in outdoor recreation has “emerged as a viable sub-topical area” in leisure research (Floyd, 2007, p. 251). “Understanding leisure as it relates to the richness that racial and ethnic diversity brings to community life as well as the marginalization and exploitation of particular subgroups of our population is an exciting and worthwhile endeavor that deserves further investigation” (Shinew et al., 2006, p. 407). African-Americans have historically been marginalized in many facets of American society, including outdoor recreation (Algeo, 2013; Bryne & Wolch, 2008; O’Brien, 2007; Shumaker, 2009). Most of the literature reviewed for this study focused on underrepresentation of racial/ethnic groups in the outdoors. While there is a need to focus on underrepresentation, this study takes a different approach by examining African-Americans who are engaged in outdoor recreation.

The purpose of this research was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of African-Americans’ outdoor recreation experiences. By taking an exploratory approach, various issues related to outdoor recreation experiences such as constraints, negotiation tactics, experiences, and motivations were explored. By gaining a deeper understanding of this subgroup of outdoor recreationists, efforts can be made to support existing outdoor recreation efforts in the community in addition to helping to inform cultivation of new ones. As Floyd’s (2007) review of race and ethnicity theory and research states, the responsibility to translate research into language suitable for practitioners is imperative. Based on the findings of this research, recommendations for leisure practitioners and outdoor industry professionals will be provided.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Participation in Outdoor Recreation

The term *outdoor recreation* has been a part of leisure studies for over 60 years (Plummer, 2009). Generally, to be considered outdoor recreation, the following conditions must be met: “Organized free-time activities participated in for their own sake and where there is an interaction between the participant and an element of nature” (Ibrahim & Cordes, 2008, p. 5). For example, “Surfing is an outdoor recreational activity where there is interaction between the participant and water, an element of nature. Football is not an outdoor recreational activity under our definition, for although it is an organized recreational activity, nature plays a minimal role in it” (Ibrahim & Cordes, 2008 p. 5).

Though the definition of outdoor recreation contains a few common elements, the activities that qualify as outdoor recreation are sometimes unclear. Plummer (2009) uses golf to illustrate this. “Golf certainly meets two of the criteria to be considered outdoor recreation. It may be both a free-time activity and may occur outdoors. But, does it emphasize interaction with the natural environment? This is a point of debate” (Plummer, 2009, p. 24). The author goes on to state that some would consider natural elements like water, trees, and wind to be important aspects of golf, while others argue that interaction with the natural environment is not a primary focus (Plummer, 2009). Due to the ambiguity around what activities are outdoor recreation, the current study has decided to not strictly define outdoor recreation.

To better understand how outdoor recreation participation and its relationship with African-American recreationists has been contextualized, past research was reviewed. As part of the first national comprehensive study of outdoor recreation in the United States, Mueller and Gurin (1962) provided one of the first empirical studies on outdoor recreation participation

among African-Americans. The report attempted an inventory of outdoor recreation resources in the country, while measuring present participation and predicting future demand. The study used the following list of activities which qualified as outdoor recreation activities to survey participation trends: outdoor swimming or going to the beach; boating and canoeing; fishing; hunting; skiing and other winter sports; hiking; automobile riding for sightseeing and relaxation; nature or bird walks; picnics; camping; and horseback riding. Respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they participated in each activity during the last twelve months. “This question presented the respondent with a broad range of outdoor activities, asking about minimal as well as frequent participation over the last year period” (Mueller & Gurin, 1962, p. 3). This national study is an early example of race being studied in the context of outdoor recreation participation. While this study grossly underrepresented African-Americans, race had a significant effect on participation. African-Americans participated in outdoor recreation activities at a very low rate. This figure was compared with over 2,000 cases of White individuals, the only other racial/ethnic group studied (Mueller & Gurin, 1962).

The Outdoor Foundation conducts a yearly, national report to measure outdoor participation trends amongst Americans. The 2017 Outdoor Foundation Report used a series of online interviews, as well as individual and household surveys to gauge outdoor recreation participation in America. This report uses a list of 42 activities that are deemed “outdoor activities.” To qualify as an outdoor recreation participant, respondents must have participated in one or more of the 42 outdoor activities at least once during 2016 (Outdoor Foundation, 2017). The report also collects demographic information, allowing for demographic analysis across several categories. The 2017 Report found African-Americans had the lowest outdoor recreation participation rate (33%) in 2016 compared to Whites (50%), Hispanics (48%), and Asians (51%).

While African-Americans participated in outdoor recreation less than their racial/ethnic counterparts, the report found that African-American and Hispanic outdoor recreation participants went on an average of 88 outings, 11 more outings per year than White and Asian participants (Outdoor Foundation, 2017). Additionally, the most popular outdoor activities amongst African-American respondents were jogging/running (17%), biking (10%), fishing (9%), camping (5%), and hiking (4%).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation also measures outdoor participation amongst Americans. Conducted every five years, "The focus of the National Survey is to estimate participation and expenditures of persons 16 years and older in a single year" (USFWS, 2018, p. 4). In this survey, wildlife-associated recreation is reported in two categories: 1) wildlife watching, and 2) fishing and hunting (USFWS, 2018). This study contextualized wildlife watching as "closely observing, feeding, and photographing wildlife, and maintaining plantings and natural areas around the home for the benefit of wildlife" (USFWS, 2018, p. 38). In order to qualify as a wildlife watching activity, the primary objective of the recreational activity must be to watch wildlife. Moreover, wildlife watching was characterized as occurring either around the home (within 1 mile of home) or away from home (at least 1 mile from home). Demographic information such as race and ethnicity were collected from survey respondents. For "around the home" wildlife watching activities by race, 86% of survey participants were White, 9% identified as African-American, followed by 4% Other, and 1% Asian. Similarly, racial breakdown for "away from home" wildlife watchers included 95% White participants, 3% African-Americans, 1% Asian, and 1% Other. USFWS (2018) categorized fishing as either freshwater or saltwater. Within these activities, 86% of anglers were White, followed by 9% African-American, 3% Other, and 2%

Asian. Hunting participation information was also included in this report. Hunting activities were grouped into several distinct categories: big game hunting, small game hunting, migratory bird hunting, and other. Of all U.S. hunters, 97% were White, followed by 2% Other, and less than 1% Asian and African-American.

Visitation to National Park Service sites has been a common metric used to measure outdoor recreation participation amongst Americans. In Vaske and Lyon's (2014) study, National Park visitation characteristics from Visitor Service Projects (VSP) between 2001 and 2010 were linked to the 2010 census. This report compares visitor characteristics from the VSP with demographic and economic data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau. This study found that most visitors in the VSP database were White (95%) (Vaske & Lyon, 2014). Both American-Indian and Asian respondents accounted for 2% of visitors in the VSP database, while African-Americans accounted for 1% (Vaske & Lyon, 2014). Using data from the 2009 National Park Service Comprehensive Survey, Taylor, Grandjean, and Gramann (2011) compared National Park visitation behaviors of major racial and ethnic groups. The 2009 National Park Service Comprehensive Survey categorized respondents as "recent visitors" and "non-visitors." Recent visitors were defined as respondents who could name a park service unit and had visited a park service unit within the previous two years, while all other respondents were non-visitors (Taylor et al., 2011). Taylor et al. (2011) found Non-Hispanic Whites to be "over-represented," comprising 83% of visitors in 2000 and 78% of visitors in 2008-2009, while making up 74% and 70% of the sample, respectively. African-Americans were the most "under-represented," with 4% visitation in 2000 and 7% visitation in 2008-2009, despite making up 12% and 11% of the sample, respectively. Hispanic Americans were also under-represented, with 2% visitation in 2000 and 4% in 2008-2009. Finally, Asians and American Indian/Alaska Natives were

represented in around the same proportion as their sample at around 1%. The National Park Service visitation statistics reviewed support evidence of lower African-American representation found in other studies (Scott & Lee, 2018; Weber & Sultana, 2013; Floyd, 1999).

Travel to state or National parks is an additional way to examine outdoor recreation participation. The 2011 Edition of the African American Traveler was intended to understand how African-American travelers think about travel, identify the range of African-American traveler types, understand the behaviors of African-American leisure travelers, learn what is important to African-American travelers, and quantify the economic impact of the African-American leisure traveler (Binder, Mandala, Paluch, & Gao, 2011). This nationwide survey defined African-American travelers as individuals who have taken at least one trip within the U.S. in the past year for leisure purposes that was 50+ miles away from home. Through market segmentation, three major segments of African-American travelers were identified: 1) the curious and engaged, 2) the family reunion traveler, and 3) the business traveler. Questions pertaining to travel related activities were posed, including travel items with major ramifications for outdoor recreation. This study found that the “curious and engaged” segment were most likely to visit National or state parks, with 46% of the market segment indicating that they traveled to parks in 2010. While curious and engaged respondents had higher visitation rates to parks, 65% of the segment indicated they would visit more parks if they saw greater diversity among employees and visitors (Binder et al., 2011). Additionally, 74% of this segment indicated that they would visit parks more often if they offered more stories and exhibits about African-American history and culture.

This section summarized some of the ways that outdoor recreation participation amongst African-Americans has been contextualized. The outdoor recreation participation literature

reviewed has demonstrated an underrepresentation of African-Americans in a variety of different outdoor recreation activities and settings. This underrepresentation has been attributed to several different factors, some of which are explored below.

Ethnicity and Marginality Perspectives

In Washburne's (1978) seminal work, alternative explanations were provided to help explain black participation rates in outdoor recreation. "Like other important elements of American culture, access to wildland resources for outdoor recreation has always been regarded as one of the cherished rights of citizenship, available to all willing to take advantage of the opportunities" (Washburne, 1978, p. 175). Washburne continued by stating that not all segments of the population participate equally, and non-participation by blacks is especially pronounced. This study introduced two concepts to account for black participation rates: marginality and ethnicity.

The marginality perspective suggests that African-Americans do not participate in outdoor recreation because of poverty and other consequences of socioeconomic discrimination (Washburne, 1978). Washburne theorized that the marginalized position of African-Americans in society results in a lifestyle of unmet basic needs, leading many black families to work multiple jobs. Since participation in outdoor recreation requires a substantial commitment of time, the lifestyle of black families could affect the availability of large blocks of leisure time to dedicate to outdoor recreation.

The ethnicity perspective attributes minority underrepresentation in outdoor recreation to sub-cultural leisure styles (Washburne, 1978). "If leisure is an integral reflection of culture, characteristic preferences for leisure activities among Blacks may have been developed and maintained in the same fashion as those among Whites" (Washburne, 1978, p. 177). The author

explains that values are passed down from one generation to another, forming cultural heritage. “Blacks may have a very different historical relationship to wildlands and nature in comparison to the white Northern European tradition, which may be responsible for White American values relating to wildland recreation activities” (Washburne, 1978, p. 177).

Throughout the literature, criticisms of the marginality and ethnicity perspectives are well-documented (Hutchison, 1988; Johnson, Bowker, English, & Worthen, 1997; Floyd & Mowatt, 2014; Floyd, 1998). First, both the marginality and ethnicity perceptions assume “under participation” in outdoor recreation of African-Americans. Some researchers have challenged this notion, as it assumes that African-Americans need to have the same recreational pursuits as White Americans (Johnson et al., 1997).

Marginality does not adequately explain how historical racism and discrimination influence current behavior and preferences (Floyd & Mowatt, 2014). Additionally, the marginality perspective fails to recognize class differences within racial-ethnic groups (Floyd, 1998). When affluent minorities are not constrained by socioeconomic status, this perspective does not explain the still-apparent participation differences.

Similarly, the ethnicity perspective has been criticized for perpetuating “a static and monolithic view of minority groups, by neglecting not only diversity within race and ethnic labels but also masks emergent properties of ethnicity” (Floyd, 1998, p. 6). According to Floyd and Mowatt (2014), this perspective does not identify aspects of ethnic culture that are associated with recreation participation. Lastly, because the terms “race” and “ethnicity” are often used interchangeably, studies were not able to distinguish between ethnic effects associated with social and cultural norms, and racial effects, which may be associated with skin color (Floyd & Mowatt, 2014).

The Hierarchical Leisure Constraints Theory

The hierarchical leisure constraints theory has emerged as an important concept to view recreational behavior. “Leisure constraints theory has emerged as the dominant theoretical framework for understanding differential participation in leisure settings generally and park and recreational settings specifically” (Zanon, Doucouliagos, Hall, & Lockstone-Binney, 2013, p. 476). First introduced by Crawford and Godbey (1987), and later expanded by Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey (1991), leisure constraints are defined as factors that may inhibit the participation or limit satisfaction in a certain activity. The hierarchical leisure constraints theory places constraints into three categories: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints (Crawford et al., 1991). This theory has been used to help explain African-American participation in outdoor recreation over time, as detailed below.

Intrapersonal Constraints

Crawford and Godbey (1987) defined intrapersonal constraints as barriers that “involve individual psychological states and attributes which interact with leisure preferences rather than intervening between preferences and participation” (p. 122). These constraints occur within the individual and include things like stress, anxiety, depression, religiosity, and prior socialization into specific leisure activities (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). Additionally, intrapersonal constraints occur before recreational preferences are formed (Ghimire, Green, Poudyal, & Cordell, 2014).

Using data from the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment, Ghimire et al. (2014) studied constraints across ethnic groups. This analysis found several intrapersonal outdoor recreation constraints that African-Americans encounter more often than their racial/ethnic counterparts. Feeling unwelcomed, unsafe, and afraid in natural settings were major

constraints perceived by African-Americans (Ghimire et al., 2014). In a study of urban Detroit parks and black minorities, West (1989) found evidence to suggest that minorities feel more “unwelcome/uneasy” because of interracial factors.

Furthermore, Johnson, Bowker, and Cordell (2001) found that Black nonparticipants were four times as likely as Whites to feel constrained by personal safety concerns. While the study did not ask specifically what safety concerns existed, the authors theorized safety issues included fear of animals or possible racial conflict in outdoor recreation areas. Fear of crime also appears as a constraint for African-Americans throughout the literature (Child et al., 2015).

Other intrapersonal constraints to outdoor recreation in African-Americans mentioned throughout the literature include language barriers (Ghimire et al., 2014), not having the necessary skills or information to participate (Bustam, Thapa, & Buta, 2011; Johnson et al., 2001), and lack of interest in certain outdoor recreational pursuits (Lee & Scott, 2016; Bustam et al., 2011). Research has found that African-Americans are less likely to even be aware of America’s federal land system, and therefore are less likely to visit these lands (Johnson, Bowker, Green, and Cordell, 2007).

Interpersonal Constraints

Interpersonal constraints result from “interpersonal interaction or the relationship between individuals’ characteristics” (Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p. 123). These constraints exist as a result of social interactions with peers and include factors like a lack of recreation partners or family interest (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Ghimire et al., 2014; Bustam et al., 2011). “Barriers of this sort may interact with both preference for, and subsequent participation in, companionate leisure activities” (Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p. 123).

Having companions with which to participate in outdoor recreation activities can be an important factor. Johnson, Bowker, English, and Worthen (1998) found that African-Americans were twice more likely than whites to say they did not visit wildland areas such as forests and parks because they had no companion. Because interpersonal constraints are the result of social interactions, harassment and hostility are also examples of interpersonal constraints (Scott, Herrera, & Hunt, 2004).

Structural Constraints

Structural constraints are “intervening factors between leisure preference and participation” (Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p. 124). These constraints are related to the environment around the individual and include factors like finances, transportation, time, seasonality, life-cycle stage, or availability (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; White, 2008; Bustam et al., 2011; Ghimire et al., 2014). In the literature, structural constraints are well-studied. Johnson et al. (2001) found time to be one of the most prevalent constraints to outdoor recreation in African-Americans. However, evidence has shown that time constraints are not more prevalent in the African-American community than in other racial/ethnic groups. Lee, Scott, and Floyd (2001) found no significant differences in time constraints across multiple ethnic groups. Additionally, there is evidence that younger people may be more prone to time constraints compared with older individuals (Ghimire et al., 2014).

Transportation is also a commonly cited structural constraint. Ghimire et al. (2014) studied outdoor recreation constraints in multiple ethnic groups and found that African-Americans were more likely to be constrained by inadequate transportation than other racial groups. Bustam et al. (2011) found that oftentimes African-Americans had difficulty traveling. This factor may be magnified for African-Americans who live in cities (Xiao, Manning, Perry, &

Valliere, 2018). In a qualitative study conducted by Roberts and Drogin (1993), many interviewees without personal means of transportation were restricted to public transportation routes that may not connect to wilderness areas. Older African-Americans encounter even more issues with transportation, according to Ghimire et al. (2014). Another prominent structural barrier to outdoor recreation that African-Americans experience is lack of money. Bustam et al. (2011) found that not having enough money was a major constraint experienced by African-American individuals.

Constraint Negotiation

Leisure constraints do not always result in non-participation. Once constraints are encountered, it is possible that they can be negotiated (Crawford et al., 1991). Negotiation is the process by which people overcome the constraints that are holding them back and can manifest in several different ways. Jackson and Rucks (1995) classified the negotiation process into two categories: cognitive and behavioral, with many negotiation tactics classified as behavioral. Examples of behavioral constraint negotiation include re-scheduling other activities, cutting back on other expenses, altering the frequency of participation, and gaining the necessary skills and information needed to participate (Jackson & Rucks, 1995).

Constraint Theory Short Fallings

While the leisure constraints theory has been used widely to investigate outdoor recreation participation trends, the theory has been critiqued. Shinew and Floyd (2005) discussed the need for multiple factors to be considered when analyzing constraints and race. African-Americans have multiple identities, which may affect the development of leisure constraints. These multiple identities (gender, age, etc.) should be considered when measuring constraints (Stodolska, Shinew, & Camarillo, 2019). Lee et al. (2001) further examined how multiple factors

impact outdoor recreation participation and found vast inequities for disadvantaged populations. Additionally, there are many societal forces that frame inequity (Shinew & Floyd, 2005). Early constraints work did not appropriately take the varied forces of inequity which shape the lives of many African-Americans into perspective.

While negotiation is a good framework to help explain overcoming constraints, it is also important to acknowledge its short fallings. Some leisure constraints are extremely difficult or even impossible for marginalized groups to overcome. “Since constraints are not absolute, do they imply that an individual can overcome them through sheer will? We view this as false” (Godbey, Crawford, & Shen, 2010, p. 123). Even if removing all constraints were possible, Godbey et al. (2010) argue that it would not be desirable. Recreational settings would be more prone to crowding, long lines, and financial hardship.

Historical and Cultural Factors

Throughout the literature, issues related to African-Americans’ underrepresentation in outdoor recreation have been linked to several historic and cultural factors. This section will detail some of the major themes related to historic factors that may impact African-American outdoor recreation participation.

The impact of racism on African-American outdoor recreation participation habits was prevalent throughout the research (Lee & Scott, 2016; Lee & Scott, 2017; Johnson, 1998). Lee and Scott (2016) studied African-American park visitation in a Texas State Park and found historical constraints to visitation. The history of the community near the study area had been marred by racial conflict between white and African-American residents. This racial conflict spilled over into the park, with one interviewee stating “[racial conflict] was very prevalent” (Lee & Scott, 2016, p. 8). Violent acts perpetuated against African-Americans during slavery and

the Reconstruction Era may have caused a cultural aversion to the outdoors (Johnson & Bowker, 2004). In a qualitative study with 13 middle-class African-Americans, Lee and Scott (2017) found evidence to suggest that fear of these violent, racially motivated attacks may be linked to current African-American travel patterns. “Many of us, due to the historical effects of slavery, learned to hate the land. It was a place of sweat and pain” (Valenzuela, 1995, p. 68).

Johnson (1998) studied place attachment (i.e., a deep, positive, effective bond to a setting or type of setting) to wildland in different demographic groups. The study found race to be a strong indicator of wildland attachment, with African-Americans having the least amount of wildland attachment of any racial group. The findings caused Johnson (1998) to theorize African-American collective memory (i.e., an image of the past within the bounds of social context, like meaningful events that occur in one’s family, neighborhood, or ethnic/racial group) to be largely negative toward wildland areas. Johnson (1998) goes on to state that “sociohistorical factors such as slavery, sharecropping, and lynching may contribute to the lack of interest and appreciation” of wildland spaces (Johnson, 1998, p. 11). Since collective memories are composed of images of the past, the horrific past in natural settings for African-Americans may influence the behavior of the group as a whole.

Evidence of low place attachment to natural areas has also been supported by other studies, and may shape outdoor recreation preferences today (Floyd, Outley, Bixler & Hammitt, 1995; Walker & Virden, 1999; Whiting, Larson, Green, & Kralowec, 2017). Floyd et al. (1995) studied Black and White school-aged adolescents and found that Whites rated wildland activities higher than African-Americans. Walker and Virden (1999) conducted a similar study and found that White university students find forest environments to be more pleasing and safer than do African-American students. Lastly, research suggests that African-Americans tend to prefer

natural areas with built amenities such as ball fields and paved trails (Payne, Mowen, & Orsega-Smith, 2002; Johnson & Bowker, 1999; Kaplan & Talbot, 1988; Philipp, 1993).

In a study of factors that attract African-American visitation to Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP), Erickson, Johnson, and Kivel (2009) found racism to be a major issue.

Interviewees discussed how park use has been limited by racial tensions. “This limitation also created fears of traveling outside of ones’ comfort zone. There was a real fear for one’s physical safety, the lack of which was rooted in historical racism” (Erickson et al., 2009, p. 538). Personal life history influenced whether African-Americans’ traveled to RMNP. If children were exposed to the park by parents or other peers, there was a higher likelihood visiting the sites as adults. Additionally, Erickson et al. (2009) found that nature-based language including “country” and “woods” have historically had negative connotations in for African-Americans. The African-American “Great Migration” from the late 1800s until 1960 involved millions of people leaving the South and migrating to northern cities in search of jobs. “For some, this transition from the country to city was seen as a means of economic progress as the country was associated with poverty” (Erickson et al., 2009, p. 539). This disassociation with nature-based language tends to support low place attachment to outdoor spaces (Johnson, 1998).

Cultural factors that constrain outdoor recreation participation in African-Americans were also found by Erickson et al. (2009). “Many African-American participants mentioned that going to a national park or recreating in natural areas is not a “Black thing to do and is not a park of African-American culture” (Erickson et al., 2009, p. 540). Due to the framing of park visitation as “not a Black thing to do,” park visitation became associated with “White culture”. The association of outdoor activities, leisure, and whiteness has been documented in the

literature (Mowatt, 2009; Theriault & Mowatt, 2018; Kobayashi & Peake, 2000; Woodrow-Smith, 2018).

Pierre Bourdieu (1977) studied historical and cultural factors that go into shaping human behavior. Bourdieu's theoretical perspective introduced the concept of cultural capital, which has major implications for understanding African-American outdoor recreation participation.

Cultural capital is defined as the traditional resources people have, including social, cultural, and historical knowledge (Bourdieu, 1977). Cultural capital exists in three forms: embodied, objectified, and institutional. Embodied cultural capital includes how individuals are taught to act in certain circumstances; objectified cultural capital is the possession of necessary objects; and institutional cultural capital creates social boundaries between those who are educated with a certain skill, and those who are not (Bourdieu, 1977).

These forms of cultural capital can be learned through life experiences or can be passed down from generation to generation. Cultural capital is ultimately tied to action, a concept Bourdieu calls habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). Habitus is largely an unconscious practice that feels natural and appropriate.

In relation to African-American outdoor recreation participation, one interpretation for underrepresentation may be the idea that a large segment of African-Americans do not possess the cultural capital necessary to become involved. Erickson et al. (2009) use an example of someone being taught to not enter the woods because it is dangerous (i.e., cultural capital), resulting in the action of not entering the woods (i.e., habitus).

Additionally, institutional racism may play a role inspiring low African-American outdoor recreation participation, as discussed in Lee and Scott (2016). First, many parks were segregated by Jim Crow laws, the U.S. Supreme Court, and numerous state and local ordinances,

greatly restricting access by African-American visitors (Byrne & Wolch, 2009; O'Brien, 2007; Young, 2009; O'Brien, 2012; O'Brien, 2015; Shumaker, 2009; Finney & Potter 2018). African-Americans who wanted to visit these segregated spaces may have been risking their lives to participate in outdoor recreation activities (Feagin, 2006).

Austin (1998) explored governmental restraints on black leisure participation:

Of all the activities in which ordinary, law-abiding black folks engage, leisure pursuits may be the most heavily policed and the most broadly restrained... Though leisure is generally associated, however erroneously, with freedom from toil, choice of pursuits, and self-fulfillment, many blacks, particularly young ones, cannot possibly operate on such assumptions. For them, the cumulative impact of an extensive array of laws, regulations, and governmental action makings having fun hard work (p. 668).

Austin (1998) classifies governmental restraints as constraints that arise from laws, regulations, or actions of public policy in areas such as recreation, public works, licenses, traffic control, and policing. "For example, black leisure has been restricted by cities that have refused to rent public auditoriums for rap music or reggae concerts" (Austin, 1998, p. 669). Through an analysis of governmental restraints on black leisure pursuits, Austin (1998) states that the American legal system has a "long way to go before blacks will be able to pursue leisure on a just and equal footing with whites" (p. 667). The author suggests that black leisure pursuits are greatly restricted by social inequalities levied by the American government, including parks that are unsafe, recreation programs not catered to appropriately serve African-Americans, and disproportionate policed areas.

Relationship between African-Americans and the Outdoors

Despite the numerous leisure constraints, historical, and cultural barriers explored in the previous section, there are several examples of African-Americans' relationship with the outdoors. This relationship has largely been clouded by ambiguity (Johnson & Bowker, 2004; Blum, 2002). "We have always been, in fact, a rural outdoor people – from when we were

African to the time when we were uprooted and shipped to this new land to work as plantation field hands and then as sharecroppers,” (Harris, 1997, p. 110). According to Blum (2002), enslaved African people viewed wild outdoor spaces as a place of temporary or permanent escape from the horrors of slavery. Additionally, many African cultures emphasized the symbiotic relationship between people, the environment, and spiritual realms (Glave, 2010). In some African religions, the wilderness was a place for refuge and transformation (Blum, 2002).

During the Reconstruction to Post-Reconstruction era, the African-American relationship with the outdoors evolved. Approximately 50,000 African-Americans left the South in the late 1800s, and on their journeys often camped for several weeks on the banks of the Mississippi River (Therriault & Mowatt, 2018). Resorts for African-Americans opened throughout the country, offering common outdoor recreation activities like horseback riding, hiking, fishing, and boating (Foster, 1999; Hart, 1960). Additionally, visitation to local, state, and National parks were often organized by churches and other community groups (Fisher, 2006).

For a glimpse into life around segregated parks, Algeo (2013) studied African-American tourism to Mammoth Cave National Park (then, a privately-owned attraction), located in central Kentucky. During the Jim Crow era, Mammoth Cave was largely inaccessible to African-American tourists. African-Americans would have been unable to utilize hotel accommodations, transportation, and tours. In 1921, a Black owned hotel named the Bransford Hotel made travel to Mammoth Cave significantly easier (Algeo, 2013). The Bransford Hotel positioned tours of Mammoth Cave as a main attraction. Hotel owners created an almost segregated experience for Black tourists visiting the cave and provided a safe place for African-American tourists to stay.

Tourism in African-American families had to be done through a separate travel network (Algeo, 2013). The advent of Victor H. Green’s *Negro Motorist Green Book* (1936) served as a

dedicated travel guide for African-Americans. “The Green Book contained listings, organized by state and city, of hotels, restaurants, service stations, drug stores, barber shops, and other businesses that served African Americans and might be of use to travelers” (Algeo, 2013, p. 8). The Green Book and other lesser-known publications allowed African-American to travel somewhere knowing ahead of time that they would have accommodations.

While the Green Book and other publications made travel by African-Americans to remote places more accessible, there were only a handful of rural vacation spots for Black travelers to use (Algeo, 2013). “To set the historic framework, in 1936 the book identified one skating rink, three trailer parks, one resort, two bathhouses, one dude ranch, five cabin-rentals, one park, one recreation club, and one place to fish and boat that were available to African-Americans across the nation” (Erickson et al., 2009, p. 532). These limitations may have affected development in leisure styles for future generations, as African-Americans formed different vacation styles than others.

Cavin (2008) studied the experiences of African-American outdoor enthusiasts in a dissertation study. Chapter Four of this work discusses racially related constraints amongst the interviewees. Using a qualitative approach, Cavin (2008) interviewed nineteen African-American outdoor recreationists to discuss racially-related constraints they may experience. Six racially-related constraints emerged from the data: 1) reservations of family and friends regarding being in “the woods”; 2) collective memory and fear; 3) being the “only one”; 4) discrimination and “reverse curiosity”; 5) assumption of novice status; and 6) balancing the identity of being black and “acting White.”

Using the same interview procedures, Cavin (2008) explored the experiences of African-Americans in serious outdoor leisure pursuits and identified common themes amongst the

outdoor enthusiasts. Each informant had experiences in nature when they were children, which were important for shaping their outdoor participation as adults (Cavin, 2008). Additionally, interviewees successfully negotiated racially-related leisure constraints in order to participate in their desired outdoor recreation activity (Cavin, 2008). The author illuminated the constraints and experiences that African-American outdoor enthusiasts face. By focusing on African-American outdoor recreation enthusiasts, knowledge was gained on the circumstances by which they developed their participation habits, as well as the experiences they face while participating in outdoor recreation. However, the author called for future research to use “a more holistic framework for understanding non-White participation in outdoor recreation” (Cavin, 2008, p. 95).

While there is some ambiguity surrounding the definition of outdoor recreation, the literature reviewed demonstrates that African-Americans are underrepresented in several metrics used to measure outdoor recreation participation. To help explain this underrepresentation, the ethnicity and marginality perspectives, the leisure constraints theory, and other cultural and historical factors have been posed. While the factors that are constraining African-American outdoor recreationists deserve to be studied, the literature reviewed identified fewer studies dedicated to understanding the experiences of African-American outdoor recreationists. Thus, the purpose of this exploratory study was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of African-Americans’ outdoor recreation experiences.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

As evidenced by the reviewed literature, underrepresentation by African-Americans in outdoor recreation has been studied extensively in the past. However, fewer studies have been

focused on the experiences of African-American outdoor recreationists. The purpose of this research was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of African-Americans' outdoor recreation experiences. Research questions aimed to better understand the constraints, negotiation tactics, and motivations that comprise outdoor recreation experiences were developed:

1. *What perceived constraints to outdoor recreation, if any, do African-American outdoor recreationists' experience?*
2. *What facilitators and negotiation tactics do African-American outdoor recreationists' employ to participate in outdoor recreation?*
3. *What perceived benefits do African-American outdoor recreationists' gain from their involvement in outdoor recreation?*

The section below details how the researcher developed this study in attempt to address the three research questions.

Study Design

This study employs an interpretive qualitative research method to answer the proposed research questions. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), interpretive qualitative studies are interested in: 1) how people interpret their experiences; 2) how people construct their worlds; and 3) the meanings that people attribute to their experiences. "The overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24).

Throughout the literature, a need for qualitative studies exists (Lee, Brock, Dattilio, & Kleiber, 1993; Delpitt, 1993; Allison, 1998). Floyd, Bocarro, and Thompson (2008) examined race and ethnicity research in five major leisure journals and found qualitative research methods

to be underused. Lee et al. (1993) pointed out that qualitative methods yield many benefits that develop from studying an “insiders” perspective. A basic qualitative research method was appropriate for this study, as the purpose of this research was to gain a more holistic view of the lived experiences and perceptions that African-American outdoor recreationalists face when participating in outdoor activities. By speaking directly with African-American recreationists, the researcher was able to gain a first-hand account of their lived experiences while participating in outdoor recreation activities.

Participants

Fourteen people from across the U.S. participated in this study. In order to qualify, participants needed to self-identify as African-Americans. Due to the ambiguity of what activities qualify as outdoor recreation, participants in this study also needed to self-identify as outdoor recreation participants. The participants included seven men and seven women, ranging in age from mid-20s to early 70s (Table 1). Many participants held jobs in the environmental sector and participated in a wide range of outdoor recreation activities. Each participant was given a pseudonym to help ensure anonymity. Fourteen participants were deemed sufficient to research data saturation, or the point where continued data collection produced no new information or insights (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

To recruit participants for this study, the researcher’s personal network provided the first few interviewees. After identifying a few key individuals, a snowball sampling method was used. Snowball sampling happens when the researcher asks a few initial interviewees the names of other people who fit the recruitment protocol and may be willing to be interviewed (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016).

Table 1: Interviewee Information

Name	Description
Nelson Long	Male in his mid-40s. Works for the federal government in an environmental field. Originally from a rural southern state.
Robin Patrick	Female in her early 70s. Discovered outdoor recreation relatively later in life and now participates regularly. Founder of an outdoor recreation affinity group.
Betty Williams	Female in her mid-30s. Works for the federal government in an environmental field. A recent, first-time mother. Grew up as a Girl Scout.
Brandon Jones	Male in his early 50s. Avid outdoorsman who is currently working as a journalist. Grew up as a Boy Scout.
Kelsey Graham	Female in her mid-40s. Works as an environmental justice lawyer. Regularly travels to participate in a wide range of outdoor recreation activities.
Mackenzie Jeffery	Female in her early 30s. Participates in several outdoor activities but is an avid base-jumper.
Patty Pederson	Female in her mid-20s. Member of a bicycle group for African-American females. Works as an environmental lawyer.
Kendall Smith	Female in her mid-20s. Joined a running group of African-American females to become more active.
Malcolm Brooks	Male in his mid-60s. Has worked in environmental related fields for over 40 years. Originally from a rural part of a southern state. Grew up as a Boy Scout.
Jason Douglas	Male in his early 30s. Works in finance. Co-founded an outdoor recreation affinity group. Immigrated from an African country as a child.
Sydney Jenkins	Female in her early 30s. Co-founded an outdoor recreation affinity group after a recent introduction to hiking.
Nick Mills	Male in his late 20s. Spiritually connected with nature. Co-founded an outdoor recreation affinity group.
Zach Hicks	Male in his mid-20s. Recent graduate who became enamored with outdoor recreation in college.
Carson Johnson	Male in his mid-20s. Avid rock climber. Works for a large outdoor industry brand.

Instrumentation

In order to answer the research questions, a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A) was created. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher more flexibility than structured

interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Typically, semi-structured interviews contain a mix of structured and unstructured questions. This flexibility allowed the researcher to react to answers in real time, creating follow-up and probing questions to understand interviewees on a deeper level. Additionally, after themes began to emerge from prior interviews, the researcher had the flexibility to ask appropriate questions to later interviewees.

The interview guide contained a list of twelve questions, developed from a review of appropriate literature in addition from a prior pilot test with five individuals. By exploring findings of similar works, knowledge gaps such as the need for more qualitative research were identified. Pilot tests led to several changes in the study method. First, the interview guide was revised to become less structured. Complicated terms were taken out of the guide and replaced with language that was easier to understand. Additionally, results from the pilot test helped determine what questions would be necessary to answer the study's research objectives.

Procedures

First, a research proposal was submitted to the North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). After IRB approval was granted, the primary researcher accessed his personal network as well as leads from the pilot test to begin recruitment. A recruitment email was developed (Appendix B) to provide information about the study and informant requirements. The initial recruitment email was sent out to potential interviewees, and the snowball sample followed.

Once study participants were identified, an interview consent form (Appendix C) was sent out for their review. After interviewees viewed and signed the consent and agreed to participate, interviews were scheduled based on their preference and availability. Interviewees participated in this study from five different U.S. states. Face-to-face, webcam, and telephone

interviews were all deployed in this study. The study's five face-to-face interviews took place at a mutually agreed upon location. One webcam interview and eight telephone interviews rounded out the study. Face-to-face interviews were the preferred method, as they allowed the researcher to more quickly build a rapport with participants. Additionally, face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to identify body language and other non-verbal cues. As this study had participants from throughout the entire United States, telephone and webcam interviews were also used. The use of these interview tactics allowed for more flexible scheduling, and saved money on transportation costs. Participants who could not be interviewed in person were given the choice of either telephone or webcam interviews. The lone webcam interview allowed the researcher to pick up on a few non-verbal cues, but the quality of the call was compromised due to technical difficulties. The eight telephone interviews allowed for easier recording and more convenience, but non-verbal cues were lost. Interviews were recorded using a voice recorder or through an internet-based conference call hosting platform.

Each interview began with the researcher briefly introducing himself and giving a short overview of the research topic. During the interviews, field notes were taken to help better understand the dialogue. Interviews were informal, with multiple probing questions used to gain a deeper understanding of interviewees' experiences. Interviews ended with a couple simple demographic questions: age and place of residence. The interviews ranged from just over nineteen minutes to over two and a half hours.

Once interviews were complete, MP3 files were saved to the primary researcher's computer. Audio files were sent to a local transcription company to be transcribed verbatim. To ensure the accuracy of transcripts, the researcher replayed audio files and read along with the transcripts, line-by-line, to correct any discrepancies. When confirming transcription, identifying

information was removed to ensure interviewee privacy. Each interviewee was given a pseudonym to preserve anonymity.

Analysis Plan

Once transcripts were received and checked for validity, they were immediately uploaded to the data analysis and management software NVivo. While sophisticated analysis was not generated using NVivo, the software served as a great tool to help store and organize data.

To identify themes throughout the data, a process of open coding was employed. Transcripts were analyzed by the researcher, line-by-line, and assigned codes. Through the process of open coding, the researcher was open to the data and expansive to including all perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Each open code represented different thoughts, phrases, or words conveyed by the interviewee.

Once open codes were generated, the process of axial coding began. Axial coding is the process of grouping open codes together into greater themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While open coding separated data into separate pieces, axial coding brought data back together again to form a coherent whole (Charmaz, 2006). Through axial coding, relationships between the open codes were found, and a larger narrative was created.

Research Positionality

As an African-American outdoor recreationist, the potential for researcher bias existed. I, the researcher, enjoy spending time outdoors and participating in traditional outdoor recreation activities. Growing up, my interest in certain outdoor recreation activities often set me apart from my family and peers. As I grew older, I began to wonder why I did not see as many people who looked like me when engaging in certain outdoor recreation activities. This led me to pursue research in this area. Through developing research questions for this study, I reflected on how I

would answer if the same questions were asked to me. When analyzing and interpreting my research data, I was often met with situations that I could easily identify with through my own personal experiences in the outdoors.

While the potential for researcher bias existed, my positionality allowed me to be accepted by the fourteen interviewees of the study. I got the sense that participants felt comfortable with me and were able to share deep subject matter. This allowed me to establish rapport with participants. Steps to ensure data trustworthiness are included in the next section.

Trustworthiness

Throughout the data analysis process, steps were taken to ensure trustworthiness. First, by recognizing the researcher's positionality, critical-self-reflection was used regarding assumptions, biases, and more (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A research notebook was created, where the primary researcher could reflect on interview experiences and perceptions. This self-reflection served as an internal check to alleviate bias. Additionally, member checks were employed. Findings were sent to interviewees, asking if the results were plausible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Feedback was received from several interviewees confirming the content of the findings. The primary researcher met regularly with members of the research committee to discuss the process of study and findings. These meetings helped the primary researcher interpret the data.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

In this chapter, interview results will be presented. This study categorized the experiences and perceptions of interviewees in three different areas: barriers, involvement, and motivations. Each section begins with a broad summary of the findings. After each summary, subheadings pertaining to each category provide evidence and support for the broader themes.

Constraints

When participating in outdoor recreation, interviewees were met with a variety of barriers. Oftentimes, interviewees felt as if their presence stood out in outdoor settings. This resulted in interviewees feeling like a curiosity or oddity, and even being perceived as a beginner while in leadership roles. Additionally, interviewees were frequently the only black person in the vicinity when in outdoor recreation settings. When speaking about the outdoors to friends and family members, they were often met with pushback. These barriers fit into the common stereotype that “black people don’t like the outdoors” and that the outdoors is associated with whiteness.

Additionally, interviewees were faced with several other leisure constraints. Typical leisure constraints such as lack of time and money appeared. Fear was the most frequently cited factor, as interviewees were afraid of being the victim of racially motivated attacks. Furthermore, friends and family members were afraid on the recreationist’s behalf, often wondering if their loved ones would be safe in an unforgiving world. Overtly racist encounters also plagued the experiences of the outdoor recreationists. People using racial slurs directed towards interviewees was discussed multiple times throughout the interviews. Moreover, encounters with police while traveling to and from outdoor recreation settings were also discussed. Sometimes, interviewees made special considerations to feel safe when in outdoor settings. This included choosing

recreation areas based on proximity to more developed areas. Lastly, the outdoor recreationists sometimes lacked necessary skills needed to complete their desired outdoor recreation activity.

The culture surrounding outdoor recreation was sometimes homogenous, leaving many respondents to feel out of place. Individuals in their respective outdoor recreation communities dressing the same, talking the same, and acting the same way were common place throughout the interviews. Sometimes, interviewees noticed themselves assimilating into the existing culture to fit in. This included buying expensive equipment and apparel, oftentimes at large outdoor retailer stores. Sometimes, when purchasing gear at these retailers, interviewees felt as if employees perceived them as a beginner.

“Not What You Expected”

When engaging in outdoor recreation activities, interviewees were often met with curiosity from others. While interviewees generally did not feel as if this curiosity was rooted in hatred, there was a sense of shock from other recreationists during encounters in the field. “One thing that I've experienced cycling, I don't think that people are used to seeing large groups of Black people on bikes,” stated Patty. She continued, “We see a lot of shock. We see a lot of, like, ‘Wow!’ and ‘Nice bikes’ so it's just a lot of—a lot of stares that way.” Carson added, “Yeah, you know, I think I get a lot of looks. And, at some point, I'm just leaning into it like, ‘Hey, I am different, cool. I'm not wearing that Patagucci, and I see you noticed that I'm this way.’”

Interviewees expressed feeling even more curiosity from others when they were engaged in more strenuous outdoor recreation activities. “In hiking, I've hiked, you know, I've noticed like a lot of Black people don't do more strenuous hikes. And I've done a lot, so that is also a lot of shock and surprise from that,” stated Patty. Brandon spoke extensively about this:

It really depends on where it is, the closer I am to the city, the less my presence is questioned. I mean I never sensed any one's curiosity. But the deeper I go, the further I go,

the longer I'm out, I get the sense that people don't expect to see me out there. And they wonder not necessarily why I'm there or what I'm doing. It's more a question of "How does someone who looks like you that we don't typically see find themselves here?" And the curiosity doesn't come necessarily with any hostility—It's more a question of, "Oh you're black. I've never seen a black person out here before." I don't necessarily feel like people consider me a threat. I think more than anything else, I think I'm perceived as an oddity.

When interacting with others, interviewees often felt as if they were viewed as beginners.

"I think the other way that it shows up is like thinking about competence," stated Carson. He continued, "I think there's some kind of just like, 'Oh, you are a black man.' And people might not phrase it like this, but I think (they're) kind of like, 'Oh, you must be a beginner'."

Mackenzie added:

I'm a base jumper. I'm a tall black woman and no matter where I go, people look at me and they're like, 'Oh, are you here for your first-time base jumping? Go on in, we're about to start the class and we'll introduce you to an instructor.' And I'm like eye-rolling, right? Because I've been doing this for years. So, it's a little bit frustrating and I get that like no matter what I do I will never look like a base jumper.

Even when leading hiking trips for others, Zach feels as if people see him as a beginner:

I know when I see certain people, I come across like, "This is his first time." Even me leading trips and everything, I think you still kind of look like, you know, "Does he know what he's doing?" or, you know, "This might be the first time he's did it." I've definitely had that experience a few times for sure, for sure. I led a hiking trip and it definitely seemed like that. And I don't know if it was just more of the calm demeanor, or I figure I just didn't have the, you know, top of the line REI gear or anything on, but I can remember walking past people and they're kind of looking like, you know, "Are these guys lost? Do they know where they're going, what they're doing?" You know, "How are they're out here, and everything?" The looks always come across at some point for sure, for sure.

Oftentimes while in outdoor spaces, respondents expressed being the only Black person in the vicinity. "A lot of times you go into certain spaces, especially outdoors, and there's not, like, a lot of black and brown faces," stated Jason. Malcolm's experiences were similar, as he stated, "I mean, I literally went everywhere we camped and maybe I'm the only black 99% of the time." For Brandon and many of the other interviewees, the feeling of being the only black person can be frustrating:

Constantly having to say, can't I just be here. You know do I have to be on display? Do I have to prove that I belong there? And I think that if anything has ever prevented me from doing anything it's that—You know, it's like having to justify my presence in a place and sometimes it's just, no, I just don't feel like being the only black person there. So I'm just not going to go. Or I'm just not going to do that and I'm not going to be there. And I think that those things are becoming less and less frequent. I mean it doesn't happen to the same degree of regularity that it did when I was a kid.

In addition to being the only black person in certain spaces, interviewees were sometimes the “black sheep” of their families and certain friend groups. Patty stated, “a lot of my friends for the most part don't really do outdoorsy things.” Brandon discussed distant family members questioning his choices:

They wonder exactly why it is that I'm doing the things that I do. Because they don't get it necessarily. They don't understand the appeal of being dirty and cold and wet, on a regular basis, and wonder why I'm not doing other things because it's something that they can imagine themselves doing.

Carson added, “I think for my family and my friends, for a long time it was like, ‘What are you doing? Black people don't do that.’ And now, I think it's more like, ‘Ah, that's a Carson thing.’”

Racial Discrimination and Fear of Racism

Fear was often cited as a chief concern and manifested itself in a few different ways.

First, individuals were afraid of encountering individuals outside. “Someone that might decide that I don't belong (outside),” stated Brandon. He continued:

And that is, and I've said this many times, there's nothing in the outdoors I'm afraid of except for the people that I might encounter. I'm not afraid of bugs. I'm not afraid of bears. I'm not afraid of the weather. I'm not afraid of temperature. Not afraid of altitude. It's mean people. That's my biggest concern.

Fear of others was not limited to the individuals who were participating in outdoor recreation, but also from concern from family, peers, and other loved ones around them. “I think my mom had a lot of fear in it,” stated Carson. Later, he elaborated:

And so, there's this kind of unspoken thing, where I don't think my family really ever talked about it. Any road trips we took, my mom was like, “I want to be in a hotel by this time,”

you know. Like it's dark around, and we were in the country she was like, "We need to pull over and find a place and we'll drive the rest of the morning," you know. And that, like that right there, was beyond just the outdoors. It was like the narrative of like what had happened historically to our ancestors and our family in the past and things like that, you know. So then, when it did come to me going outside it was like, "Whoa, my son could die, you know, by like so many means, you know, because the outdoors can be dangerous, like there's some risk there." Because, like a lot of these spaces, like, historically have been like dangerous places for black bodies, black and brown bodies, now and so forth.

When working with a group of African-American landowners, Malcolm encountered an older African-American landowner, who was weary of trusting others. After a few meetings, Malcolm gained the trust of the landowner and subsequently invited him to an event in an old Girl Scout camp located on a dirt road in a remote section of a national forest. The following exchange happened between the two men:

[The Landowner] says, "Yeah, I read all about it, but I didn't go in. I'm glad you took me in because if I had I had to come back here, I wouldn't have went down the road." I said, "Why?" He said, "Back in my day if you went down the road like that, you may not come back." And I said, "Now I get it." The fear wasn't about animals. It was about who was down there that was not going to allow you to come back out. And I think what the parents and older siblings were thinking, you don't know who's in the woods where you are.

Interviewees also faced overtly racist acts from others surrounding outdoor recreation. "I left the drop zone in [a Southern State] because of I'm not comfortable with white people using the word 'nigger,'" stated Mackenzie. She continued "I was asked to leave another drop zone because I was told it's not safe for me to jump there. Granted I have been jumping there for three years." Malcolm shared the following account from his time at Boy Scout camp:

It was my first time going to Boy Scout camp, I walk into the camp, and we all had to share cabins, but you didn't know half the time who your cabin mate would be. And this was not my first year, it was my second year because my second year I became, whatever they call it, like a summer camp teacher, so we stayed there the whole summer. And so me coming from my only space being that leader, I had to go camp and sleep with another person. So I walk in and this guy, young kid, walked in and stand up there and he says, "Well, I ain't staying with no nigger" And then I just turned to him and says, "I guess you need to find another place to stay." And he starts telling me about dad and the Klan and all that. And I start telling him about my dad and my guns.

Additionally, respondents experienced encounters they perceived to be racist while they were on the periphery of outdoor recreation, oftentimes while traveling to locations to access their desired recreational locations. “You know, getting pulled over by the cops and I get a ticket by just getting pulled over by the cops which has happened twice on my way to drop zone,” stated Mackenzie. She continued, “I’m not even special with that because I know that happens to other black people and people of color everywhere. Whether you’re driving between these small little towns or not.” Additionally, when Malcolm traveled to his first job with the U.S. Forest Service, the following encounter happened:

I’ve had occasions when I’m traveling out west to go to the first job at the Forest Service, didn’t have no money, I rode the bus, got off the bus in a little small town in Arizona, little young white kid with his granddad sitting at the bus stop and looked up at me and he said, “Granddad, what is that?” The granddad just says, “I guess that’s one of them niggers from the south.”

Safety was a concern for informants that influenced outdoor recreational pursuits. Although Malcolm feels safe in practically any environment, he takes other’s safety into consideration. “I think when I invite others to participate with me, they wouldn’t feel less safe in some environments. So it’s not a safety factor on my part. It’s more on others that I’m thinking about,” he stated. Kelsey, along with some other respondents, prefer not to be travel to extremely remote locations for safety reasons:

So even when I travel—while I like to enjoy national areas when I leave home, I still want those natural areas to be not that remote. I don’t want to be far away from cell phone signal or someone or emergency vehicles. I want to be found. Like I want to feel maybe, like, I’m away from it all but that it all is not that far away. So if I’m choosing a travel destination I might be, like, “Oh, yes, I want to go to the Red Sea. It’s a special place. How close is it to other things?” So I want to experience the outdoor place in the natural world and the wonder, but I am less likely to choose a part of the natural world that very remote, that’s very true.

“Cultural Currency”

Many interviewees expressed feelings about the outdoor industry, and the culture that accompanies it. “The only big limitations for me, and again, as I mentioned before, not having the cultural currency to be able to be in a space,” stated Brandon. He continued “And by cultural currency, I just mean knowing how things work in a place that I'm not familiar with.” To gain the “cultural currency” to be in certain outdoor spaces, Brandon stated “it's just a matter of putting yourself in places where you can learn those skills.” He continued:

More than anything else, it's literally just a matter of being able to say okay, this interests me, I'm going to take the time to learn what it's like to live in this environment, to work with the skills to be able to have the experiences necessary to be proficient at this activity.

Carson discussed the culture in the outdoor recreation climbing community:

I often am like, I am done with climbing because I kind of like get really annoyed by the climbing community, to be quite honest. It is quite a homogenous thing, not just white male, but like I said the clothing is the same, people talk the same. They're still just like, and it is like we don't talk about anything beyond climbing, which I like, you know, even beyond just like the social justice or political side of the like problematic nature of that, you know.

Interviewees also discussed the pressure to assimilate with the “homogenous” outdoor recreation culture. Carson stated “And this is really unfortunate, but I think I've gotten to a place where it's like code switching or assimilating in this way that it was like I want to be outside for a little bit with no hassle, and so I therefore do these specific things, whether conscious or unconscious, to avoid conflict.”

In one instance, an informant described the pressure of a peer to live up to the stereotypes of being black in their greater outdoor community. Mackenzie described this as “performing blackness”:

I think maybe there is more pressure for black men because we are such a minority within the sport. There's a lot of pressure to perform blackness. I have one guy friend, well, you know they're the only black jumper at their drop zone and they're the only black person in

their circle of friends. I mean, you're black because you were born black, like full stop. Like you don't have to perform blackness just because you're the only black guy in your circle of base jumping friends. It's really, really frustrating.

Additionally, the culture around the outdoor industry often requires extensive equipment for some interviewees to “fit in” with their peers. Kendall stated:

They're running, but it's like ‘buy all the different cool run stuff that people buy.’ And different things, even stuff like headphones, like I had brand-new headphones. So it was— it was something different. It was a lot to take in. Even just the run. You would think, Oh, just go out there and run, but no, you don't just go out there and run.

Kelsey added, “I heard some of my coworkers talking about something that they needed to use to do some hikes. Like what is that? I don't want to use that.” She continued, “I don't want to compare—I don't have to use something to go outside. How about I just choose to not being over there.”

Extensive outdoor recreation apparel also shapes outdoor recreation culture, as Carson explained:

Climbers look very specific. Like, they'll have Sportivo shoes, and they've got colorful pants, and they're probably wearing like Arc'teryx or Patagonia and Patagucci, you know, like, a North Face beanie on, right? I feel like there's this, like, apparent like, “Oh, yeah. You look like a climber, so you can climb, right? And like there are times where I like go out and I'm like wearing a bow tie and like jeans and I'm like, “Yes, this is how I feel like dressing today,” But that's how people are gonna read it, you know. They're gonna be like, “Oh, he's not wearing the stuff that he should be wearing. He's not showing up in the way that he should be wearing that,” you know. So, like, yeah. So, I think that is another way in which like my experience has been, you know, being these spaces.

To purchase equipment, gear, and apparel for outdoor recreation experiences, interviewees often visited outdoor retailer stores. “I might be, just kind of generally looking for something, and they're like, ‘Why don't you try this?’ I was at REI (Recreational Equipment, INC) and needed a new pair of sneakers and I had earned a certain amount of credit for buying other things,” Kelsey stated. She continued, “They're like, ‘Look, what are your running gloves right now?’ ‘Why don't you try this? You have this credit.’ It's always somebody else's

recommendation. Not typically—not like researching you know, gear that I need. It's somebody telling me.” While these interactions at outdoor retailer stores such as REI can be helpful, some respondent’s expressed frustration during trips, as Mackenzie explained:

Every time I walk into an REI, bless her heart, God bless him, I can say this because I'm a southerner. But well-meaning people try to tell me, oh, this is called a tent and like this is called a pack bag or whatever or a day pack and like, this is the way you pack it. And I'm like, okay, I've been in the military for 10 years, but I appreciate the fact that you are trying to do your job or what you think your job is.

Mackenzie has noticed this issue becoming worse, since she has become disabled and uses mobility aids:

That has been my experience all along. So, I have noticed that, oh it's got so much worst now that I'm completely disabled, but I do try to like, okay don't get frustrated because maybe it's not because you're black, maybe it's because they see the walker or the crutches or whatever. Maybe, that's part of it. But, yeah, it's been pretty frustrating especially for someone who has been in the military for 10 years. I'm like, okay. Well, I know this, but thank you. And, I'm not trying to make someone feel bad about themselves because there might be someone who walks in the door and has my skin color and my gender and maybe they need that. So, I think, don't ever do that, but there probably are better ways, like start with a few like starter questions like I don't know. I can't tell them how to do their job, but there might be a better way to kind of filter as people come in the door with just a few sort of generic questions about -- so, you know how much experience you have and then ask it to everyone. So, black people don't feel like they're singled out. So, I'm not trying to pick on REI, I'm not trying to pick on outdoor retailers but, yes.

Involvement

Despite the many barriers discussed in the previous section, interviewees still participated in outdoor recreation activities. For many interviewees, outdoor recreation was a huge aspect of their upbringing. Playing outside was sometimes the only consistent recreational outlet that interviewees had. Additionally, key figures in interviewees’ lives introduced them to outdoor recreation activities. These figures were normally family members and friends and helped to shape the interviewees love for the outdoors. Throughout the informant’s natural progression in their outdoor recreation behaviors, more formalized outdoor recreational activities developed. Interviewees tried new activities, developed new outdoor skills, and accumulated useful gear.

Oftentimes, groups like the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America helped facilitate this development. Generally speaking, the longer amount of time interviewees had participating in an outdoor recreation activity, the more comfortable they became.

Throughout the interview process, a constant theme that emerged was the facilitation of communities. Interviewees preferred to participate in outdoor recreation with a group, as opposed to being alone. The group dynamic allowed interviewees to spend quality time with friends, family, and other like-minded individuals. After becoming involved in outdoor recreation, interviewees felt the need to introduce the outdoors to more individuals in their respective communities. This included encouraging their friends and family to get outside. For several interviewees, encouragement of others became more formalized with the creation of outdoor recreation affinity groups geared towards other people of color. These groups helped beginning outdoor recreationists discover new activities, similarly to how key individuals in interviewees' lives helped them become involved in the outdoors.

Social media also helped create communal spaces. Social media accounts allowed interviewees to post about their experiences, thus spurring the interest of peers. These mediums were also powerful in showing representation of people of color in the outdoors, helping to break down stereotypes discussed in a previous section.

Interviewees took it upon themselves to make outdoor recreation more inclusive for all. The leadership demonstrated by many interviewees included them addressing inequities in their respective outdoor recreation communities. Lastly, community wasn't just tied to individuals, but also to the land. Special outdoor locations helped anchor the community for many respondents.

Outdoor Recreation Progression

Interviewees had varying journeys as it pertained to becoming involved in outdoor recreational activities, as well as progressing in the field. For many interviewees, their upbringing played a major role in shaping their outdoor recreation participation behavior.

Playing outside was a huge part of many of the interviewees' childhoods, as Sydney explains, "Yes, I was a full-grown tomboy. When I was young, I loved being outside. I would throw stuff, play with rocks, play with branches. Oh my gosh, I did a lot." Nick added, "I wasn't the video game kid. My family was too poor to keep up with the video games. So, I was outside all the time." Carson described his introduction to outdoor recreation as being "mundane":

I think my story coming into the nature is like, much more mundane, you know. It's a lot of it was just, you know, I think back to, like, the fact that like we used to rake leaves in front of my house, and I was just outside all of the time, you know. We'd have block club parties and kids coming home dirty, you know. You're just on bikes all day, doing God knows what.

Kendall, who grew up in a rural part of the south, stated that she "always played outside because (she) lived in the country." This sentiment was shared with the other respondents who grew up in rural areas. Nelson said, "I grew up in Mississippi. Grew up kind of in the rural south." He continued, "We had, like, 80 acres of land that my great, great grandparents purchased. We were always doing something on that property, hunting, fishing or just hanging out in the woods." Malcolm found himself playing outdoors as a way to escape farm work which would be waiting for him otherwise:

It was pretty easy. Growing up in Arkansas, there was nothing else to do. You got outside, or you had work waiting on you. Oh yeah, it was very easy. So you get up out of bed before everybody else and you hit outdoors and you go at it. And if you go back home, you better hope it's dark. Unless someone told you the night before, "We need you to be here to do XYZ," you got up and got out.

Key individuals in interviewees lives often served as a liaison to the outdoors, or a specific outdoor recreation activity. "My mother was a very outdoorsy person. She loved fishing

and her way of keeping all the kids out of trouble was to take you fishing,” explained Malcolm. Betty recalls being inspired to join the Girl Scouts because of hearing about her mother’s experiences as a girl. “She used to tell us stories about her going to a Girl Scout camp every summer. Camp Lehigh. Going to Camp Lehigh every summer. And the experiences that she had there and stuff.” Betty continued, “As a little girl looking up to my mom and then hear her tell these stories about all this fun that she had. And so, I was like, ‘Oh well I would definitely like to try some of that stuff, too.’”

In addition to parents, friends and other peers played a role in “outdoor introductions” to many of the interviewees. “A few friends introduced me to it (hiking). I had a few girlfriends that were going out to visit a waterfall, and that was my very first time,” said Sydney. Kendall stated, “A co-worker told me about it.” She continued, “I had been talking about getting more active, and she was telling me about a group... it just pretty much started like that.” Carson discovered rock climbing while on a trip to South Africa:

I'd say, rock climbing was kind of -- I was introduced to it, I was on, like, a trip travelling in South Africa, and two of the folks, one of the South African guides who was with us and one of the, like, American troop leaders both rock-climbed. So, one day, they just like took me up to a crag where, like, they were kind of like, "We're gonna go climb and look for bolts." And I was like, "I don't know what that is." But I went with them and, you know, figured it out and fell in love with it. So, I kind of, I guess, I learned about them in the way anyone does, you know. Someone introduced me, and then I kind of fell in love with it, and figured out how to make it happen, so yeah.

Scouting also factored into the informant’s outdoor recreation journeys. “I started out as a Cub Scout when I was 9, then became a boy scout when I was 12,” said Brandon. He continued, “I became an Eagle Scout when I was 18. So literally a decade of my life was spent going to national parks, going to camps, going to areas where outdoor recreation is practiced as a lifestyle.” Brandon credited joining the Cub Scouts as a huge shift to his formal outdoor recreation behaviors, as it wasn’t a regular part of his life prior. Betty added “So growing up, I was in Girl Scouts. The

troop that I participated with, that I graduated from, we focused on primitive camping.” For Malcolm, the Boy Scouts gave him a mentor in his Scout Leader:

It was another person as a mentor, which now that’s what I would consider him, but he was my dad’s friend that leased land from us. He was the scout master, shop teacher, & extension agent. He didn’t have kids, so he focused a lot of attention on other kids. And my mother sort of gave me to him and said, “Make my boy not a sissy,” and that was the end of it. He taught me how to swim, how to do everything that relates to outdoors, and I became assistant scout master with him.

Once interviewees became involved with the outdoors, their participation habits began to look a bit different. Malcolm’s scout master taught him about the technical side of outdoor recreation. “The technical side all came from him because you had to learn ... I became an Eagle Scout so you had to learn different things and they had to teach you different things.”

After their “outdoor introductions”, most respondents decided to branch out and try new outdoor recreation activities. “So, the hiking was my first (outdoor recreation activity) that I tried. And then, I did rock climbing not too long afterwards and I got to do that a few times. And then, of course, I got to do, like, paddle boarding and kayaking, which are fun,” stated Zach. “Once I opened up to other outdoor activities, I ended up learning to kayak. We went zip lining, white water rafting. Bicycling, and even though this was indoors, but we went spelunking. That is simply crawling through caves,” said Robin. She added that she is always looking for new activities to try.

Additionally, interviewees accrued gear to use during outdoor recreation experiences. “I have more gear. Well, I have my lamp that I strap to my head that I bought for camping. But now, if I want to go out and walk in the morning and it might still be dark, I have my little lamp,” stated Kelsey. She continued:

I’ve accumulated more gear that allows me to do more things outside. I have special Burke chair that is really close to the ground for outdoors show so I don’t get in the way of other people behind me. I have a big tent for when I go to the beach, so I can stay out there longer without getting sunburned or otherwise very uncomfortable. I just have more

gear so I can stay outside longer.

Generally, the longer respondents spent engaged in outdoor recreation, the more comfortable they become with outdoor experiences. “Honestly, the more you expose yourself to the outside, the more you’re going to be able to, you know, endure,” Nick stated. He continued:

Different experiences of nature in regards to animals, temperatures, really just everything. Before, I was a little bit timid about certain animals like snakes and everything, but after being outside like I am now, I kind of like some of them. I’m just going to pick it up or play with it. I’m not as scared as I was before.

Community Building

While participating in outdoor recreation activities alone wasn’t a major barrier for most of the interviewees in this study, respondents generally preferred to participate with someone else. Jason stated, “Now, there are times when I do run myself, but as far as the hiking, the running, even the biking, I tend to do it with someone else for the most part.” Various reasons for participating in recreational activities with others emerged. Jason elaborated, “It’s more fun with a group, but I would definitely have to say having someone else helps to motivate me to be able to do it more.” Sydney, who considers herself a beginner, said, “I never hike alone. It’s not the best idea, although a lot of people do it. I am still a beginner, so I hike in a group.” Zach uses his time outdoors with others to spend quality time with his companions:

It's just a companionship thing. It's a time where you can do outdoor activities and be a little isolated. It gives you a good time to talk to somebody, where you don't have, like, just the rest of the world right in front of you, you know. You're kind of away from everything else. So, it's just a good time where you can call talk and get to know somebody or spend some quality time.

To many interviewees, spending time outdoors with family was also important – especially for those with young children. Nelson elaborated on getting his son outside:

Usually it's around a holiday, when he's out of school. We'll sit and we'll say, well, what do you want to do? Of course, he wants to sit in the house and play his X-Box. But my mind is, my mindset is let's get outside and do something

Betty, who is a first time mother to a two year old, echoed the importance of getting her son outdoors one day:

It is important to me for him to be exposed to it, for him to get out in it. He already has a good curiosity and stuff when we go outside. You know, "Mommy, this is a rock." He picks up a rock. And I say, "What's that?" "That's a leaf." And he picks up a leaf and then he points to the trees and stuff. Maybe it's just because the age, but he is definitely very inquisitive and curious. But yeah, but my plan is, once he gets a little bit older. He's 2 right now. So once he gets a little bit older then I do plan taking him out there and taking him out there with me and things of that nature.

Respondents also encouraged their friends, family, and peers to get outdoors, further adding to their outdoor recreation communities. Nelson wanted to get his wife involved in his desired activities and said "It took a little bit of cajoling, but I eventually got her out there. So, she's gone a few times." After Sydney's first hike with friends, she developed a desire to get more people outside:

What can we do to expose more people? Because in our minds, everybody would have the same reaction that we had. All we have to do was get out there more. Once you're out there more, it's like, oh my gosh, it's great.

This encouragement of others resulted in several respondents creating their own outdoor recreation affinity groups, catered to African-American and other people of color. Robin has led a group for African-Americans outdoor recreationists since 2011, which now has a membership base of almost 5000 people:

It's the socialization. It's just the stories. We've had business relationships that have developed as well as romantic relationships that develop as a point of people meeting. And one of the things that I find, particularly out on the trail, because its neutral grounds, background, whatever you do for a living, really doesn't matter

Sydney became motivated to start her group because she wanted to support other novice hikers:

We just wanted to be a little more of that support system for those people that don't want to hike by themselves. I'm not a hiker. I'm not a lone hiker. I don't hike by myself, so I didn't want other people to feel as though okay if I want to do this, I got to do it by myself. So, we provide that support system to them to where okay, if you've never been hiking before, come with us. We'll show you the ropes. We'll provide company. We'll provide entertainment, and we provide the snacks. So, it worked, and it's just evolved.

The strong sense of community was also not limited to in-person experiences. Social media played a huge role in creating community spaces for some interviewees. Sydney credits social media as a way that helped her get people in her circle interested in the outdoors:

We came home and just posted pictures on social media. And once we did that, oh my gosh, we had such a crazy response, that everybody just wanted to be a part of it. Everybody wanted to know like, “Wait, how are you all doing that? How can we do that?” Black people everywhere was like, “Where is that?” You’re going there and they’re thinking that we’re in another state or some even thought we were in another country just because they didn’t realize that that stuff was there.

Mackenzie started using social media to connect with other African-Americans with an affinity for outdoor recreation. “I felt kind of out of place all the time and I wondered what the experience is like for African-American climbers or hikers or just other people doing other things, right?” she stated. She continued, “So, what I came up with was [Omitted Hashtag] and at the time, there was not sort of like communal space online where we could find each other.” Since Mackenzie started the hashtag in 2016, she has noticed other affinity accounts, dedicated to highlighting people of color in the outdoors:

Flash forward to 2018, the online space is completely different, like we now have our own corner of the Internet. And it didn't exist before, but it does now and it's because all of our efforts, parallel and then in tandems working together and collaborating, we now have this like little corner of the Internet where if you are a person of color and you like the outdoors, it's a place to link up and find each other and it definitely is geared towards a younger like millennial demographic.

Social media also helps Mackenzie and other respondents showcase African-Americans and other people of color in the outdoors. She created an Instagram account, to help with representation:

I'm a black female, right? So gender -- so, I needed to see different types of black women doing different kinds of thing in the outdoors. And I'm sure there are other people who maybe don't look like me who needed that as well. So, that's what we're trying to provide. I think representation is definitely, it's incredibly important and I think the type of representation we provide is a little bit different and it's coming down to the photos that we repost. I want people of color to be the damn hero. In your shot, because pictures, what do they say? Like pictures are worth a thousand words. Like pictures are not

neutral. You can say they are, but they're not, right? And if every picture is of -- and there's nothing wrong with this. But if every picture is a white-led, non-profit, teaching underprivileged, under-resourced, cash-poor black kids how to surf or how to hike or how to do this or that. And I'm not saying these (white) organizations are not doing good work. They are, they're very important, very valuable, I appreciate their work, but in [Omitted Instagram Handle] people of color are the hero. You are the center of the shot. It's all about you. And, it's all to show that people of color can be competent in the outdoors. We can be like good at what we do.

Throughout the interviews, leaders emerged to help make outdoor recreation feel more inclusive for all members of their respective communities. Mackenzie, an avid base jumper, stated, "Base jumping has an issue with sexism, sexual harassment, racism, leadership issues and we're working through that." She continued with: "We just have a lot to work on in my community, and I'm not going anywhere. I know there are people who really don't like me for bringing up those issues, but there are people who really appreciate it. Like they are kind of relieved to talk about it." Carson, who works in diversity and inclusion for a major outdoor industry brand discussed the need for creating more inclusive environments in depth:

You know, it's like one of the things that we're talking about right now is including gender inclusive and expansive language on our application. Because, currently, if you don't identify as a male or female and you're outside of the binary, like that right there, just like puts you in this box of like, "Now I have to choose something that I'm not to be able to, like, create or engage in this space." And, you know, for some folks, they might be like, "Well, just click man or woman and move on," you know. But it's beyond that. And, at the same time, that's such an easy fix. That's such a quick thing that we can do, which we're working on to be able to say, "Cool, just add another area for people to talk about how they identify." And then that makes them feel welcome. They can now come in, they can learn those skills, they can pass on their skills, you know, and so forth.

A strong sense of community was not only evident by connection to other people, but in some respondents, also by connection to land. For Nick, this connection to land came when he traveled to Africa to connect with his roots. "It's just, for me, the biggest connection for me is the whole African connection. I just came back from Ghana. Everybody was outside, all day every day. Ain't nobody inside watching TV." Nelson grew up in the rural South, on property that his family purchased from a white man. "My great, great grandparents purchased it in like

1885. My dad often talked about that story as well, and when he talked about it, you could hear how proud he was to tell that story,” said Nelson. The land that Nelson’s family owned became a staple in their community, with the family home, and even a family owned grocery store being located on the property:

For me and my brothers, it's all connected back to that property. And even the store, of course, it's what kind of anchored the community because everybody shopped there. You know, we sold gas and everything you could name. All kind of stuff. And so, it kind of anchored the community, and so everybody hung out there, and shopped there. Nelson went on to state that the connection he has to his family’s land is much different than the connection he has to other natural areas:

Yeah, it's a bit different, and then, yeah, that Greenway is open to the public, but it's not in the Long family. So even though yes, you appreciate the land itself, the Greenway itself, the feel is different. Even now when I go back home, I went home for Thanksgiving last year. So even now when I go home, I took my son. We just went and walked the property. And I was telling him like, how my friends used to come back here and sometimes sit in the woods and chitchat or play hide and seek or whatever. So I took him back there and we just went walking through. And I’m just showing them and telling him about the property and here’s where your dad used to play and all that kind of stuff. Completely different feeling than when I take him walking on the Greenway. I’m not as connected to it. So enjoy it, go running on it and we go bike riding and stuff, but it's just a different feel.

Motivations

Interviewees continued to participate in outdoor recreation activities over time for several reasons. Many interviewees cited that outdoor recreation was a great way to get exercise, thus improving physical health. In addition to physical health improvements, outdoor recreation participation resulted in general health improvements, including mental health benefits. For some respondents, their participation in outdoor recreation has helped them get through tough times in their lives. A consensus was that outdoor recreation was a great stress reliever. Interviewees shared their love for the outdoors, often thriving for the connection to the natural world.

Through outdoor recreation, interviewees were able to explore new places, while taking in new cultures. This exploration contributed to a sense of freedom experienced by some

interviewees. After completing outdoor recreation activities, interviewees expressed a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment. This normally came after a successful outcome, such as catching a fish or completing a strenuous hike.

Health and Wellness Benefits

Interviewees often cited outdoor recreation as a great way to get exercise. After her first hike, Sydney told her friends “Oh my gosh, this is great. This is fun. We got to work out.” Since her first hike, she has made astounding progress. “I’ve lost over forty-five, fifty pounds since I’ve been hiking,” stated Sydney. Outdoor recreation was also important for many interviewees’ general health and wellbeing. “I mean, it just makes me feel good. And at the same time, I think that it adds life to my years. I think that the physical health benefits of being in nature are the primary things,” stated Brandon. Kelsey added, “I think it is just a healthier life that we spend a lot of time moving outside. It feels good. I mean, I think fresh air is just nicer than being cooped up inside.” Nick spoke about the healing properties of the outdoors:

Just healing, overall healing. You know, physically from the sun, from the trees that purify the air that actually ... You know, when you’re outside on a mountain with all those trees, it’s physically healing to your body, you know, and some in ways more than what I can even explain because I’m not a scientist. I know that, scientifically, there’s healing from just being out there and that type of nature that has not been polluted, like if you were in the city. You are around all those trees, you’re taking in all that sun, all that fresh air, you know, it’s just a healing experience.

Robin, who is 70 years old credits her active lifestyle for keeping her healthy. “Let me also say when I say they say I’m an inspiration, at 70, being an African-American female, I’m not on any medications. I don’t have any of the ailments that you hear about,” said Robin. She continued, “So now I go for my annual check-ups, and I tell them I come so they can tell me how healthy I am. The outdoors, I have found has vastly improved and helped me maintain and sustain a healthy lifestyle.”

The general health and wellbeing benefits expressed by interviewees also included mental health benefits. “If I go a few days without running, I can feel it. I can tell, my body can tell, mentally I can tell. I’m more agitated. Things get to me a lot easier,” stated Jason. He continued, “Once I noticed the changes as far as mentally, I just felt better overall. I was doing better at work. I noticed that this was something that’s for me, I want to continue to do it. I want to do it more.” Sydney credited outdoor recreation for helping her get through a tough period in her life:

I lost my mom in 2012. And after losing my mom, I was lost. I was under severe depression, even thoughts of suicide, attempted suicide, I’ll be honest with you and transparent. And it got to the point where I needed an outlet, so I moved to Greensboro because Charlotte, my hometown Charlotte just wasn’t fulfilling anymore. I came to Greensboro, and I was still looking for that outlet. I couldn’t find the one thing that gave me peace, and I was looking for it in people. I was looking for it in events, places, whatever, I just couldn’t find that true peace of mind, until I got back outside. That third time I went to the waterfall, it was so relieving and it cleared my mind and it took me away from the outside world. And that’s kind of what got me addicted.

Additionally, many interviewees expressed that outdoor recreation had a calming, de-stressing effect. “[Outdoor recreation] gives me opportunity to just kind of clear my mind. It’s just, almost a healing in that sense, but it’s just a de-stressful thing to do. So I think, that was probably a good way to say it.” said Betty. Patty echoed these claims and stated:

It’s definitely a stress reliever being in such a stressful industry. You know, there are health effects that stress can radiate through your body. And for me, that’s a way to just be able to break free a little bit and release some stress. Just going hard on my cycle or my bike or having that peace in hiking. So that’s what it does.

Interviewees also had a general love for being outdoors. “I love being outside, and I love [outdoor recreation activities],” stated Nelson. Jason added, “I participate because I love it. I honestly do.” Robin first tried hiking on her 56th birthday and fell in love with it. “I absolutely loved it. It brought out something inside of me that I did not know was there.” Being outdoors shaped a large part of many interviewees’ identity. “I do it because it’s gotten to a point now

where it's a part of me," stated Jason. Mackenzie spoke extensively about her identity as an outdoorsperson:

It just has a lot to do with my identity. That always kind of like base my identity around, being really active, no matter if it's running and rowing or hiking and base jumping. Just being very active in the outdoors. So, I guess that has to do with what I get out of it. Like, I can get a lot of personal fulfillment out of it.

Freedom through Exploration

Through their participation in outdoor recreation, many interviewees were able to explore new places and learn more about the natural world. "For me, it expands your creativity if you're out in the woods exploring. To me, it develops your curiosity, because there's so much to see in terms of how nature works," stated Nelson. Many interviewees enjoyed learning about local cultures while traveling to outdoor recreation destinations, as Jason stated:

We have a lot of different mountains that's near Winston-Salem, so going outside of Winston-Salem to some of these smaller towns that I've never been, so it's also a new experience to go there, and then also it's an experience in itself with the hike.

He continued, "So, that's kind of one of the things that intrigues me because I'm now able to explore and be somewhere that I've never been before. And then while I'm there, you know like I said, I can explore the mountain."

Commonly, interviewees experienced a sense of freedom when they are outdoors as described by Brandon:

Apart from the physical well-being, just the sheer sense of freedom. To be able to go outside and just to be a part of something that's bigger than myself and has very little to do with me, but I still have the opportunity to be in it.

Kelsey added, "I suppose I can't really articulate why [outdoor recreation] feels good. There's something freeing about it." For Malcolm, this freedom feels like "being able to get outside and do exactly what I want to do whether it's hiking, camping, or fishing, swimming."

After completing outdoor recreation activities, interviewees often felt a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment. Following her first hike, Robin stated:

It was such an exhilarating feeling that, when the hike was over, the hike leader told me, and I always say he had the good sense to wait until that hike was over, to tell me that that was one of their hardest hikes. And I had gone up, was leading it and just having a ball. I absolutely loved it.

For Nelson the process of fishing allows him to reach his desired outcome:

I'm out there and there's the thrill of getting the right bait or going to the right area and being able to catch the fish, right? The type of fish that I'm actually looking for, because there's a technique to that. If you want to fish for catfish or crab or whatever, then you need to know what kind of bait you need to use, what time of year, are they spawning or not. If you're going to fish for bass, what do you need? So I think it's just kind of like what we do in science. If you want to go out and answer particular questions, then you have to know, you have to have all the right tools to go and address that particular question. So that process of thinking through what you need to do and then reach that outcome. I've always have kind of liked that. I've always kind of been that way with figuring out things in general. I've always been kind of a process thinker.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

African-Americans have been shown to be underrepresented in outdoor recreation activities (Outdoor Foundation, 2017). Due to this apparent underrepresentation, numerous studies have focused on reasons for the disparities (Washburne, 1978; Crawford et al., 1991; Johnson, 1998; Erickson, 2009). The purpose of this research was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of African-Americans' outdoor recreation experiences. Research questions aimed to better understand the constraints, negotiation tactics, and motivations that comprise outdoor recreation experiences were developed:

1. *What perceived constraints to leisure, if any, do African-American outdoor recreationists' experience?*
2. *What facilitators and negotiation tactics do African-American outdoor recreationists' employ to participate in outdoor recreation?*
3. *What perceived benefits do African-American outdoor recreationists' gain from their involvement in outdoor recreation?*

Through listening to the experiences and perceptions of the outdoor recreationists in this study, this research was able to identify new aspects of outdoor recreation behavior among African-Americans.

The following section first details four key findings and their theoretical links: 1) outdoor recreation affinity groups; 2) outdoor recreation progression through environmental socialization; 3) leisure constraints and negotiation tactics; and 4) outdoor recreation culture as a barrier. After key findings and theoretical links are explored, limitations, recommendations for both practice and research, and final conclusions are presented.

“At Least We Have Each Other” - Outdoor Recreation Affinity Groups

The interviews in this study revealed a strong sense of community amongst the outdoor recreationalists. Interviewees much preferred to participate in outdoor recreation activities with friends, family, and other peers. This resulted in the creation of outdoor recreation affinity groups.

Almost all interviewees in this study belonged to an affinity group catered to people of color. In current events, the awareness around affinity groups promoting diversity in the outdoors has been heightened. Stories in the press have highlighted diversity and inclusion in the outdoors and affinity groups extensively (e.g., Meraji, 2015; Pattillo, 2017; Root, 2017). Perhaps the most popular nationwide outdoor recreation affinity group catered towards African-Americans is Outdoor Afro. Founded in 2009, Outdoor Afro is a non-profit and “the nation’s leading, cutting edge network that celebrates and inspires African American connections and leadership in nature,” (Outdoor Afro, 2018). Outdoor Afro offers planned outdoor activities, led by trained volunteers to help promote the outdoors. “We are changing the visual narrative, and inspiring access to the most pristine nature as well as urban nature, including local parks, trails, and open spaces. These activities promote not only a healthy lifestyle, they also help communities find healing, connect to black history found in many natural areas, and inspire an increased desire to protect vulnerable public lands for all to enjoy” (Outdoor Afro, 2018).

While Outdoor Afro is now a large, nationwide entity, many interviewees in this study participated in or started groups at a more local, grassroots level. Groups often featured similar purposes, largely focused on providing support to other people of color who are interested in outdoor recreational pursuits. By encouraging friends and family to go outside, bringing groups of minorities to parks, posting photos of people of color in the outdoors, and taking leadership

roles aimed to increase inclusivity, the groups mentioned in this study help to break down common narratives.

The affinity groups found in this study are a sort of “parallel institution,” as Floyd and Mowatt (2014) discussed in depth. Parallel institutions are “innovative resistance strategies” that black physicians, nurses, and lawyers used to discredit White supremacist beliefs and desegregate communities (Hine, 2003; Floyd & Mowatt, 2014). Examples of these institutions include The National Medical Association and the National Society of Black Engineers. Similar to the outdoor recreation affinity groups found in this study, these parallel institutions offered African-Americans “private space to buttress battered dignity, nurture positive self-images, sharpen skills, and demonstrate expertise...” as well as offering a safe haven to make relationships and networks across communities (Hine, 2003, p. 1280).

In this study, outdoor recreation affinity groups worked to construct social worlds for their members. A social world is defined as “an internally recognizable constellation of actors, organizations, events, and practices which has coalesced into a perceived sphere of interest and involvement for participants” (Unruh, 1979, p. 115). In social worlds, individuals define and redefine the world they live in based on major points of reference (Hughes, Hallo, & Norman, 2016). The characteristics of a social world are culture, shared communication channels, and shared knowledge (Shibutani, 1961), all of which were present in this study.

Three key components of social world culture are intersubjectivity, emotional solidarity, and in-group/out-group identification (Hughes et al., 2016). Intersubjectivity is described as how individuals understand and relate their shared experiences with others, shaping the world around them (Schutz, 1969). In the context of this study, outdoor recreation affinity groups offered members the chance to construct their own unique group cultures, as opposed to always having

to conform with the broader outdoor recreation culture. Emotional solidarity is described as how individuals come together to create a sense of togetherness (Jacobs & Allen, 2005). Affinity groups in this study created emotional solidarity by fostering an environment conducive to beginners and all skill levels, with members often “showing the ropes” of outdoor activities to others. Finally, insiders expect considerations from other group members that they do not expect from outsiders (Shibutani, 1961). Interviewees in this study created joined affinity groups because fellow members proved to be more accepting of different skill levels and personalities, and close relationships were developed.

Shared communication channels were also created within the affinity groups found in this study. “Communication channels are a critical component to developing and maintaining a social world,” (Hughes et al., 2016, p. 154). Social media emerged as a major communication channel for affinity groups in this study. In planning group activities, details were often posted online using popular social media platforms. Sharing photos and posts about their experiences outdoors served as a major way to get peers interested and excited about going outdoors. Additionally, groups posted photos on their social media platforms to create awareness and display representation of people of color excelling in outdoor recreation activities.

Finally, shared knowledge was present in the affinity groups found in this study. Shared knowledge is described as members of the social world being familiar with key elements of that social world (Shibutani, 1961). Members of outdoor recreation affinity groups seemed to understand the importance of their groups for creating representation and awareness among African-Americans participating in outdoor recreation activities. This manifested in interviewees introducing peers to the outdoors, participating in activities as a large group, and using social media to document their experiences.

Progression Within Outdoor Recreation: An Environmental Socialization Approach

The communities that were constructed by interviewees in this study also helped introduce people to new leisure activities. Environmental socialization research describes how individuals become introduced to outdoor activities and helps explain the process of their involvement progression. Bixler, James, and Vadala (2011) describe the process of environmental socialization and include several factors that relate to this study.

Bixler et al. (2011) found social support to be a main domain of environmental socialization. “After childhood, peers, camp counselors, teachers, park rangers, and professors play an increasingly important role in recognizing people’s abilities, supporting, interpreting, and guiding their further discovers, opportunities, and choices” (Bixler et al., 2011, p. 44). This paragraph outlines a few key aspects of social support, and how they relate to the current study. Reverential role models played a huge role in introducing people to outdoor settings. A reverential role model is defined as “a highly talented person who attracts the attention of an environmentally developing person. Out of awe he or she becomes a reference for skills, avocations, vocations, attitudes, ways of thinking, etc.” (Bixler et al., 2011, p. 46). In the context of this study, many interviewees were introduced to the outdoors by key role models in their lives, either as children or as adults. Key role models from their communities or affinity groups often showed interviewees how to participate in activities they had never tried. Similar to reverential role models, environmental sponsorship was also found in the context of this study. Bixler et al. (2011) described environmental sponsorship as involving others in a program that provides direct or indirect environmental experiences. The individuals who helped introduce interviewees to the outdoors often used environmental sponsorship, as they encouraged their peers and interested individuals to seek outdoor adventures. When participating in outdoor

activities as a group, the concept of environmental convoys was also prevalent. An environmental convoy is “a group of people who move through environmental experiences together over an extended period” (Bixler et al., 2011, p. 44). The affinity groups and overall communal preference found in the context of this study served as an environmental convoy to interviewees.

Bixler et al. (2011) also described the development of environmental competencies. Environmental competencies are “frequent experiences in wild places that heighten the understanding of these places both perceptually and intellectually...” (Bixler et al., 2011, p. 47). Many of the components of environmental competencies have important implications for the context of this study, as described in this paragraph. Bixler et al. (2011) describe environmental introductions as a person’s first, basic set of experiences with the environment through play, exploration, or participating in an activity. For many interviewees in this study, their introduction to the outdoors happened from a young age or through the social context. Through their participation in outdoor activities, interviewees became “environmentally competent,” exhibiting a wide range of skills and knowledge of outdoor recreation, and increasing efficiency, safety, and enjoyment. Additionally, individuals begin learning wildland recreation activities, which become necessary to participate in outdoor recreation activities (Bixler et al., 2011). Interviewees in this study exhibited these traits by learning more formal outdoor recreation skills and acquiring knowledge to partake in outdoor activities in more efficient manners. Bixler et al. (2011) also describe several environmental competencies that concern growing more comfortable with the environment surrounding outdoor activities, including tolerance for bad weather, getting dirty, appreciation of weather extremes, and becoming more familiar with wild animals. In the context of this study, the more interviewees participated in outdoor activities, the more comfortable they

became in outdoor settings. Interviewees in this study expressed similar sentiments, often growing more comfortable with these outdoor factors as they experienced them.

Through their involvement in outdoor activities, individuals accumulate environmental experiences. Bixler et al. (2011) explain that this accumulation of environmental experiences reinforce, renews, and expands interest in the outdoors. Many key aspects of the accumulation of environmental experiences relate to the current research, as outlined in this paragraph. First, environmental expansion was prevalent in this study. Bixler et al. (2011) describe environmental expansion as the addition of new activities that complement an existing interest in the outdoors. In this study, many interviewees were introduced to outdoor recreation through one activity. However, after their initial introduction, they were exposed to and tried different outdoor activities. Environmental continuity, as described by Bixler et al. (2011), is the “activities, events, or social interactions that support the continuation of existing environmental interests despite a change in geographic location or life course” (p. 54). For interviewees in this study, belonging to outdoor recreation affinity groups served as an important vector to their environmental continuity. Despite their participation in outdoor activities, individuals often face barriers. Bixler et al. (2011) categorize these barriers as environmental constraints, which are described as anything that stops the emergence of, reduces, or eliminates the participation on outdoor activities. Interviewees in this study were constrained by several factors, including racism, time, money, fear, and safety concerns. Constraints will be discussed at length in the next section of this discussion, but it is important to note the connection to environmental socialization work.

Lastly, through the process of environmental socialization, individuals start to form environmental identities. “Persons begin to view themselves as environmentally oriented as they

develop a robust set of environmental competences, preferences, and values,” (Bixler et al., 2011, p. 57). Environmental identities formation was prevalent throughout the current study, as detailed below. Many interviewees in this study held environmental occupations, described by Bixler et al. (2011) as a position that is or resembles an occupation structured around the environment. Through their occupations in environmental fields, interviewees worked to help conserve outdoor spaces. Unusual interests are also used to define environmental identities. These unusual interests defy the mainstream, and the person holding these unusual interests may be subject to “outgroup derogation” (Bixler et al., 2011, p. 59). Interviewees in the current study sometimes held “unusual interests” in their family or friend groups, and often felt like outcasts to their loved ones. Despite the feeling of judgement from others (and several other constraints found in this study), interviewees still exhibited environmental perseverance by excelling at their environmental pursuits. The concept of environmental perseverance is explored more deeply in the section below.

Persisting through Leisure Constraints

Throughout this study, several leisure constraints and barriers were prevalent. Leisure constraints are defined as factors that may inhibit the participation or limit satisfaction in a certain activity (Crawford et al., 1991). Constraints and barriers concerning social norms and expectations emerged throughout this study. To better understand these social norms and expectations, a symbolic interaction approach was used.

The symbolic interaction approach helps in understanding constraints that arise from socially regulating factors such as norms and expectations (Samdahl, 1988). Symbolic interactionists believe that “meanings come to mediate between the individual and the environment” (Samdahl, 1988, p. 29). Samdahl describes these meanings as the source of

freedoms and constraints that regulate action. In symbolic interaction theory, actions are molded and modified to fit the patterns of actions by others (Samdahl, 1988; Park, 1927; Shibutani, 1961; McCall & Simmons, 1966). In the context of this study, many interviewees defied social norms and expectations of other recreationists. As a result, interviewees were perceived as beginners, felt like “oddities,” and often were the only black faces in a crowd in outdoor recreation settings. These socially regulating factors created a burden for interviewees, who often felt like they had to explain their existence in outdoor spaces.

In addition to socially regulated constraints, interviewees in this study were subject to several other leisure constraints. Past constraint literature was accessed to help support the findings of the current study. Constraint literature found that African-Americans were often constrained by safety factors when participating in outdoor recreation (Johnson et al., 2001; Child et al., 2015; Ghimire et al., 2014). The current study supported past literature, as interviewees in this study were often constrained by safety factors, especially concerning fear of racially motivated attacks. Similarly, interviewees of this study often dealt with hostility from others. This included racial slurs and other racially charged encounters while participating and on the periphery of outdoor recreation settings. Additionally, past constraint research has shown that African-Americans sometimes suffered from not having the skills or appropriate information to participate in more formalized outdoor recreation (Bustam et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2001). Interviewees in this study sometimes expressed not possessing the skills to participate in certain outdoor activities, or the appropriate knowledge to purchase necessary outdoor recreation gear.

Despite the constraints and barriers found in the current study, interviewees still participated in outdoor recreation activities. Outdoor recreation affinity groups served as a major vector for constraint negotiation. Constraint research has affirmed the importance of

companionship for African-American outdoor recreation participation, as Johnson et al. (1998) found that African-Americans were twice more likely than whites to say they did not visit wildland areas because they had no companion. The outdoor recreation networks found in this study provide a sense of community, so the outdoor recreationists do not have to feel isolated when they decide to go outside. The affinity groups found in this study were led by trained, competent individuals who provide technical support and cultivate a friendly environment for beginners, helping to alleviate knowledge gaps. Lastly, interviewees in this study generally felt more comfortable and safer when participating in outdoor recreation with a group, as consistent with the literature (Burns et al., 2008).

Interviewees for this study were able to negotiate their constraints and barriers to outdoor recreation participation. Past constraint research has shown motivation to be a key component of negotiation (Loucks-Atkinson & Mannell, 2007; White, 2008). While individuals in this study were motivated to participate in outdoor recreation for several reasons, their participation resulted in several perceived health and wellness benefits. Interviewees credited their participation in outdoor recreation to health outcomes including weight loss, lower stress levels, and mental health improvements. These findings support prior research on the health benefits of time spent outside (Godbey, 2009; Rosenberger et al., 2009; Wilson & Christensen, 2012).

Outdoor Recreation Consumer Culture as a Barrier

Outdoor recreation consumer culture emerged as a barrier for interviewees in this study. Individuals felt as if they did not always possess the “cultural currency” to fit in with other recreationists. Pressure was felt to assimilate into the dominant outdoor recreation culture, and interviewees prescribed to several techniques to feel included.

Interviewees described outdoor culture to be homogenous, which was supported throughout the literature. As Martin (2004) stated, “[w]ildland recreation enthusiasts are generally viewed as young, rugged, and adventurous, and I contend that they are almost exclusively perceived as being White” (p. 514). Martin (2004) describes the homogenous state of outdoor leisure identity to be “unappealing to some segments of the population, particularly those who value a more cosmopolitan or sophisticated identity, and may be mutually exclusive from the self-image of many urban Blacks” (Martin, 2004, p. 514).

This homogenous nature included individuals wearing popular outdoor brands and using expensive gear. According to the Outdoor Industry Association’s 2017 Outdoor Recreation Economy Report, outdoor recreation products account for \$184.5 billion annually. When combined with outdoor recreation trip and travel spending (\$702.3 billion), outdoor recreation accounts for \$887 billion in annual consumer spending (OIA, 2017).

Interviewees often felt like they needed to wear the latest gear or use the newest equipment to feel accepted. This resulted in interviewees feeling as if they did not have the “cultural capital” to exist in outdoor recreation settings. When interviewees participated in outdoor recreation without the newest gear, they felt judged or were perceived as a beginner by others.

Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of objectified cultural capital deals with material objects that can be transferred or purchased by economic means. “The cultural capital objectified in material objects and media, such as writings, painting, monuments, instruments, etc., is transmissible in its materiality” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 50). The material objects held in the objectified state of cultural capital are symbolically valuable (Bourdieu, 1986; Erickson et al., 2009). Bixler and Morris (1998) transformed Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of cultural capital into a concept of

“outdoor capital.” Outdoor capital “refers to the accumulation of outdoor experiences within social groups. These experiences result in the development of outdoor skills, vocabulary, values, social networks, accumulation of outdoor equipment and clothing, and outdoor related references...” (Bixler & Morris, 1998, p. 238). For interviewees in this study, wearing valuable outdoor recreation clothing and possessing new outdoor gear was important. When interviewees did not possess the newest gear, they often felt outcasted and were perceived as outsiders by others. This finding was supported by the literature, as Erickson et al. (2009) explained: “In a recreation context, this could even include the possession of valuable outdoor gear, which can serve as a social boundary between those who own the correct gear for outdoor settings, and those who do not” (p. 531).

Limitations

There were several limitations within this study. First, as a result of the snowball sample, multiple members of the same outdoor recreation affinity groups and workplaces were interviewed. While this study spoke to interviewees from several different affinity groups and workplaces, conducting interviews with multiple people from the same groups could affect the results.

Additionally, the potential for research bias existed in this study. The primary researcher is African-American and considers himself to be an outdoor recreationist. Emotions in addition to other factors could have affected how the interview transcripts were interpreted. To combat against researcher bias, steps for trustworthiness such as member checks, interview field notes, and meetings with research team members were used.

While this study intended to speak to a diverse representation of African-American outdoor recreationists, a few omissions may have occurred. First, there was no mention of socio-

economic status throughout the interview guide. This study may not have conducted interviews with people who represent lower, middle, and upper socioeconomic class. Additionally, other key social identity factors such as sexual orientation, gender identity, educational background, ability level, and religion were not covered in the interview guide. Since racial/ethnic groups are not monolithic in nature, these additional factors may have informed how interviewees experienced outdoor recreation to varying degrees.

Though this study was limited by these factors, strengths also emerged. First, due to the primary researcher identifying as an African-American, he was able to build rapport and trust with the interviewees. Additionally, the study sample was well-educated on issues surrounding diversity and inclusion in outdoor settings. This helped in providing rich, descriptive answers. Lastly, by speaking with individuals located in different regions across the U.S., different perspectives and experiences were gathered.

Recommendations

Implications for Practice

Based on the research conducted, the following measures are recommended to outdoor recreation practitioners and outdoor industry stakeholders. The goal of these recommendations is to help shift the dominant narrative of outdoor recreation.

Support outdoor recreation affinity groups.

Throughout this study, outdoor recreation affinity groups emerged as a popular way for interviewees to become engaged in outdoor activities. These groups provided a safe space for the interviewees, allowing them to participate in activities with people who look like them. Affinity groups also help change the dominant narrative around the outdoors. Thus, outdoor recreation

affinity groups should be supported as a viable way to help increase diversity in outdoor recreation settings.

Outdoor recreation agencies and industry stakeholders should work to identify and provide support to outdoor recreation affinity groups. This support can manifest in several ways. First, providing training, certification opportunities, and other tactical support to leaders of grassroots affinity groups would help ensure that outdoor activities are conducted in a safe manner. By providing these services to group leaders at a subsidized or free cost, cost limitations would be reduced. As an added benefit, new skills and certifications may open the door to groups participating in new activities.

Furthermore, support for affinity groups could be monetary. Some groups in this study provided food, transportation, and more to their members for no charge. If funding for groups is available, their reach could be further amplified. Additionally, the monetary burden that the founders of these groups could be reduced.

Lastly, expensive gear and equipment was a barrier to outdoor recreation in this study. Gear rental programs or group discounts could help to break down this barrier. By engaging with outdoor recreation affinity groups and analyzing their needs, individuals who may be constrained by lack of gear would benefit. Additionally, gear discounts to members of identified outdoor recreation groups could make expensive, high quality gear more accessible.

Change marketing demographics for outdoor recreation activities.

Historically, the dominant narrative around outdoor recreation has not been associated with African-Americans. When speaking with the interviewees of this study, a common sentiment included them wanting to show the world that people of color are participating and

excelling in outdoor activities. When marketing outdoor recreation programs or outdoor products, an emphasis should be made to show representation from all groups.

There is some evidence that brands are incorporating diverse people in outdoor settings in their ads. Anecdotally, a recent Subaru Forester television advertisement entitled “Call of the Road” depicts an African-American couple traveling through different terrains while on a road trip in their new car (Lynch, 2019). The couple was shown hiking, car camping, and passing through an entrance gate to a park. While this is just one example of a more diverse advertisement, an influx of these campaigns may help to change the dominant narrative around outdoor recreation. Recreation practitioners can also help to change this narrative, by using diverse photos of people in outdoor recreation program guides, flyers, social media posts, and other advertisements.

Hire and train diverse people to lead outdoor recreation.

When leading outdoor recreation events for others, interviewees were sometimes perceived as beginners. Additionally, many interviewees were treated like an oddity or novelty when encountering others on their recreation excursions. In another attempt to disrupt the dominant narrative surrounding outdoor recreation, the need for African-Americans in outdoor leadership roles exists.

Instead of the dominant narrative portraying African-Americans as beginners in outdoor recreation, the training and leadership of black outdoor recreationists would help to break down stereotypes that people may hold. This would show the general population that not only are African-Americans participating in outdoor recreation, but they are also excelling and leading in the field. Pathway programs could help show African-Americans that careers in outdoor recreation are possible.

While making a conscious effort to hire African-Americans and other people of color to positions in outdoor recreation is a good first step, the ongoing training and support of these individuals is necessary as well. As this research confirmed, outdoor recreation culture can be homogenous at times. Interviewees often felt like they were the only African-American in the vicinity. Providing mechanisms to help employees cope with this burden may be necessary to help avoid burnout. Support groups, therapy, and safe spaces are examples of resources that could help in this regard.

Engage with key stakeholders in diverse communities.

Leaders in their respective outdoor communities emerged throughout the research. These interviewees started their own outdoor recreation affinity groups, encouraged others to get outside, worked to diversify outdoor spaces, and held jobs in environmental fields. The input of strong individuals like the interviewees in this study should be a major part of developing future outdoor recreation programming and marketing decisions.

Engaging key stakeholders could include providing avenues for open channels of communication between outdoor industry organizations and stakeholder groups. This would allow stakeholders to express which type of experience they are seeking when participating in outdoor recreation, and better position outdoor organizations to meet them. Additionally, communication with key stakeholders would allow them to express concerns about current efforts to outdoor organizations. Many interviewees throughout this study encountered overtly racist acts while in and around outdoor spaces. By communication with these stakeholders, policy and procedure can be developed to help avoid such acts in the future. When communicating with key stakeholders, it is important to respect cultural differences of the group (Johnson & Monroe, 2008).

Significance & Future Research

This study provided rich data about the constraints that African-American outdoor recreationists face, as well as the motivations and negotiation tactics employed to overcome them. The findings of this study supported previous research on the experiences and perspectives of African-American outdoor recreationists (Cavin, 2008; Roberts & Drogin, 1993), in addition to past leisure constraints research (Crawford et al., 1991; Ghimire et al., 2014; Bustam et al., 2011), aspects of the marginality and ethnicity perspectives (Washburne, 1978), and other historical barriers to participation (Erickson et al., 2009; Johnson, 1998; Finney, 2014). While past literature was supported, more novel findings also emerged. Using these new insights, recommendations for future outdoor recreation research were developed.

The culture surrounding outdoor recreation emerged as a major constraint to outdoor recreation for interviewees of this study. Interviewees needed specific outdoor gear apparel to fit in, as well as individuals acting and talking the same. While cultural constraints have been found in previous research (Erickson et al., 2009), this study provided valuable data about how interviewees negotiate these constraints. As the outdoor recreation industry continues to grow, special attention should be given the homogenous nature of outdoor activities. One potential area for future research could include seeking a more comprehensive understanding of the unique cultures for different outdoor activities such as rock climbing, base jumping, and running. This research could gain insights on why these cultures exist, to provide recommendations for them to become more inviting and inclusive.

Additionally, this research found outdoor recreation affinity groups to be a major facilitator to outdoor recreation participation. Throughout the literature, the effect of affinity groups on African-American outdoor recreation participation has not received much attention.

Outdoor recreation affinity groups offered many benefits for their members to help negotiate leisure constraints such as fear, lack of partners, and lack of knowledge. Many affinity groups used social media as a tool to recruit new members, publicize events, and represent African-Americans doing outdoor activities. With the increasing popularity of social media platforms, affinity groups may increase in sheer numbers and reach. Future research focus on these groups in order to gain more comprehensive understanding of their inner workings.

Lastly, while this study focuses on specifically on African-American outdoor recreationists, future research should focus on other racial/ethnic minorities who have been historically underrepresented in outdoor spaces. Throughout this study, the prominence of outdoor recreation affinity groups catered towards African-Americans emerged. However, outdoor recreation affinity groups catered towards other minority groups also exist. Since these groups played a large role in helping interviewees negotiate constraints, future research could detail if affinity groups have similar affects on other minority groups.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of African-Americans' outdoor recreation experiences. This study found that African-American outdoor recreationists face a variety of leisure constraints that effected their participation in outdoor recreation. Despite these barriers, the interviewees of this study partook in outdoor recreation with varying levels of participation. Strong outdoor recreation communities were cultivated with the help of grassroots outdoor recreation affinity groups in which interviewees founded or joined throughout time. These groups emerged as a major tactic to help interviewees participate in outdoor recreation. Through their involvement in outdoor recreation, individuals gained several perceived benefits, and were motivated to participate in outdoor recreation

activities. The recommendations developed from this study can help outdoor recreation practitioners, outdoor industry stakeholders, and outdoor recreation scholars in efforts to diversify outdoor spaces.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

1. How do YOU define outdoor recreation?
2. What outdoor recreation activities do you participate in?
 - a. *How often do you participate in these activities?*
3. Tell me about how you participate in these activities?
 - a. *Alone, with friends, in a group setting, for a short/long amount of time, etc.*
4. Can you talk about how you first got you interested in participating in outdoor recreation activities?
5. What are some factors that help you to participate?
6. Talk about your favorite places to participate in these activities.
 - a. *Why?*
 - b. *Tell me about any places or circumstances where you wouldn't feel comfortable participating in these activities? Why?*
7. Let's talk about how friends, family members, or other close acquaintances think about your participation in outdoor recreation activities?
 - a. *How do other people you interact with while participating in outdoor recreation activities respond to your participation?*
8. Can you describe any ways in which your outdoor recreation participation has changed over time?
9. What are some things that have held you back from participating in outdoor recreation activities in the past?
 - a. *Has this changed?*
 - b. *What did you do to overcome these barriers?*
10. Tell me about what you get out of your participation. That is, why do you participate?
11. As you know, my study is trying to help understand the experiences of African-American outdoor recreation participants. Is there anyone you know that you think I should also speak with that might further help me with this study?
12. Demographics: age and current location

Appendix B: Sample Recruitment Email

Hello,

I hope this message reaches you well. My name is Diquan Edmonds, and I am a Master's student at North Carolina State University studying Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management. I am reaching out in hopes that you may be interested in participating in a research study that I am conducting.

As you may know, African-Americans participate in outdoor recreation activities at a relatively low rate. Current research possesses a number of reasons why participation rates are lower, including feeling unwelcomed or afraid in natural spaces, lack of time/money, and historical barriers to name a few.

While these barriers are relatively well researched, my study is interested in focusing on individuals who regularly participate in outdoor recreation activities. If you self-identify as African-American, are between the age of 18-64, and love participating in outdoor recreation activities, you are a perfect candidate for this study!

This study will involve semi-structured interviews that take place in a mutually agreed upon location or via phone call, skype, or other internet-based services.

My research hopes to better understand how African-American individuals who participate in outdoor recreation negotiate their constraints, in turn informing future programming, policy, and marketing decision-making, and ultimately increasing outdoor recreation participation among African-Americans.

Interested in finding out more information? Email or call Diquan Edmonds at daedmond@ncsu.edu or (omitted phone number)

Thank you

Appendix C: Interview Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: How African-American Outdoor Recreationists are Re-defining Outdoor Recreation

Principal Investigator: Diquan Edmonds

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michael Edwards

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of the study is to better understand how African-American individuals who participate in outdoor recreation negotiate their constraints, in turn informing future programming, policy, and marketing decision-making, and ultimately increasing outdoor recreation participation among African-Americans.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer interview questions truthfully, and to the best of your ability. Interviews will be audio recorded.

Risks and Benefits

There are minimal risks associated with participation in this research. There are no direct benefits to your participation in the research. The indirect benefits are providing important information to understand outdoor recreation participation in African-Americans.

Confidentiality

The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely in password protected computer. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

What if you are a NCSU student?

Participation in this study is not a course requirement and your participation or lack thereof, will not affect your class standing or grades at NC State.

What if you are a NCSU employee?

Participation in this study is not a requirement of your employment at NCSU, and your participation or lack thereof, will not affect your job.

What if you have questions about this study?

If you have questions at any time about the study itself or the procedures implemented in this study, you may contact the researcher, Diquan Edmonds at daedmond@ncsu.edu or (omitted phone number)

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

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 the IRB office at irb-coordinator@ncsu.edu or by phone at 1-919-515-8754.

Consent To Participate

“I have read and understand the above information. 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.”

Subject's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____