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# Racial Complexities of Outdoor Spaces: An Analysis of African American's Lived Experiences in Outdoor Recreation

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RACIAL COMPLEXITIES OF OUTDOOR SPACES: AN ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN  
AMERICAN'S LIVE EXPERIENCES IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

by

Matthew C. Goodrid

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Racial Complexities of Outdoor Spaces: An Analysis of African American's Lived Experiences in Outdoor Recreation

Abstract

by Matthew C. Goodrid

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This thesis examines the racial power imbalances that exists within the outdoor recreation industry. Despite participation rates being quantified, limited research explores the lived experiences and perspective of people of color. In this study, I explore the socio-historical development of outdoor recreational spaces, existing environmental habitus and African Americans lived experiences in outdoor recreation. To emphasize the voice of the participants, twelve African American millennials were interviewed. Questions in the interviews revolved around their perception of outdoor recreation and personal experiences while participating in outdoor recreation. Three overarching themes emerged from their stories, i) the typology of outdoor recreation, ii) outdoor recreation as a White activity and, iii) the role of environmental trauma. Upon exploring these themes, the conclusion was made that the participants did connect the socio-historical development of outdoor recreational spaces, existing environmental habitus and their lived experiences in

outdoor recreation. Their connection led me to the conclusion that the low participation rates of African Americans in outdoor recreation is a complicated social phenomena that is connected to multiple facets of oppression. I then broke these facets of oppression into three tiers, i), the construction and maintenance of outdoor recreation as a White activity, and the Whiteness that is embedded deeply within the outdoor recreation configuration, ii), the history of financial and economic marginalization that communities of color have endured in the United States and iii), the environmental trauma that African Americans have experienced in outdoor settings throughout American history. These three tiers together make the participation in outdoor recreation a different and complicated experience for African Americans.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

If you find yourself trapped in the middle of the woods without electricity, running water, or a car you would likely describe that situation as a “nightmare” or “a worst-case scenario like after plane crash or something.” White people refer to it as “camping”. (Clander, 2009, para 1)

Tonight my 1st grade daughter's fluency practice story was about a boy who dreamed of being a surfer. She'd never heard of surfing before, so I cued up some videos on YouTube of children surfing. And, of course, she asked if girls surfed. I found some videos of women surfing. Then she asked if Black girls surfed. I had no idea how difficult it would be to find videos of Black girls surfing....Black women surfing....Black *people* surfing. (Davis, 2013, para 1)

Both quotes, extracted from online blogs, highlight the racial complexities of outdoor social spaces in the United States (U.S.). As the bloggers allude, outdoor recreation<sup>1</sup> has become linked with white<sup>2</sup> culture in the United States (Washburne & Wall, 1980; Virden & Walker, 1999; Finney, 2014). Despite people of color comprising 39.9% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), recent data indicated that 70% of outdoor recreation participants were Caucasian (Outdoor Foundation, 2013) and between 2008-2012, 95% of National Forest and Wilderness visitors were white (U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of chapters 1, 2 & 3, the broadly accepted academic definition of this concept is utilized. Here, outdoor recreation is understood as “organized free-time activities that are participated in for their own sake and where there is an interaction between the participant and the environment” (Ibrahim & Cordes, 2002, pg. 5). In the later chapters, ‘outdoor recreation will be presented in accordance with the definitional frameworks provided by the participants (see chapter 4). This intentional shift in definition seeks to honor the voice of the participants *and* recognise powerful processes of social construction shaped by our intersecting social identities (e.g. gender, race, class, sexuality & (dis)ability).

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this thesis, the racialized labels of “White”/“Caucasian” and “Black/African American/People of Color” will be used interchangeably in accordance with the source literature and participants’ interview data.

Forest Service, 2013). Such data draw attention to the current lack of diversity within outdoor recreation communities and is suggestive of people of color's marginalization within these recreational spaces (Floyd & Shiner, 1999; Floyd, 2014).

The relatively homogeneity of outdoor recreation communities notwithstanding, participation in these activities has been steadily increasing (California State Parks, 2005; Ghimire, Green, Poudyal & Cordell, 2014). From 1999-2008, participation rates grew 4.4% from 208 million to 217 million and an estimated 140 million Americans now *prioritize* outdoor recreational activities within their daily lives (Outdoor Foundation, 2013; Ghimire, et al, 2014). Despite the continued growth in aggregate participation, people of color remain under-represented and consequently constrained from obtaining the various health benefits associated with these forms of physical activity (Ghimire, et al. 2014; Virden & Walker, 1999; Washburne, 1978). Research has consistently identified outdoor recreation as a fundamental component of healthy lifestyles (California State Parks, 2005). Empirical, theoretical and anecdotal evidence supports the claim that regular contact with nature positively affects blood pressure, depressive mood states, cholesterol, general outlook on life, stress reduction, anxiety and child behavioral problems (More & Payne 1978; Moore 1981; Kaplan & Kaplan 1989; Kaplan 1993; Rohde & Kendle 1997; Frumkin 2001; Godbey, 2009). Thus, outdoor recreation can be considered a vehicle for achieving balanced physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and social well-being. These well-documented health benefits only heighten the importance for increased involvement in outdoor recreation for people of color (Godbey, 2009).

## Research Question

Several social scientific disciplines have explored racial disparities in human-environmental interactions (see Dwyer & Huitchison, 1990; Floyd & Shinew, 1994; Johnson, 1998; Virden & Walker, 1999; Glave & Stoll, 2006; Finney, 2014; Child, Kaczynski, Sharpe, Wilcox, Schoffman, Forthofer, & Barr-Anderson, 2015). Their collective findings suggest the epistemic devices<sup>3</sup> surrounding the environment are socially constructed along racial lines. While the findings advance knowledge of different racial perceptions of environmental settings, with the exception of Finney (2014), these studies make limited strides towards understanding the sociogenesis and lived experiences of such perceptions. The paucity of such knowledge presents a rich vein of inquiry for Recreational Studies scholars and informs the research question guiding this thesis.

I will draw from Figurational Sociology (see Elias, 1970) while also being informed by Racial Formation theory (see Omi & Winant, 1994; HoSang, LaBennett, & Pulido, 2012) to explore how epistemic devices evident in African-American communities shape, and are shaped by, people's lived experiences of outdoor recreation. The decision to focus exclusively on African-American communities is grounded in their notable marginalization within outdoor recreation. While 14.3% of U.S citizens identify as Black, annual participation data consistently report Black Americans amongst the smallest demographic represented (U.S. Census Bureau & Outdoor Participation Report, 2014). Presumptive explanations of this trend often reflect the belief that people of color do not participate in outdoor recreation solely because there are limited opportunities and/or

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<sup>3</sup> Epistemic devices refer to the ways people “construct[s] and legitimize[s] knowledge and knowers and the relationship between them” (Vorster & Quinn, 2012, p 72)

limited financial resources for them to do so (Floyd, Shiness, McGuire, & Noe, 1994; Ghimire, et al, 2014). However, Finney (2014) asserts that spaces *believed* to be inclusive within the U.S. democratic system often operate in social conditions that support the exclusion of people of color.

This thesis therefore asks whether there are relationships between the socio-historical development of outdoor recreational spaces, existing environmental habitus and African American lived experiences of outdoor recreation? In order to engage with the social complexity of this focal question, two sub-questions have emerged from the review of literature;

- i) Is outdoor recreation constructed as a ‘white activity’ within African-American communities? If so, how?
- ii) Are racialized constructs influencing the quantity and *quality* of African-American participation in outdoor recreation? If so, how?

## **Summary**

Despite an aggregate increase in outdoor recreation participation, studies are continuously highlighting the lack of diversity within the industry (Dwyer & Huitchison, 1990; Floyd et al, 1994; Johnson, 1998; Virden & Walker, 1999; Glave & Stoll, 2006; Finney, 2014; Child et al, 2015). Given its homogeneity, implicit assumptions are often made about the alignment of ethnic minorities’ needs and values with dominant White definitions, policies and practices. Such assumptions are problematic since they overlook the possibility of complex racial differences. Where ethnic minorities’ epistemic devices do not mirror those in the hegemonic system, they may be dismissed as ‘uninterested’ and

subject to further exclusionary practices. Indeed, Robert Stanton, the first African American director of the National Park Service noted

If you say over and over again that black folks don't like parks because they're not in the parks, the park service people begin to believe that and the black people begin to believe it themselves... It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, to a lot of people's satisfaction, quite candidly (as cited in Finney, 2014 p. 101-102)

Scholars have called for applied examinations of “the changing needs and values of an increasingly multicultural citizenry” to ensure that public land managers’ can “work toward a fuller understanding of those needs and values” and develop inclusive policies and practices (Driver, Dustin, Baltic, Elsner & Peterson, 1996, p. 5). It is the intention of this thesis to contribute to the body of knowledge dedicated to this endeavor. It is hoped that the findings discussed herein will be used to develop transformative policies and practices that reflect the needs and values of all peoples.



## **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

This review of literature begins with a brief examination of racial terminology, then introduces the three models used in existing research to make sense of racial disparities in outdoor recreation participation. It offers an alternative framework to explore African-American's lived experiences of outdoor recreation, by utilizing a Figural approach. This framework gives primacy to the long-term social processes and webs of power that underpin all human behaviors, values, knowledge and attitudes (van Krieken, 1998). This chapter concludes with an overview of the sociogenesis of contemporary U.S. human-race-environmental relations.

### **Race**

Race Formation theorists highlight the “continuous temptation to think of race as an essence, as something fixed, concrete, and objective” within mainstream society (Omi & Winant, 1994, p 59). They also note a pervasive, yet contradictory tendency amongst scholars to see race as an artificial construct, existing only in ideological forms. Omi & Winant (1994) argue that both positions fail to capture the “unstable and de-centered complex[ities] of social meanings” and the political, economic and social power relations contributing to these changes. The modern practice of conflating race and ethnicity further complicate matters, since ethnicity refers to “a subjective sense of belonging” grounded in “social meaning -past, present and future” (Romanucci & De Vos, 1995, p 25). Given these observations, I approach race as a dynamic concept that “signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies”

(Omi & Winant, 1994. p.55). This definition recognizes the role played by biological indicators (e.g. differentiated phenotypes), self-identification *and* socio-historical conditions, in forming ‘racial’ groups. As noted on page 4, racialized labels of “White”/“Caucasian” and “Black/African American/People of Color” will be used interchangeably in accordance with the source literature and participants’ interview data.

### **Theoretical Models of Human-Environment Relations**

Early studies (Saegert & Winkel, 1990; Williams & Patterson, 1996) describe three different models used to examine human-environment relations:

- a) The adaptive model: An evolutionary approach that believes biological and psychological drives to survive provoke behavior
- b) The opportunity structure/goal directed model: A psychological approach that categorizes the connection between the behaviors of goal directed activities and the environment, and,
- c) The sociocultural model: A sociological approach that draws attention to the development of meanings connected to the environment

Each model presents the environment and human-environmental interactions differently. Within the adaptive model, the environment is classified simply by the physical qualities with which humans interact. Comparatively, the opportunity model understands the environment as the temporal and spatial structure of land uses, services and facilities (e.g. classified based on the presence or absence of setting characteristics) (Viriden & Walker, 1999). Finally the sociocultural model classifies the environment as “a socially/culturally defined setting and system”, thus recognizing individuals’ capacity to define the environment based on their cultural values, rituals and history (Saegert &

Winkel, 1990, pg. 444). While all three models have relative strengths and deficiencies (see figure 1), this thesis operates within the basic assumptions of the sociocultural model.

Figure 1: Strengths & Deficiencies Human-Environmental Theoretical Models

<b>Model</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Deficiencies</b>
<b>Adaptive</b>	Emphases on highly valued results such as health and well-being, an understanding of the environment with human needs, and the real and perceived control mechanisms for effective coping.	Treats people as biological and psychological individuals and the environment as naturally given. (i.e., meaning is created at the biological level as a foreseeable response to features of the environment.
<b>Opportunity structure /goal-directed</b>	Provides ways to integrate non market values into traditional economic analyses of policy alternatives.	Often makes vague assumptions, provides limited understanding of the socioeconomic and sociocultural (i.e. class and race) forces and reduces environmental meanings to behavioral utilities and generally ignores symbolic meaning
<b>Sociocultural</b>	Recognizes that environmental meanings extend beyond biological rules and individual goal-orientated constructions, and includes the ways they are socially constructed	Doesn't focus on psychology and goals of the individual and generalizes over a social community.

Locating this thesis within the sociocultural model is motivated by the importance it places on processes of social construction. Rather than viewing individuals as autonomous beings driven by survival needs or project goals, the sociocultural model presents people as social agents who construct meanings of the environment (Williams & Patterson, 1995). This model also acknowledges that “meanings are not just constructed. They are also given by culture and social structure within which the person operates”

(Saegert & Winkel, 1990,pg. 458). Giving due attention to the role of individual agency *and* sets of shared characteristics within groups of common backgrounds and experiences, the sociocultural model permits such meanings to be operationalized on several levels. At a minimum, the intersection of meanings on a personal, communal and historical level.

### **Sociocultural Approaches to the Human-Race-Environment Nexus**

Several sociocultural frameworks have been used to explore human-race-environment relations. With demographic statistics indicating lower outdoor recreation participation rates amongst minority groups, two hypotheses have emerged to help explain such trends (Washburne, 1978; Klobus-Edwards, 1981). The first of these, the *marginality hypothesis* suggests that the social status of minority groups contributes to their under-representation in the outdoor recreation industry. Historically speaking, ethnic minority groups have had limited and restricted access to education, financial income and major socio-political institutions (Floyd et al. 1994; Ghimire et al, 2014). According to the marginality hypothesis, this limited access has negatively impacted minorities' lifestyle, reflecting their reduced participation in outdoor recreation. Recognized advocates of the marginality hypothesis found observable socioeconomic differences with regards to Black Americans' participation in various outdoor activities (Washburne, 1978; Woodard,1988). Woodard (1988), in particular, claimed that social class was *very clearly* a determinant of participation in recreation activities. He asserted that Black Americans who lived in families with two or more full-time employed members were more likely to participate in these activities *and* that middle class Black Americans were likely

to be more aware of alternative leisure pursuits (i.e. outdoor recreation) than those of lower socioeconomic status.

While Washburne (1978) concluded that Black Americans reduced participation in recreational activities was due to poverty and various consequences of socioeconomic discrimination, he could not definitively attribute these trends to socioeconomic factors. He also supported the second of the hypothesis as a mechanism for understanding these trends. Indeed, Washburne (1978) believed that differing ethnic cultural values towards outdoor recreation (ethnicity hypothesis) were a result of the marginalization (marginality hypothesis) these groups have historically received. The *ethnicity hypothesis* posits that under-participation reflects the different values and cultural meanings ethnic minorities have towards outdoor recreation (Washburne, 1978; Ghimire et al., 2014). Klobus-Edwards (1981) provided supporting empirical evidence for the ethnicity hypothesis. His investigation into leisure tendencies concluded that values motivating leisure choices varied among racial groups. These subcultural variations in leisure were observed in white-American favoring of skill classes and organized outdoor activities; whereas, black-Americans preferred physical conditioning and dance instruction. While this thesis has no intention of seeking a definitive and single hypothesis to explain lower participation rates amongst ethnic minority groups, it is important to remain cognizant of heterogeneous ethnic minority values, ideologies and practices *and* the history of marginality that such groups have endured. It is with this understanding that I have turned to figurational theory to construct my theoretical framework.

### **Moving Towards the Integration of Figuration-Race Formation Theories**

Stemming from the pioneering work of Norbert Elias, four principles guide a figuration approach. These can be summarized as:

- i) Human beings are interdependent
- ii) Our lives develop in the webs of interdependence (figurations) that we form
- iii) These figurations are repetitively in a state of unrest, experiencing changes of different remits
- iv) The long term development of figurations has been, and continues to be, largely unintended and unanticipated

Each principle carry specific implications for the ways I approach my research questions. From a figuration perspective, individuals do not possess a wholly autonomous identity. Instead, this theory understands humans to be interdependent, and only exist in and through relationship with others (van Krieken, 1998). We exist within complex, global webs of interdependence (figurations), through which power is distributed. It is through these figuration power relations that the mechanics and structures of oppression are created, maintained and sustained over time. Thus, these dynamic figurations act to both constrain *and* enable the actions of its individual members (Elias, 1970).

The concept of figuration power dynamics helps provide a foundation to better understand the process of oppression, in which:

one, or more, identifiable segments of the population in a social system systematically and successfully act over a prolonged period of time to prevent another identifiable segment, or segments, of the population from attaining access to the scarce and valued resources of that system (Turner, Singleton, Musick, 1984, p. 1-2).

From a figurational perspective, prejudice, discrimination, racism and bigotry are interwoven properties of oppressive figurations. Individually they present necessary but *insufficient*, insight into the complexities of racial power relations.

Recognition of the long-term processual development of (racial) figurational power relations illuminates the similarly long-term development of collective memories (Finney, 2014). Regardless of how African Americans independently define themselves, the struggle to overcome systematic racism distinguishes a larger historical commonality amongst African American Communities (Finney, 2014). Collective memory explores how members of a social group retain, alter or re-create the historical past (Coser, 1992; Motley, Henderson, & Baker, 2003). From an Elisian perspective, this social phenomena is conceptualized as “habitus” (Van Krieken, 1998). Similar to collective memory, habitus refers to “the durable and generalized disposition that suffuses a person's action throughout an entire domain of life or, in the extreme instance, throughout all of life-in which case the term comes to mean the whole manner, turn, cast, or mold of the personality” (Camic, 1986, p. 1055). Thus, rather than habitus being individually and intentionally created, we are born into collective memories and social identities inherited from the past (Harro, 2000). Therefore, as members of historical figurations, individuals’ social values, ideologies and behaviors are not exclusively their own. Instead they are cemented by common experiences communities have endured in the past and then become learned and adapted over an individual’s lifetime.

In light of the long-term and often unintended development of individual and collective habitus, the next section of this literature review provides an overview of the sociogenesis of African-American environmental habitus. It is not intended to be an

intricate and comprehensive historical timeline of human-race-environmental relations in the US. Rather it seeks to offer readers the historical context from which contemporary African-American environmental narratives, ideologies and practices have emerged.

### **The Sociogenesis of U.S. Race Relations: Slavery to the Present Day**

U.S. race relations have been extensively examined over the past sixty years. Consequently, a comprehensive analysis of these dynamic power relations can be accessed elsewhere. However, a brief summary of the long-term processes that have given rise to racist, culturally isolating oppressive contemporary figurational relations is warranted. In mapping out U.S. race relations the common starting point is often slavery, a historical era many believe to be the foundation of African-American discrimination (Turner, et.al., 1984). Although the institution of slavery undeniably played a formidable role in historical and contemporary race relations, it is necessary to understand the origins of race identification ideologies. These belief systems fueled the emergence and maintenance of the African slave trade.

The origins of the American racial ideologies can be traced to Elizabethan England, where preconceptions of “blackness” shaped early colonists’ initial perceptions of their African counterparts (Turner, et.al., 1984). During this period, Africans were almost always identified by their ‘black’ complexion, a term, which at that time was associated with evil, danger and repulsion. In comparison, ‘white’ complexions were associated with virtue, beneficence, peace and beauty (Turner, et.al., 1984). This form of Elizabethan ethnocentrism was expressed in multiple ways. For example, there was a tendency to describe African behavior (cultural, sexual, political) as “bestial” with its strong animalistic connotations (Turner, et.al., 1984). The Elizabethan population was introduced to



anthropoid apes and “Negros” at the same time, and in the same place. From their simultaneous exposure to both emerged the belief that “Black” humans were associated with apes on a natural level, a connection that has continued to plague African-Americans (Brave R. & Sylva K. 2007). Given the European heritage of early explorers of “America” and the subsequent colonial settlers, those responsible for the introduction of slavery to U.S. shores were heavily influenced by similar ideologies that presented virtually all African characteristics as threatening, savage, and inferior.

The American slave trade is generally accepted to have begun in 1619, when a Dutch ship brought 20 “negras” to Jamestown, Virginia (Sloan, 1977). By the 1700s various laws and slave codes had stripped these Black individuals of their rights (Sloan, 1977). These codes were epitomized by the 1712 Virginia statute enabling white slave owners to list people as property. The institution of slavery existed in its ‘historical form’ until the mid-1800s, leaving undeniable marks on U.S. race relations.

Abolition was a radical and interracial movement which challenged the social acceptance of human enslavement and highlighted the exploitive problems of racial slavery. Interracial abolitionist movements continued throughout the 1800’s. However, the prevailing ideology of black inferiority remained, both in and outside these campaigns (Manisha, 2016). Thomas Jefferson, one of the most revered men in American history, despised slavery due to its violation of natural law. Yet, he also personally owned slaves, believed that Black Americans were biologically inferior to Whites, and opposed their integration into white society (McGarvie, 1999). Alternate movements directly challenging this biological white superiority myth soon began to materialize. For example, in 1831 Nat Turner led a slave rebellion against his plantation owners, and the surrounding

white families. The rebellion took the lives of 51 white people, Turner was later captured and hung in Jerusalem, Virginia (French, 2004). White leaders also led radical attacks against the institution. In the North, groups like the Anti-Man-Hunting League emerged to prevent Black individuals from being kidnapped and returned to Southern slave owners (Manisha, 2016).

The Civil War era did little to weaken the racialized narrative of Black Americans as inferior, gentle, childlike, lazy, and neither biologically nor intellectually equipped to function within 'white' society (Turner, Singleton, Musick, 1984). The residue of the European "natural prejudice" prompted men to,

despise whoever has been their inferior long after he has become his equal... [In the United States] the abstract and transient fact of slavery is fatally united with the physical and permanent fact of color. The tradition of slavery dishonors the race, and the peculiarity of the race perpetuates the tradition of slavery... You may set the Negro free, but you cannot make him otherwise than an alien to the European (Tocqueville, 1862 cited in Brooks, 1996, p.118).

The end of institutional slavery did little to change the social class and status of Black Americans. Their White counterparts continued to possess the vast majority of the wealth, land, education, social prestige, and political voice (Brooks, 1996). Despite Washington officials' belief that Reconstruction would help liberate the recently freedmen of the South (Berry, 1978), it did not provide the protection needed. Northern forces were initially placed throughout the South to protect the new rights accorded to Black Americans. Yet, in 1877 Northern forces withdrew from the South leaving the recently freedman to fend for themselves against a brutally racist regime. Unsurprisingly, racial tensions between Southern Blacks and Whites worsened, giving rise to arguably the most extreme form of "negrophobia" in American history (Sloan, 1977). Central to which was

the Political persecution enforced by the Federal Government through social and economic segregation.

Racial segregation during the Jim Crow era became the legal means to sustain the subordinate status of African-Americans and maintain White supremacy. African-Americans were forced to live apart from White communities and were denied equal access to public facilities. Courts, Congress, and chief executives led the legalization of formal segregation; with the 1893 Supreme Court supporting the legality of segregated public spaces and refusing to enact legislation to protect Black voting rights (Berry, 1978). In the same year, the Court declared the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional and three years later reinforced the doctrine of 'separate but equal' via their *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling. The ongoing advance of oppressive legislation was rooted in the political disfranchisement of Black Americans. White Southerners understood that if their black neighbors were able to vote, a shift in political power relations could transpire (Berry, 1978). Black voting rights continued to erode and continued disfranchisement ensued through the use of violence, intimidation, and reading/educational requirements. Once African-Americans' complete exclusion from the political system was accomplished, White Supremacy could remain intact. Extreme violence was used to punish those who violated segregation laws. Lynching became the popular remedy for quick "justice" in the South. Despite the illegality of this action, 1,702 African-Americans were lynched by White mobs between 1882-1900 (Tuskegee Institute). Perpetrators were rarely held accountable, circumventing the judicial process with help from local law enforcement.

Simultaneously, scientifically racist theories began to gain credibility within the intellectual community, further compounding oppressive racial power

relations (Hofstadter, 1955). The most notable form of scientific racism, Social Darwinism, applied the Darwinian concept of evolution to the development of societies. In so doing, parallels were drawn between our social and natural worlds. The latter of which is governed by 'survival of the fittest' ideologies. This theory identified certain races (Black) as inferior, less evolved, less human and more apelike than the superior races (white). Indeed, in 1906 Ota Benga, a 23 year old Congolese man, was displayed as a part of the primate exhibition in the Bronx Zoo. The Zoo promoted Ota as the missing link to evolution (Lindfors, 1999). Scientific racism thus provided the intellectual reasoning to practice racial discrimination and oppression of people of color (Feagin, 2000). Social Darwinism informed the growth of eugenics, a scientific approach to selective breeding. To ensure the maintenance of racial purity, American eugenicists believed interracial breeding should be prevented at all costs (Turner et.al., 1984). It was not uncommon for Eugenicists to believe that those from the "lesser" races should be sterilized or excluded from the nation. In 1893, Harvard scientist N.S Shaler, claimed that Black Americans were inferior, uncivilized, and "alien folk" with no place in the political world; he would go on to say that the race would eventually become extinct under the process of natural law (Feagin, 2000).

Social scientists, politicians and intellectuals, implicitly and for many *explicitly*, perpetuated these scientific racist ideals (Feagin, 2000). President Wilson asserted that, "we cannot make a homogeneous population of a people who do not blend with the Caucasian race" (Stoddard, 1912). His successor, President Harding (a former Klu Klux Klansman) similarly rejected the notion of social equality between Blacks and Whites. President Harding cited the influential book, "*The Rising Tide of Color*" as evidence to the

global race problem (Feagin, p. 87; Stoddard, 1921). This work supported ideals of scientific racism, arguing that,

The earth has grown small, and men are everywhere in close touch. If white civilization goes down, the white race is irretrievably ruined. It will be swamped by the triumphant colored races, who will obliterate the white man by elimination or absorption (Stoddard, 1920. p.203).

Presidents Harding and Wilson were not alone in their support of scientific racism. Many other distinguishable politicians, including Theodore Roosevelt and Calvin Coolidge, embraced different forms of the philosophy (Feagin, 2000). The normalization of scientific racism led Congress to pass several discriminating laws including the 1924 Immigration law, restricting almost all non-white immigrants from entering the U.S (Ngai, 1999). In short, scientific racism heavily influenced White America's ethnocentrism. It provided a legitimate platform for re-integration of these ideologies in the national legislative framework and cultural habitus of U.S. society. It remained common to view African-Americans as inferior, uncivilized, unintelligent, and apelike (Feagin, 2000; Finney, 2014). Scientific racism contributed significantly to the severe power imbalance between races at a figurational level.

Although some White skeptics saw past the illogical reasoning of scientific racism, it took the controversial work of anthropologist Franz Boas to challenge its continued acceptance (Farber, 2011). Boas was extremely critical of underlying assumptions of racial inferiority -superiority, positing that scientific race theorists continually failed to produce empirical data due to their inability to detach their personal views of their own culture (Baker, 2010). The years following Boas' groundbreaking work saw a broad, but slow decline of legislative racial prejudice. The 1950's, 60's and 70's were marked by various

sociopolitical movements seeking racial equality. While some in mainstream American have used President Obama's election as evidence of a post-racial America, the impacts of slavery, the Jim Crow era and scientific racism remain prevalent in the US. (Alexander, 2010). Contemporary America is marked by new waves of social protest seeking racial equality. For example, "Black Lives Matter" (BLM) challenges societal 'colorblindness', state violence against people of color and "the ways in which Black lives are deprived of our basic human rights and dignity" (<http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>). Counter-movements, such as "All Lives Matter" demonstrate a national habitus that remains rooted in historical racist ideologies. Such countermovements dismiss the unique lived experiences of people of color and further marginalizes their voices within our national figuration. It is in the context of these long-term processes that this thesis will generate data associated with African-Americans relationship with the natural world. As such, it becomes necessary to consider the interrelated sociogenesis of human-race-*environmental* habitus. It is to this relationship that attention now turns.

### **Sociogenesis of African-Americans Environmental Relations: Slavery to the 1964 Wilderness Act**

To date, it has been common practice within environmental history studies to apply a single (White) national narrative to *all* American citizens (Finney, 2014). Consequently, Whiteness, as a way of knowing, becomes how the environment is represented, interpreted and understood within our current social condition (Finney, 2014). The ideologies of John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt and Henry David Thoreau, along with historical legislation (eg. the Homestead Act of 1862, the establishment of a National Park System, and the 1964 Wilderness Act) have shaped this contemporary understanding of human-environment relations. However, African-American experiences are far more complex than this

contemporary narrative suggests, having been shaped by institutions of slavery, segregation and scientific racism. The combined impact has presented outdoor public areas as contested and often, violent social spaces. Through an examination of these, one can begin to understand that African-Americans have a far more “complicated union with the natural world” compared to European Americans (Outka, 2008).

Enslaved Africans clearly did not arrive in America as “blank slates” in relation to human-environment relations. While the degree to which their former lives shaped their collective habitus remains beyond the scope of this thesis, it can be assumed that their previous societal views, rituals and African heritage influenced their perception of the earth (Finney, 2014; Beier, 1966). The first experience many African-Americans had with the environment on American soil was through slavery, where they were forced to cultivate the White man’s farmland. At odds with their former lives, these experiences laid the foundation for complicated relationships with the natural world in America. Slavery rendered African-Americans practically invisible, conceived solely as an exploitable human resource for the American slaveholder (Glave & Stoll, 2005). While historical accounts show African-American slaves becoming skillful hunters, their experiences were reflective of the intense work they would perform for their master, acting as the hauler, tracker, cleaner and cook. After the slave holder would shoot the wild game, the slave would perform the dirty work, cleaning and skinning the animal (Glave & Stoll, 2005). However enslaved Africans connected with the environment, it was always shadowed by the realization that they lacked ownership of the land.

In many ways, African-American slaves built an extreme awareness of the natural world. Some used the forests as a religious escape, congregating in the woods to practice

their form of Christianity (see Raboteau, 2004). Nonetheless a dark side to this environmental relationship existed, as slaves risked severe consequences for assembling in secluded “steal away” spaces (Raboteau, 2004, p 213). For example, Moses Grandy, a former slave recalled his brother-in-law, a ‘slave’ preacher, being flogged with his back pickled for preaching at a service in the woods. After the preacher had been beaten, his congregation received additional lashings (Raboteau, 2004). Thus, woods became a place for religious freedom *and* a space which likely initiated brutal punishment.

Conversely, European colonialists were experiencing very different environmental relationships. Many were settling land on the east coast or heading west to acquire land through the 1862 Homestead Act (Finney, 2014; Anderson, 2011). The difficulties of settling land were often arduous and isolating work. However the difference between possessing your own land, and working and living on land belonging to someone else precipitates:

a trajectory of ‘black’ experience and ‘white’ experience, that would come to define natural resource practices for African-Americans in very specific ways (Finney, 2014 p. 35-36)

Westward expansion and the Homestead Act triggered a key moment in White-environment relations, since the natural world symbolized opportunity for many white families. On the contrary this right was not extended to Black Americans bound as they were by slavery. The introduction of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment in 1865 formally abolished slavery throughout the country. Black and White Americans alike were beginning to claim individual stakes of land. The establishment of the 1865 Freedmen’s Bureau, provided order for the four million freedmen in the war torn South (Abbott, 1956). Land ownership came to embody and represent Black Americans' ideals of freedom. As a Northern reporter



noted, the "sole ambition" of the freedman was "to become the owner of a little piece of land, there to erect an humble home, and to dwell in peace and security at his own free will and pleasure" (Abbott, 1956, p.151). Several freedmen did receive land confiscated from Southern families. However, the recently pardoned Southern land-owners feared the African-Americans accumulation of wealth and placed pressure on Congress to recall the portion of the Act reassigning land to former slaves. President Andrew Johnson ordered all land titles be withdrawn from former slaves and returned to the White owners (Abbott, 1956). Consequently the freedmen and women were forced off their newly acquired land and it was reclaimed by the same white families that had held generations of African-Americans in bondage. The significance of the reversal of the Freedman's Bureau Act cannot be downplayed as it represented further discrimination within human-race-environment relations.

Movement into the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries represent a significant era in U.S. environmental history. John Muir began a series of lectures regarding the importance of maintaining pristine wilderness areas, eventually gaining the attention of President Roosevelt (aka. the 'conservationist president') (Kohrs, 2015). During Roosevelt's administration, 205 million acres of public land was established; including 150 million acres of National Forests, and five new National Park sites (Crater Lake, Wind Cave, Sullys Hill, Platt National Park and Mesa Verde). His administration subsequently created the United States Forest Service and added land to Yosemite National Park (nps.gov). As innovative and iconic as these men were, their historical achievements remained shadowed by peoples of color continued exclusion from the newly founded democratic principle of public land (Finney, 2014). The Jim Crow era restricted people of color's access to public

facilities and either denied or gave African-Americans limited access to National Park system (Shumaker, 2005). Shenandoah National Park was a popular destination for African-Americans, with approximately 10,000 visiting the park between 1938-1940 (Shumaker, 2005). These high visitation rates led park officials to determine the need for separate facilities for African-American visitors (Burns).

Simultaneously African-Americans were experiencing further systematic racism through normative racist behavior. For example, in Chicago the majority of Black residents were living in the highly congested South side. Filled with packinghouses, steel mills, and factories, this section of the city was far from a pristine habitat. Many residents lived in decrepit wooden multi-family tenements whose backyards and allies were often infested with garbage and waste (Fisher, 2006). Due to these unhealthy living environments, many black Chicagoans saw outdoor recreation as an essential escape (Fisher, 2006). In the early 1900s Dr. Williams, an African-American physician echoed the views of many White environmentalist in his weekly health column, when he urged readers to,

get close with nature... to get far away from the heat, the dust, the hurry, the bustling marts, and streets of the overcrowded, jostling municipality and find some cool, shady spot to camp where one may find rest for mind and body with nature's purest food, water and air (Fisher, 2006, p. 69)

Despite Dr. Williams' call, the inaccessibility of natural landscapes posed a barrier for African-American communities. Highlighted by the Chicago race riot of 1919, normative racist behavior restricted African-American access to certain outdoor spaces. The riot began when a group of south-side African-American boys launched a raft made of railroad ties into Lake Michigan. The boys floated over an informally segregated beach, where a white male saw them approaching. The man began to throw rocks at the boys, until one of

the rocks struck a 14 year old Eugene Williams in the head (Fisher, 2006). Williams was knocked unconscious, slipped beneath the water and drowned. The remaining boys returned to shore and alerted a black police officer. However, a white police officer prevented the perpetrators' arrest. A predominately African-American crowd began to gather and tensions escalated. As police moved to arrest one Black citizen, the other members of the crowd began throwing rocks, and a pistol was fired towards the officers. The ensuing riot killed 38 people, injured 537 and left 1,000 homeless (Fisher, 2006).

It would be easy to assume that the rise of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960's immediately resulted in increased access of African-American to public lands. However, normative ideologies remained. Three years prior to Dr. King's iconic 'I have a dream' speech, a white professor attempted to plan a vacation to a Canadian National Park for his and Dr King's families. Before their departure, the professor notified the chalet company of the racial profile of their group. Due to the number of American clients and the perceived embarrassment to their business, the company informed the professor that Dr King's family was not welcome at their resort (Finney, 2014). However, four years later, two of the most iconic pieces of legislation would pass through Congress; the Wilderness and Civil Rights Acts of 1964. Each bill has constructed how we culturally label, and confront issues relating to race and the environment. The very existence of both Acts emphasized the historical struggle in defining human-race-environmental relationships within the U.S. (Finney, 2014). Informed by Muir's philosophies, the Wilderness act provided a legal definition of *wilderness* and solidified the protection of such spaces. In short, the purpose of the Act is to,

assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness (Wilderness Act, 1964)

While the Wilderness Act ensured the “benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness”, the Civil Rights Act concentrated on the domestic well-being of African-Americans. The Act was established to protect the constitutional rights of African-American. Specifically, it sought to:

enforce the constitutional right to vote, to confer jurisdiction upon the district courts of the United States to provide injunctive relief against discrimination in public accommodations, to authorize the attorney General to institute suits to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education, to extend the Commission on Civil Rights, to prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs, to establish a Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity, and for other purposes (Civil Rights Act, 1964).

The simultaneous passing of both Acts highlights a pervasive disconnect between race and the environment (Finney, 2014). The Wilderness Act made several underlying assumptions in regards to access, ignoring systematic policies which restricted “all men” from participating in wilderness recreation. And although access to public lands can be interpreted as a constitutional right, it is worth noting that the Civil Rights Act excluded any discussion on *access* to natural resources (Finney, 2014). Historians argue that each bill focused on existing concerns (wilderness conservation and civil liberties) and could not be expected tackle *both* complicated issues at the same time. Nonetheless, the language of both Acts reflect the on-going detachment of African-Americans from outdoor spaces. Recognition of Slavery, the Freedmen’s Bureau, Segregation, the 1964 Wilderness & Civil

Rights Acts and modern policing of outdoor spaces provides an insight into the social conditions shaping contemporary African-American environmental habitus.

### **Summary**

As noted previously, scholars conclude that ethnicity and race continue to influence meanings and attitudes attached to environmental settings. Dwyer and Hutchison (1990) found that African-Americans (53%) favored developed and urban facilities more than whites (24%). While White-Americans (57%) favored preserved natural areas more than their African-American counterparts (27%). Similarly, Wallace and Witter (1992) found that Black-Americans preferred recreational sites with well-lit and well supervised facilities. Such preferences may be grounded in racial *perceptions* of outdoor spaces. White participants in Virden and Walker's (1999) study tended to identify forest environments as "pleasing and safe", whereas Black participants considered forest environments to be "threatening and annoying" (Virden & Walker, 1999). Correspondingly, white participants ranked mountainous scenes and waterfall scenes as more appealing than Black participants.

These perceptions are reflected in ethnic minorities' participation in outdoor recreation activities. Quantitative studies have consistently demonstrated low participation rates amongst these groups (Washburne, 1978; Washburne & Wall, 1980; Dwyer & Hutchison, 1990; Floyd & Shiner, 1994; Floyd, Outle, Bixler, & Hammitt, 1995; Johnson, 1998; Virden & Walker, 1999) and suggest that ethnic minorities groups perceive more constraints (e.g. time, money, personal safety, language and transport) to outdoor recreation than their fellow White citizens (Ghimire, et al, 2014). While these studies

acknowledge the different participation rates and perceptions of outdoor spaces, few have examined *how* these differences have come to be. Indeed, as early as 1978, scholars have called for “more qualitative approaches” to sensitize research “to the life circumstances of individuals and the social organization within minority communities” (Washburne, 1978, pg. 186). Others posit that “the general lack of understanding of environmental meaning and preference associated with different ethnicity/race and gender groups suggests a need for additional qualitative research in the area” (Virden & Walker, 1999, p 237). The slow response to this call motivated the use of qualitative methodology to explore *how* epistemic devices evident in African-American communities shape, and are shaped by, people’s lived experiences of outdoor recreation.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

With the hope of presenting a greater understanding of African Americans meanings, attitudes and values of outdoor recreation, this study utilized a qualitative cross-sectional methodological approach. The following chapter presents the theoretical framework, sampling technique, research procedures and tools, ethical concerns and data analysis technique.

#### **Methodological Principles**

Sociological theories provide the guiding principles for studying the social world (Maguire, 1988). As noted on page 9, a core sensitizing concept of figurational theory is the recognition of humans as interdependent beings whose lives develop through the sociohistorical figurations they form. Responding to the long-term figurational developments requires a methodological approach that is informed by the sociogenesis of contemporary human relations. As such, an analysis of the historical oppression African Americans have endured, and its impact on the collected habitus of these communities was a central component of Chapter Two.

Similarly, responding to the interdependency of human relations necessitates the use of data collection tools that account for multiple realities. Existing studies (Washburne, 1978; Klobus-Edwards, 1981; Virden & Walker, 1999) have relied primarily on survey methods to gather data on African American perceptions of outdoor recreation. In so doing, these studies have provided valuable descriptive quantitative information regarding trends in African American attitudes and perceptions. However,

this form of data has done little to advance the knowledge of *how* or *why* these trends have come to be. Furthermore, quantitative surveys restrict the unique voice of each participant, reducing their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes to predefined categories. Comparatively, qualitative methods provide a more descriptive, detailed and democratic approach to collecting and analyzing data (Atkinson, 2012). Interviews and focus groups offer participants the capacity to explore their lived experiences and present them in their own terms (Atkinson, 2012). This feature is particularly relevant here, given desire to examine deeply rooted social complexities, such as the under-representation and under-participation of African Americans in outdoor recreation.

### **Reflexivity: Taking a Detour Via Detachment**

Reflexivity is a crucial component in relation to social scientific research, where researchers themselves are products of the social worlds they are investigating (Maguire, 1988). Emirbayer (2012) defines reflexivity as “the exercise of recognizing how aspects of one’s identity or social location can affect one’s vision of the social world” (pg.577). Thus, the role of self and subjectivity *within* the research process must be placed under critical and explicit scrutiny (Bloyce, 2004). Figural theory offers the concept of involvement-detachment to assist in this process, whereby researchers identify their emotional attachment to the research topic as critically as possible and “attempt to detach oneself *as far as is possible* from one’s values” during all stages of the research process (Elias, 1956, 1987, p.xxi-xxii). Figural researchers assert that relative detachment is a prerequisite of quality research since it minimizes the encroachment of emotional evaluations, personal ideologies and the short-term interests of particular groups into the research process. Bloyce (2004) suggests that, “being aware” of this need is “specifically, enough to sensitize the researcher” (p. 150).



However, I argue that this awareness is simply the first step in the complex “detour via detachment” process. What must follow is an intentional examination and transparent account of the emotional evaluations, personal ideologies and the short-term interests of particular groups that *are* present in each research study. It is only through this intentional examination that researchers are able to identify *what* they are attempting to detach from. In keeping with this observation, it is necessary for me to consider my positionality within outdoor recreation figurations.

In the first instance, the decision to explore African American outdoor recreational preferences stems from my professional and personal attachment to the field. With 5 years of professional outdoor recreation experience, my personal values are heavily influenced by a love and connection to the natural world. Through these experiences I have witnessed the lack of diversity that persists within the industry. The lack of diversity led me to Graduate school with the intent to understand the ‘whitewashing’ of the outdoor recreation industry. These experiences have undeniably influenced my personal values and perceptions regarding the research topic, as I have a biased interpretation of what I believe outdoor recreation to be.

Of equal importance is an acknowledgement of my various identities and the role these will play with various stages of the research process. My interactions with my participants did not, and cannot, occur separately and distinct from long-term identity politics and power relations of our figurations. To engage in this research study without acknowledging the implications of my identity as a White man would be a fundamental threat to the veracity of my findings. As with all research, the inherent power imbalances within researcher-researched relations exists in this study. These power imbalances are

both the racial identities of myself and my participants *and* the historical foundations of these race relations. It is therefore possible, that unspoken barriers between myself and the participants emerged throughout the interviews. For the most part, the participants and I had positive interactions. There were however occasions in which I felt that the participants were hesitant to answer questions, for fear of answering it wrong. Such barriers could have contributed to a dissolution of trust within our interactions, jeopardizing both the quality and quantity of any data generated (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). That being said, in the moments where I sensed this, I would quickly attempt to ensure the value of their personal answer. Equally I, by default, interpreted these experiences through a White lens, and cannot speak for the participants experiences. However, there were explicit attempts to identify and react in a meaningful and intentional manner.

In light of this, it becomes clear that researcher reflexivity can at best be understood as a *dimension*, but not the entirety, of the “detour via detachment” process. Researcher reflexivity must then inform methodological choices *and* continue on through the data collection and analysis processes. With respect to the former, explicit attempts were undertaken to mitigate the racial power imbalances within the researcher-researched relationship (Maguire, 1988). For example, each interviewee was given as much time as needed to explain themselves. I strategically attempted to never interrupt or distract the participant from their thought. Furthermore, the attempt was made to display positive body language and eye contact, with the intention that the interviewee felt respected and valued at all times. These methods, although minimum, had a visible effect on the interviewees, as many times the interviews would begin with a tense feeling but would quickly progress into a relaxed conversation feeling. On the other hand, I am not naive in believing these

methods alone were a solution for erasing hundreds of years of power imbalance. Rather, I am acknowledging that an awareness to these historical power imbalances was at the forefront of my mind and influenced the manner in which I conducted interviews.

Similarly, the data analysis process must involve “a constant interplay between mental operations directed at theoretical synthesis and at empirical particulars” (Maguire, 1988, p 189). This interplay helps filter emotional evaluations and personal ideologies from the analytical process, in so much as is possible. It brings a two-way dialogue between theory and evidence to the forefront, rather than a one-way conversation between the evidence and researcher. While figurational theorists have yet to offer definitive and specific ways to complete these final steps in the “detour via detachment” process, the following research design is sensitive to these ideas.

### **Research Design**

Scholars have a range of research designs available to them; with the selection process determined by the demands of the research question and the theoretical framework employed (Gratton & Jones, 2010). With figurational principals in mind, three design options were considered for this study,

- i) longitudinal design, which best enables the exploration of habitus development over time,
- ii) ethnographic design, which best accounts for the slippage between what people say they do and how they *actually* behave (Atkinson,2010),
- iii) cross—sectional design, which best accounts for time and resource limitations.

Given the limitations of a master’s thesis, longitudinal and ethnographic designs were rejected as viable choices. Gathering data from every member of my research

population (African-American millennials in Stockton, California) was clearly impractical. Therefore a traditional cross-sectional approach was employed.

### **Research Tools**

Similarly, several data collection tools are available to researchers (Gratton & Jones, 2010). For this study, qualitative methods (e.g. interviews) presented the most appropriate option, as interviews enable researchers to explore the “knowledge of how human beings assign meaning to their thoughts and actions within cultural contexts” (Atkinson, 2012, p. 122.) Specifically, semi-structured interviews were selected for four primary reasons. First, they allowed the participant to reveal much more about the meanings they attach to the experiences they have had, thus providing a richer account of their experiences. Second, this interview style facilitates more authentic interviewer-interviewee connections than traditional structured interviews (Atkinson, 2012). The authenticity of the interviewer-interviewee relationship typically helps establish rapport within the relationship and foster a desire to *understand*, rather than *explain* the problem at hand (Fontana & Frey, 1996). Third, semi-structured interviews provided a degree of order to the conversation, while simultaneously presenting opportunities for the interviewer and interviewee to deviate from the discussion (Atkinson, 2010). Such deviations enabled the participants to freely express relevant information regarding their lived realities. Finally, this approach enhanced participants’ capacity to use their own epistemic framework and terminology in their responses, rather than those imposed by the researcher (Atkinson, 2012). This structure will be used to ensure important and relevant information is collected, while also allowing the participants an opportunity to speak freely of their lived experiences and thoughts (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Such autonomy facilitated efforts to place the voice of the participants first, the study second, and the voice

of myself last. Although difficult to do, attempts were made to understand the multifaceted behavior of African Americans without imposing any preconceived academic categorizations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). A key element for maintaining this balance was keeping the researcher's voice out of the conversation during interviews, ensuring that my point of view did not influence the participant's thoughts (Fontane & Frey, 1996).

The use of semi-structured interviews also presented several challenges to the “detour via detachment” process. In context of my Whiteness, I attempted to remain sensitive and conscious of other contributing factors that may influence the trustworthiness of the interview process. This included the way I presented myself, the verbal and nonverbal language I used during interviews, the setting of the interview and how I introduced the study. Although small details, these decisions remain rather important, because once the interviewer's presentation of self is cast, it undeniably leaves an impression on the participants (Fontana & Frey, 1996).

### **Population, Sample and Sampling Technique**

The population of interest was African-American millennials over the age of 18 in Stockton, California. This population was chosen for the following reasons:

- i) the ability to explore contemporary cultural perceptions and consequently, future trends the industry may encounter.
- ii) access to a network of community based organizations who serve the research population, therefore facilitating access to participants via existing relationships.

Purposive, snowball sampling was used to select a cross-section of the population. This sampling frame was chosen because it can help identify members of the population that are open, willing to talk and trustworthy. Given the sensitivity around the research question and the racial dynamics within the interview setting, gatekeepers provided a

practical way of recruiting participants that may have been hard to reach otherwise. Key gatekeepers were identified at each organization to facilitate access to African American community members. Each were strategically identified based on their cultural knowledge and position within the community (see Table 1).

Table 1: List of Gatekeepers used to identify possible participants

<u>Local Non-Government organizations (NGO)</u>	<u>Religious Organizations</u>	<u>High Schools, Government agencies and health care providers</u>
RESTORE Stockton: Emma Schyberg (Project YES! Community advocate & RESTORE community outreach coordinator	Stockton Black Ministry community Ben Saffold (Project YES! Community Advocate & Active man of faith in Stockton)	Franklin, Edison & Stagg High Schools: Presidents of respective Black Student Groups
Puentes: Susan Moro Lokyo (Chairwoman)		Weber Institute & Health Careers Academy: Constance Starner (Project YES! Community advocate & Weber Faculty Traci Miller (HCA Principal)
Teen Impact Center: Jonathan Ramirez (Project YES! Community advocate & Director of the TIC)		Stribley, McKinley & Oak Park Recreation Centers
Boys & Men of Color: Stockton Chapter Michael Tubbs (Mayor of Stockton)		
Fathers & Families of San Joaquin: Sammy Nunez (Project YES! Community advocate & Executive Director)		

Given the time and resources limitations of this study, a minimum sample of size of 12 participants has been set.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Given the research involved human beings, every precaution was taken to avoid any emotional, physical or mental harm (ASA Code of Ethics, 1999). Prior to the start of data collection, the researcher completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) required for social and behavioral research investigators and IRB approval was obtained. The use of interviews to generate data presented several generic ethical considerations. The first related to informed consent. Once contact was made with each participant, they were presented with an informed consent document (see Appendix A). This document contained descriptive information about the study and a request for certain demographic data, including age, gender and socio-economic indicators. The return of a signed copy was required before data collection proceeded.

Secondly, all appropriate measures were taken to protect participant's identities. Each individual selected their own personal pseudonym to maintain their anonymity. Choosing their own pseudonyms offered an opportunity of empowerment for the participants. This was a strategic decision, as the researcher acknowledged the historical trauma associated with White males assigning names to young African Americans (Finney, 2014; Johnson, 1998; Raboteau, 2004). Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim using the assigned pseudonyms.

Furthermore, confidentiality was guaranteed for the participants, unless certain information was shared. No harmful information was shared, (e.g. self-inflicted harm or family abuse) during the course of the interviews. Since no issues of personal safety arose, the participants maintained guaranteed confidentiality.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The interviews took place in locations of the participants choosing, which included a popular coffee shop, a book store and a student center. This strategy contributed to the participants' comfort and sense of empowerment during the interview. Interview lengths was determined by each participant's schedule, with a goal of 1-hour total interview time per participant. However, some interviews went past an hour, with the longest interview lasting 1 hour and 48 minutes. The interview schedule (see appendix B) was organized around 3 themes that explore: 1) personal attitudes/perception of outdoor recreation and outdoor spaces; 2) lived experiences of outdoor recreation and outdoor spaces; and 3) challenges and opportunities for outdoor recreation participation. As noted above, each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. A copy of the transcript was sent to the interviewee for a member check since it was crucial that the participant's words, feelings, thoughts, and experiences were accurately captured before data analysis. In doing so, no edits were collected from the participants.

### **Analytical Techniques**

The analytical framework used to make sense of the data was grounded in the figurational principles described in section 3.1. The act of being intellectually nimble, moving both from theory to evidence, was at the forefront of qualitative-coding process (Maguire, 1988; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The raw data was initially coded through the lens of figurational theory. During which time connections to the research question and the significant figurational concepts (see Chapter Two) were highlighted. In order to avoid retreating to the present, placing of words, feelings, experiences in historical context, not Chapter 2 as a stand-alone review of literature, directly informed the analysis process. Once saturation was reached, the open codes were organized into distinct themes and subjected



to further theoretical analysis. At this stage saturation was reached when a coherent theoretical narrative emerged and could be discussed by the researcher (Carl & Silverstein, 2003).

To avoid misinterpretation, intercoder reliability was established through feedback from all members of the thesis committee. A racially diverse committee was intentionally selected to ensure that interpretations are reviewed by a variety of social perspectives. A second member check was completed at the conclusion of Chapter Four. The participants' approval played a key role, as findings were verified by participants in order to maintain their empowerment throughout the entirety of the study, considering they possess the truths regarding their realities (Sparks & Smith, 2014).

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

As established, this study sought to gain deeper understanding of African Americans' meanings, attitudes, values, and lived experiences of outdoor recreation. The goal of this study was to have African Americans speak for themselves regarding their perceptions, values, and lived experiences within outdoor spaces. For purposes of clarity, I am presenting the findings (the thematic coding of the participants' narratives) and the discussion (the sociological analysis of these themes) as separate chapters. The decision to do so was intentional and strategic, to reflect the values of this study that people of color should guide the academic discussion around building more inclusive outdoor spaces in the United States.

The twelve interviewees provided rich, substantive data with three overarching themes emerging from their narratives. These can be summarized as,

- i) typology and the definition of outdoor recreation
- ii) outdoor spaces being labeled as White spaces,
- iii) the role habitus/collective memory played in their outdoor experience.

Each is described through the voices of the participants.

### **Typology of Outdoor Recreation**

The term 'outdoor recreation' is oftentimes used to describe activities or leisure pursuits that are practiced in outdoor settings. These activities can vary depending on one's self interests, however several factors (media, marketing, outdoor recreation industry, government agencies, etc.) have caused the term has become synonymous with

activities like hiking, backpacking, camping, fishing, canoeing, caving, rock climbing, mountaineering, skiing, snowboarding and whitewater rafting. For example, when Googling ‘outdoor recreation’, the images<sup>4</sup> generated are overwhelmingly of individuals participating in such activities.

Furthermore, as mentioned above (section 1) several other studies have indicated that White participation is significantly higher than African American participation in the above mentioned activities. Theoretically, these studies imply that the outdoor recreation configuration is sustained and controlled from a White perspective. Consequently, the term outdoor recreation, and its definition, is therefore, theoretically based off White understandings of the word. This suggests that the terminology itself is being defined by a White understanding of the word.

Curious about this notion, the decision was made to start every interview with the same question, “*When I say the word ‘outdoor recreation’ what comes to your mind, what are your general thoughts, or how do you define that idea*”? As a White male, I have an understanding of what that word means to me, and to confront my personal bias I should acknowledge that I had a slight expectation that the participants would mention activities that aligned with the traditional definition of outdoor recreation. However, eleven participants (91.6%) defined outdoor recreation outside of the White/traditional interpretation of the word. Which, to refresh is defined as “organized free-time activities that are participated in for their own sake and where there is an interaction between the participant and the environment” (Ibrahim & Cordes, 2002, pg. 5). It should be noted that the term “traditional” can be problematic, as it implies a sense of legitimacy. However

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<sup>4</sup> Of the first 100 images that appear in the Google search, only 2 images include people of color.

within this analysis, the term is being used to represent the longevity of the Whitewashed industry. The definition above mentions “an interaction between the participant and the environment”. The dominant view within the outdoor recreation industry is that “outdoor recreation” refers to specific outdoor recreation activities. Due to this fact, the term “traditional” will be used to refer to the current industry’s interpretation. On the other hand, the typology this group of African Americans associated with outdoor recreation is an important part of this study, as everything that follows does so with the understanding that these young people did not consider the concept of outdoor recreation in the traditional sense, as being theirs. The following section presents a description of their typology.

The majority of participants (83%) associated outdoor recreation with sports, both organized and recreational. Ali, a 19 year old, thought of, “like football teams... community centers, um yeah like that’s what I think, like organized sport”. Fred, a 25 year old, stated that when he hears the term outdoor recreation, he envisages “people playing in the park or joining a summer league... anything where you’re playing the sport for fun”. More specifically, seven participants (58%) made connections between *outdoor* sports and outdoor recreation, with most emphasizing recreational sports (playing for fun) opposed to organized sport.

Although the majority of participants associated outdoor recreation with outdoor recreational *sports*; it is important to acknowledge the definitional diversity, as the variety of answers highlights the complexities and possible variations associated with the heterogeneous definition. For example, Pharaoh, a 19 year old male, associated outdoor recreation with multiple activities. Pharaoh included football in his initial response, but

he quickly went a different direction by connecting outdoor recreation to “geometry... architecture, using my hands... something that is creative, cause it recreation, cause it has creation in it, so re-creating something”. Spill, a 22 year old went in a similar direction, associating drum circles, live instrumentation, poetry and music with outdoor recreation, stating, “When I hear outdoor recreation, I resonate deeply with poetry because you can spit<sup>5</sup> anywhere”. Three other participants, Josiah, Monique and Ferrari, connected outdoor recreation to childhood play, such as jump-rope, rollerblading, childhood games, and exploring nearby fields.

Similarly, Raven and Jackie, associated outdoor recreation with exercise and activities that increase your velocity, such as jogging and running outside. Raven specifically talked about jogging around the levee with friends as a form of outdoor recreation she participates in. Simba, a 23 year old was the only participant to associate outdoor recreation with activities that align with the traditional definition, stating, “hiking, camping, uh outdoor rec, yeah pretty much”. In all, the overwhelming majority of participants in this study did not define or interpret ‘outdoor recreation’ in the traditional sense.

For several interviewees, a sense of self-doubt was evident in their initial response to the question. Two interviewees in particular stopped the interview to ask if they had interpreted the word ‘correctly’. Charlie, a 20 year old female stopped in mid-sentence and asked, “What I want to know is, is my definition correct”? It was made clear to Charlie that there was no right answer, and that she could go in any direction she wanted. However, the evident self-doubt is suggestive of a larger issue at play, whereas people of

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<sup>5</sup> “Spit” is a common phrase used to describe the act of rhyming or rapping

color may feel that their interpretation of outdoor recreation is not good enough or the right interpretation, specifically when speaking with a White male.

Despite the various interpretations of outdoor recreation, the common theme was to connect outdoor recreation with recreational sports played outside. The *spaces* in which they participated in these activities then became a focal point of the interviews. There was a common theme across majority of the narratives regarding to the space that they associated with outdoor recreation. The majority of participants mentioned such as city parks, open fields of grass, front and back yards, abandoned lots and fields, YMCA's, community centers, Churches, and soccer complexes. It became clear that all of the spaces were easily accessible in an urban environment. All of these spaces are easily accessible to the participants in this study, potentially flagging the role of proximity in the construction of what 'counts' as outdoor recreation. Although National Parks and State Parks were mentioned later in the interviews, none of the participants spoke about these places as initial spaces they associate with outdoor recreation.

Once the participants had discussed their initial thoughts of outdoor recreation in full, the interviews shifted to examine their participation in activities more traditionally associated with outdoor recreation (e.g. hiking and camping). Although the majority of participants did not associate these activities with their initial understanding of outdoor recreation, all twelve of the participants had either been hiking or camping once before. For example, Ferarri, who associated, "playing outside, just being active, summer day, um, sweating" with outdoor recreation, became animated when the topic of hiking came up, exclaiming "I love hiking!" This was a common theme within the narrative, as eleven of the twelve participants did not initially associate hiking and camping experiences with

the term outdoor recreation, despite their personal participation in these activities. Once asked about hiking and camping, the interviewees began openly speaking of their experiences. The experiences that were shared will be discussed in the next section of the findings. However, the progression to get to these experiences, starting with their first interpretations and eventually reaching traditionally viewed activities through interview questions, was a telling sign that the traditional White sense of “outdoor recreation” did not match their own understanding. This is of vital importance for understanding this group of African Americans, specifically their values and lived experiences in outdoor recreation; as it demonstrates the complexities that exist in the outdoor recreation figuration. From this point on, the analysis occurs with the understanding that the term “outdoor recreation” has, over time, come to exclude various interpretations, understandings, and perceptions.

### **White Spaces**

The following section presents the narrative that the interviewees shared regarding outdoor spaces, and their perception of these spaces as White Spaces. It should be made clear from the beginning that all twelve interviewees eluded to, or explicitly identified outdoor recreational activities as ‘White activities’. However, not all of the interviewees agreed with this notion, but all twelve did acknowledge the presence of this perception within communities of color. As I present the narrative I am doing so with the understanding that my Whiteness undeniably influences my writing. Therefore the attempt will be made to use the participants’ words and stories, as it is critical that before analysis begins, the narrative of the participants is presented accurately. To do this, I have separated the narrative into three sections; the identification of outdoor spaces and

outdoor recreation as White Spaces and White activities, why the participants believe they are constructed as White Spaces, and how the perception and reality of White Spaces is impacting their participation in outdoor recreational activities.

**The identification of white spaces.** As mentioned previously, all the participants either eluded to, or explicitly identified outdoor recreation as a ‘White activity’. For example, Mariah believed in the presence of “ideological” barriers stating,

Black people don't go camping.. black people don't do these things.. white people only do these things, and it's just like.. unnecessary barriers, they're very artificial and ideological, but they're very prevalent...

Pharaoh was one participant who categorically believed that outdoor recreation is viewed as “White Activities” within communities of color. Pharaoh stated,

So look, inside the Black community, I’ll speak about the Black community, things like hiking, things like kayaking... Things like canoeing, things like skydiving, paragliding, um surfing, boogie boarding are all seen as White activities.

Ali confirmed the presence of these perceptions, but she also believed that thinking this way is a way of “selling yourself short as a Black person”. For example, when asked if she thought backpacking, hiking, and camping were White activities, Ali stated,

No, I used to when I was younger, but that’s just how it's portrayed in the media and stuff. When you see people even like on commercials where they are advertising certain things like that, or when you look it up on a website, you’ll always see white people doing it. But I think it’s like selling yourself short as a Black person to think that it’s like White people activity

Fred was another participant that agreed that these activities have become labeled as White activities. However, as someone who likes to participate in outdoor recreation, he did not agree with the label, but still acknowledged its presence within communities of color, stating,



So I just think that we are really quick to, uh you know, put things in a basket and that's where it stays and, you know, you go years and years and years at a time where that one thing stays in that basket and then you, you got a guy like me that wants to dip into that basket and I want to go hiking and now they're like oh you're going to go do White people activities

Ferrari echoed these sentiments when asked if she believed hiking has become viewed as a White activity, she said,

Yeah! Yeah. Like I don't associate that way, but like culturally that's like, talk to many people, they don't see that no this is like so fun, I have to sale you every point for you to understand why this is an amazing thing to do, and why it's not just White

Other participants did not explicitly identify outdoor recreation as White activities, rather they insinuated this notion by speaking towards the lack of color within outdoor recreation. Charlie reflected that, "no honestly, not a lot of Black friends, sounds so bad. But no, we don't, we don't. We like, 'Go in the forest, girl nah, I see you when you get back'". Later when asked to describe an 'outdoorsy' person Charlie responded, "Usually White. Like whenever I think about an outdoorsy person I am usually like, yeah, he's a White guy, or gal. Usually a White guy". Similarly, Simba talked about how rare it is to see another African American participating in outdoor recreation, however he then clearly identified who participates in outdoor recreation by stating, "That's funny...mostly white people". Despite not using the term "White activities", it was clear that these participants had an understanding that the individuals participating in outdoor recreation are mainly White.

In all, the participants spoke to outdoor recreation being viewed as 'White activities' within communities of color. Whether the participants agreed with the notion or not, the mere fact that it is present within twelve separate interviews is a telling sign that the African Americans in this study must first confront a complicated social notion

before participating in outdoor recreation. This is an important thought to process, as it suggests that before freely participating in outdoor recreation, the participants of this study must first decide how to maneuver, address and challenge the idea that it is viewed as a 'White activity'. Before discussing how they navigate this understanding, the attention will turn towards the participants' reasoning on why they believe outdoor recreation has become viewed as a "White activity".

**The construction of white activities.** The notion that an activity such as outdoor recreation can become viewed as a "White activity" is a complicated and macro social phenomena, reflective of the social condition of the United States. There is perhaps no one truth to explain this social occurrence, as it involves a long history of oppression, privilege and systems of power. Nonetheless, it is of this paper's belief that the most valuable form of knowledge, regarding this topic, comes from the participants' themselves. Therefore, the following section will describe the reasoning the participants gave for why outdoor recreation has become viewed as 'White Activities'.

Several reasons were given by the participants for why they believe outdoor recreation can be viewed as a White activity. The participants' reasons have been separated into the following three categories;

- i) media/marketing,
- ii) upbringing/exposure, and
- iii) systematic oppression.

The decision to categorize their narrative is based on the similarities of their narratives. However, it should be noted that these were not the only explanations, other examples included financial reasons, transportation, time and capital associated with

participation. The decision to leave them absent from this section is strictly based off of the amount of times it was mentioned throughout all of the data. Therefore, the following section will provide a synopsis of the three categories through the use of direct quotes.

**Media/Marketing.** As mentioned above, all of the interviewees eluded to the perception of outdoor recreation being viewed as “White Activities”. Once the participants had discussed this perception in full, the follow up question of “Why?” was asked. The most common answer, with 66%, was, media and marketing. These interviewees specifically talked about who they see being portrayed within the media as outdoor recreation participants. Spill and Charlie were two participants that strongly pointed towards media in their reasoning. When asked to explain why she thought of White men when she heard the term outdoorsy, Charlie stated;

Whenever you watch TV, it’s usually a White male. Like something happens to someone who’s outdoors, who gets caught in something, White male. Something happens, someone dies outdoors doing something stupid, White male. You get trapped in a rock, you’re alone in the forest, like yeah. So for me it’s kind of like I think it’s just because like what’s you hear. Of course about like all the stories, I know that, a lot of it just seems like a White male, if I’m being frank

Spill echoed Charlie’s response when he was asked why he thought outdoor recreation has become viewed as a White activity, stating,

Honestly, I feel like the media has a huge part to take in it. Because on a widespread scale, if you look at movies, if you look at radio, music, you look at literature, and stuff like that... what they portray us as, and what we see, whether we've experienced it or not, makes us think the same way. Like, Oh i don't want to go camping cause look at them on TV, cause they’re afraid of bugs and they don't want to get their feet dirty and their nails are done, and all these, all these like stereotypical aspects of it, right, that I feel like feed into the minds of us all, and in turn make us think a certain way about ourselves, before we even experience it, so we automatically shut the door like, I don’t want to try that. I don’t want to do that. Like they kind of manifest the characteristics before really kind of experiencing it. So I think the media has a big part to do with it.

Mariah discussed specific marketing examples that she believes highlights how our society's understanding of what qualifies as an outdoorsy person. Consequently, she concluded that the media and time have caused the decrease in African American participation, stating;

Yeah like we see it on ... like television commercials.. like the types of cars. like when you have Land Rovers or Toyota or Jeep trucks, all they have are like the really country football players. .. Brett Favre, like what the heck?? It's just like.. like Brett Favre is in a commercial for like Wrangler jeans I think, and I'm just like... and the whole commercial is like him being outdoors and doing things and jeans that sustain the weather, and you correlate that kind of experience.. going outside.. getting dirty.. going camping, doing these things, with people that look like him. I do think there was a time when African Americans did go outside, we did do these things, and we did become really one with nature, but media and time has taken over, and we just stopped doing it, and a lot of black people don't want to go outside

Several other participants, such as Fred, Josiah, Ferrari, and Ali, all spoke about the role media plays in perpetuating this ideology. Many of these participants' made statements such as, "I think the media has a big role to play" but did not go into explicit details. There were some participants who identified specific outdoor companies that they believe are strengthening the notion of outdoor recreation being catered for White Americans. One of the companies identified within several interviews was REI<sup>6</sup>. Jackie was one participant who specifically identified REI as a participant in this phenomena. Coming from a bi-racial background, Jackie had an interesting relationship with REI. She spoke about her White family being "huge on REI" and she had commonly been exposed to their catalogues and was a fan of the company. However, at the end of that statement

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<sup>6</sup> The discussion of REI was an interesting component of this research and should be explored further in future research. However, due to the research limitations of this study, the racial experiences the participants' shared within REI's could not be examined fully.

she had a moment of self-reflection, saying, “I don't think I've had a conversation with a black person about REI”. When asked why she thought that was Jackie stated,

I don't know.. maybe again it's just like one of those... the white stores, the white activities.. it kinda just falls under those little things.. so not that I think it's right or just.. or easily found.. but I can kinda see the point in which.. I mean the media doesn't help... I mean even if you look at the catalogues, I don't generally see a lot of mixed race people... I will see some white, and maybe a few brown, but I don't usually... you know, it's not like I've ever seen a black person on the cover of REI's magazine or the catalogue they send out.. nor in any of their advertisements around. Normally that's not what you see... normally you see a white man on a mountain with a hat and maybe like one of their mugs or something that says REI on whatever he's wearing.. but that's generally what you see... so I guess that's the picture that mentally just comes to my head automatically because that's what I'm so used to seeing.

Spill also discussed the role REI and similar outdoor companies play, focusing specific attention on their marketing tactics and how this may increase the notion of outdoor recreation being viewed as “White activities” by communities of color, stating,

How, like, on your commercials, are you showing diversity, are you showing one kind of person, so when I think of REI's and Northface's, usually i see White people snowboarding, or like White people rock climbing, and I've seen Black people snowboard, I've seen Black people rock climb, I've seen all colors do those things, but when I see those commercials I only see a certain color, so it's kind of like a mind control thing for me. It's like an appeal, reverse psychology in a way, like if this is what you see, then monkey see, monkey do, you know kind of thing.

Spill went further by suggesting that not only are White Americans being portrayed as the main participants in outdoor recreation, but that the media also portrays African Americans as being scared and uncomfortable within the outdoors. For example, he spoke about the movie “Are We There Yet” with Ice Cube, as an example of how mainstream media can portray Black families as being uncomfortable in an outdoor setting, stating;

Perfect example right there, going on a road trip and hating it, like portraying the Black family as never getting along not liking road trips,

hating bugs... But you know, once again I feel like, people that have never been camping, they'll watch those movies and be like, I don't want to go camping, but they've never experienced it before, so then if they do, they already have a pre notion that they're not going to have fun, because they've seen that movie, so yeah to answer the question, I think the media, those would be a couple key examples right there, that definitely show.

There was also an interesting occurrence with regards to marketing, when three participants (Mariah, Monique and Ali) explained that they had never heard or been to an REI store. For example, Ali was one participant who did not know what REI was. However, despite not having heard of REI, Ali did have an explanation for why she believed she hadn't heard of the popular store, stating,

Um, just as far as marketing and reaching out to people like me, I just feel like, not to be on my soapbox, but in like poorer neighborhoods you see advertisements for like Coca-Cola, or like you know like fast food or something like that. You don't really see advertisements for like family vacations, and like REI or whatever, you know those stores aren't even in our neighborhoods.

Pharaoh also believed that REI and other outdoor stores were not marketing to him, as a Black man. When asked about this he replied,

No they're not. The only thing they market towards Black men are guns, drugs, gangs, and destruction. Because they taught us to hate ourselves, so we don't love any of our other people. If you don't love yourself you can't love anyone else. So, they don't market anything beneficial to our lives because it's population control, they trying to wipe us out

Most of the participants who were asked had some form of knowledge regarding REI. However, there were several interviewees (58%) that knew what the store was but had either been there once or never been there before. This development from the interviews, suggested that the popular outdoor stores were considered to be White stores or at least marketed for White consumers. Although the limitations of this study impedes a full exploration of this topic, the topic should be explored further in future research.

In conclusion, the majority of participants (66%) felt that media and marketing tactics of outdoor companies play a large role in creating the idea that outdoor recreation is a White activity. There were also participants that were able to highlight specific movies, commercials, and ad campaigns that reinforce this notion. The ability to highlight these specific examples, without being prompted, suggests that the participants may commonly be forced to internally confront the racial expectations our society has regarding outdoor recreation.

**Upbringing/Exposure.** Despite ‘Media and marketing’ being the most commonly given explanation, there were a number of participants who discussed the lack of exposure they had to outdoor recreation. The following section will be dedicated to their reasoning and voice. Although only 41% (or 5 of 12) of the participants discussed this topic, there was a common theme which revolved around the lack of exposure communities of color have to outdoor recreation and how this minimizes the presence of outdoor recreation in people of color’s upbringing. The participants tended to connect the lack of exposure to their personal life and how this played a role on the individual relationship they, as people of color, had with outdoor recreation during their childhood. For example, when asked if she thought there were any other reasons for not participating in outdoor recreation Ali simply said, “Just not being exposed to it when I was younger”. Although Ali did not expand on this thought, it was clear that during her childhood outdoor recreation was not a priority and therefore did not peak her interest during that time. It is important to keep in mind that the lack of exposure is representative of a larger and intricate social issue rather than just personal/family preferences.

As mentioned above, there were three individuals that focused their reasoning on exposure and upbringing. These individuals were passionate about this explanation and discussed in great detail their belief that what you're interested in tends to relate to how you were raised. For example, Fred believed that the lack of exposure African Americans receive of outdoor recreation creates a label among people of color that outdoor recreation is a "white activity". The label is then perpetuated through children's upbringing, as they do not encounter or witness their families making outdoor recreation a priority. He made the following comments when discussing the lack of color he sees in outdoor recreation, saying,

So um, I just think it's one of those things where it's not in a lot of people's culture or upbringing anymore as like an outdoor activity... So like if you're raised and say you know say you're a younger brother of three and you know all your brothers go to football practice and basketball practice and you know your mom and dad work everyday you're probably going to fall in line and pick a sport

Fred continued this thought by saying,

So I think once you kind of get caught on that cycle it's like you reach the age of you know 20 plus and you're like I never really hiked before, I really don't have time to go hiking, you kind of don't really go and try and explore that passion. You might get it later in life but you're not going to search for it.

The follow up question was asked, "Where do you think that comes from?", to which he replied:

I just think it's kind of the, the generation... we, categorize things and we you know we put a label to stuff and we stereotype stuff and you know if I go to a you know a restaurant and I don't see people of color, you know most people would say "oh man this place you know they must be doing something to not attract Black people" but it may not be that at all. So I just think that we get used to like labeling things.



It was clear that Fred believed that a label exists and is then perpetuated through the lack of exposure people of color encounter during their upbringing. He connected his desire to participate in outdoor recreation to his personal upbringing and the exposure he had. According to Fred, this allows him to freely participate and enjoy outdoor recreation as a person of color.

Josiah also emphasized the importance of early socialization. However, unlike Fred, Josiah connected his personal upbringing to a sense of unworthiness, and how a sense of worth can determine someone's desire to participate,

Uh I think it has a lot to do with upbringing and like what you're raised like, so like, want, and what you're raised to see, um, worth I think has a really big play on it as well. Like maybe not um like knowing that like you're like, you're like worth being able to like um like I see worth playing a part in like wanting to save, or like wanting to like do those things, like um, because I feel like when I do value, and like, know what I am worth and like, or like, um, who I am, then I kind of like um, I feel like it makes me, when I see something I've never seen, it makes me feel okay with like wanting it like or like, going for it you know?... If I don't feel like I'm worthy of it then I'll just be like, "nah". I will literally disengage...No that's not for me.

I followed this statement with the question, "when you are talking about being worthy of it are you talking about as a Black man?" To which he replied,

Yeah... I feel like, if I think about um just like my friends, even me sometimes in certain things like, um, like, I feel like that worthiness plays into like, uh, like me being like a black guy and like I don't know if I deserve that like I don't know and that's not based off of what somebody's taught me that's more so society kind of like, Black guys don't do that only White guys do that or Mexican guys do that, you know? But like, the worth of knowing that everything is, I am worthy of all, there's nothing that disqualifies me

Opposed to Fred, Josiah felt that his lack of exposure combined with his racial status in America, creates a sense of self-doubt that he has to deal with, when wanting to

participate in activities deemed as ‘White Activities’. To Josiah, this is how he personally believes that outdoor recreation is continuously being labeled as a ‘White activity’; as young people of color like Josiah have to contemplate the sense of worth that was instilled in them as a young Black men and women.

Simba echoed some of Fred and Josiah’s positioning. He was very straightforward with his reasoning, making a direct connection between his childhood and his desire to participate in outdoor recreation. Simba currently loves to perform outdoor activities like hiking, camping and dirt bike riding, however it wasn’t until recently that he began participating in these activities. When asked why he thought this was, he said,

Mmmm, I think that has a lot to do with my parents, really. Because we had no real exposure to it, we went camping probably once as a family... but hiking probably once as a family... we did walk a lot of trails because we had a dog, so we did that, like in the area, but not a lot like intense in the forest, in the woods type of camping you know what I mean? It wasn't like that... so I think it had to do with like, my parents and their influence on.. and exposure...

Simba’s explanation was concise, however the entirety of this topic, including Fred and Josiah’s reasoning, is complex and has multiple facets of oppression. Although Fred, Josiah, and Simba’s reasoning was different on an individual level, their experiences are connected by their understanding that outdoor recreation is not typically exposed to youth of color.

**Systematic oppression.** There were also participants who provided reasoning that resembled the marginality hypothesis mentioned in chapter 2; as many (41%) associated the Whiteness of outdoor recreation with systematic oppression towards people of color. Pharaoh was perhaps the most outspoken participant regarding the role of

oppression and racism. Pharaoh began this discussion by explaining his understanding of the foundation of Black oppression, stating,

So the whole entire world, from the start of slavery to the end of slavery has been conditioned to believe that Black people are stinky, stupid, like cunning, so like sneaky, um aggressive, hypersexualized, um, good for nothing workers cause when you try to oppress a people you have to justify why you are oppressing them and after that you have to relabel those people so the rest of the world will see it as justification as well... So they'll accept it. So the whole world as always viewed me as dumb, aggressive and all that.

When asked if he ever saw people of color when hiking with his mother, his response was a confident “No, only Asian’s and White people”. When asked why, Pharaoh discussed generational wealth and his personal experiences, stating,

I know why that is. Cause they the only people that have time to do that... Like, literally, to be so real with you... The most of my day is watching my back... That’s the thing that I spend most time on, to make sure that I don’t die. Cause literally, every time I wake up I be like, “damn I’m still alive?” Cause I thought I was going to die way before 18. So I’m like damn I’m still alive?... So um, the reason why Whites and Asians can do it is because they have generational wealth... The only people that still don’t have no generational wealth is Black people because Black people in America are completely different than Black people in Africa... Cause Black people in America stem from slavery... And what do, what did they give slaves? Nothing. When we got free from, technically free from slavery, they didn’t even give us 40 acres and a mule. So, we have to start from scratch, from the ground up. And um, everybody else that ain’t Black was able to come here... With resources, with connections back in their homeland. There is no connection back to my homeland... We’re completely different people, I am not an African. I’m a North American Black man... I’m really a Universal Black man, but I was born in North America so that’s how I act.

It was clear during Pharaoh’s interview that he believed that the Whiteness associated with outdoor recreation is entirely connected to the historical oppression Black

Americans have endured. There were other participants who echoed Pharaoh's beliefs. Ali also vocalized her understanding of systematic oppression and its connection to outdoor recreation. Whenever Ali was asked, “why do you think that these places and these activities, have become this historically viewed White spaces?”, she responded by saying,

Uh, because of systematic oppression and like Black people not really having access, or half the time not really even knowing about these places, that are all secluded and pretty and things like that. I know myself, I don't know about half the places, I have to google if I wanted to find somewhere that's all pretty and things like that, so... Systematic oppression. So it's like, okay your dad might of went with you camping and showed you these pretty places, but since my family never went camping, it's like I don't really know about it. So I have to look it up if I wanted to go camping or something like that.

Jackie, a biracial participant, provided an interesting perspective when she explained how her Black family views going outdoors and role systematic oppression plays in their world view, stating,

Like something my black family tells me is it's hard being black in America. So we could totally tie it into just that general feeling of .. in America.. just being outside, they don't generally feel as safe as they do behind the locked door of their own home... the black side is more.. you know, something is going to happen, and whether I consent or react or whatever, it's going to happen, and I in some way pay a price or be de-elevated in some way for it. so just a lot more fear I feel, and just like skepticism of the world... I think it's just, the unknown... you're already systematically disadvantaged because you're colored in America.. you know, don't add to that risk.. you already have the standards pushed against you.. don't increase that and just ... just increase your likelihood of something bad happening to you.

The above examples provide an insight into how some of the participants explained the development of outdoor recreation becoming perceived as a “White

activity” through systematic oppression. Their words are important to acknowledge and explore further, as the personal experiences and perspectives of African Americans can perhaps provide a more in-depth understanding to a theory such as the marginalization theory.

### **Habitus**

Throughout this thesis, Dr. Carolyn Finney and her work, “Black Faces, White Spaces”, has been discussed. It was Dr. Finney’s detailed examination of collective memory and the role of trauma within African American participation, which heavily influenced the reasoning for including a brief environmental narrative section in chapter 2. The comparative environmental narrative piece was written before data collection, as a helpful tool for readers to understand the history of trauma that is associated with the environment for African American communities. Consequently, once data had been collected, data analysis revealed that a majority of participants (66%) did discuss thoughts and experiences which suggest that the trauma presented in chapter 2 is still present within their minds as young African Americans. The following section will highlight explicit comments that display the presence and consequences of collective trauma. Following the theme of presenting the participants voice first, the comments will only be presented, as the implications of these comments will be discussed in chapter 5.

Within every interview, there was a presence of unintended and intended consequences of systematic oppression. There were times when the interviewee would mention one of these consequences in passing, but would not discuss them further. However, data analysis revealed that 66% of the participants made explicit comments

that can be connected to the environmental narrative and habitus of African Americans. Pharaoh was one participant who heavily associated the trauma of African Americans with his reasoning for low participation rates within outdoor recreation. For example, he discussed in great detail the impact Slavery had on African American's relationship to the environment, even identifying this impact as "post-traumatic slave syndrome". Pharaoh made the following comment when addressing the stereotype of African American's not knowing how to swim. He mentioned that he is a strong swimmer but then he makes an interesting connection between the African Americans he knows that don't like swimming and Slave ships stating,

On the boat ride over to Turtle Island, the original land, and they would tie chains and a very heavy weight ball to the end of these chains, actually manufactured them for this specific reason and made it so they weld a chain to a ball and they would tie it and chain it to Black people's feet and um they would just throw you off the ship, so I'm pretty sure, well I know that post-traumatic slave syndrome is very real, so this, the trauma that Black people faced in Slavery carry on through the DNA...

Later in this same discussion, Pharaoh changes the subject by bringing up the forest. He began by explaining his thoughts behind why some African Americans are afraid of the forest, stating,

Uh the forest, is hella unknown to my people because we weren't taught about it. It's that simple, we have no knowledge on these, we have no knowledge on this entire land that we still live in...So, nature is not something for Black people, um they killed us a lot in nature. They would do a lot of wild things, like plantations... Yeah they would hang us in trees, so maybe that's why Black people don't go to the forest, don't want to see a tree.

This would not be the last time Pharaoh discussed Slavery within his reasoning. It appeared several other times as a reason for low participation rates within outdoor recreation. Pharaoh also mentioned the Jim Crow era and the negative impact it had on the Black community, specifically how the Jim Crow system impacted the perception the

rest of the world had of Black people. In all, Pharaoh was one of the most vocal participants' regarding the role of trauma in outdoor recreation numbers, making it clear that he believed the low numbers were heavily, if not entirely, associated with the environmental trauma African Americans have endured. Charlie also made a connection between participation in outdoor recreation and Slavery when discussing her personal fear of the forest, stating,

So when I think about the forest I think about the movies, I think about just like, our overall like um culture, like even when you, even if you go back to slavery, it's kind of like, a lot of times they would have to go through the forest, because they can't be in the open area. And it's like, they had to be able to freaking navigate themselves in there, and things happen in there. Like you get captured, and like I think that's a thing too, I don't want to get captured, cause I feel like that's the place that, that's the most easiest places cause it'll be like, like come on, like no one's around, all there is is the animals, it's just you. And like, a couple other people. Like if someone has the manpower, or if someone has the womanpower, I'm gonna be equal there, um, they can definitely take you. That's why for me, I'm very um, I like to keep, a lot of people around me at one time. And if I see anything that's suspicious, I'm leaving.

There was an interesting moment that occurred in Mariah's interview that should be discussed, as her comments are very reminiscent of the Reconstruction era. Mariah discussed her opinion on nature and outdoor recreation, stating, "I know I myself connect nature with freedom, and if I don't feel like I have that, then I'm not gonna go out there". This comment was very similar to the perceptions of the Freedmen during the 1860's, which was discussed in Chapter 2. To refresh the reader's memory, during Reconstruction, Land Ownership came to embody the ideals of freedom for Black American's. As it was reported in Northern newspapers, that these Freedmen associated land with freedom. Although several former slaves did receive land, President Andrew Johnson eventually ordered that all land titles be withdrawn from them and returned to

the White owners. Mariah associated freedom with nature, much different from land ownership, yet her perception of freedom with land is heavily being impacted by the environmental trauma.

There were other participants that discussed the consequences of Jim Crow and segregation, and how those consequences may be impacting African American participation. For example, Ferrari compared the various ways Black people were treated to the ways in which White people have been treated, and specifically connected this to her discussion of ski resorts, stating,

So, I would think that it could come from, you think about all the, the same years pass by, 18 to 1900s to current world we are now. There's certain way life was for Blacks, there was a certain way life was for Whites. So, ski resorts that's why people say skiing is for Whites, cause Black people were not allowed, know what I mean?

Ferrari also freely discussed her Grandparents, and how their lived experiences during the 1920's impacted what they would and wouldn't let her do, saying,

My grandparents was like, nope, are you crazy? I am not letting you, this is what they said, cause my grandparents grew up in the 20s, so obviously it was a different time, and they said, you know I am not gonna let you go out in the woods with these White people from school [laughter] but seriously, but that's how she saw it.

It was clear that Ferrari's grandparents and their personal experiences through the Jim Crow era and the civil rights era had an impact on her and also made her very aware of the mistreatment her family has endured.

There were also examples that suggesting that a new chapter of the African American environmental narrative could be in the process of being written right now. As several participants (4 total or 33%) discussed the contemporary issues African Americans face with police brutality. The participants who discussed police brutality



connected police brutality and the impact it has on being able to freely participate in outdoor recreation. For example, Mariah is quoted saying,

A lot of black people don't want to go outside.. it's not the best times out here for black people to be going outside doing any old thing.. it's like.. now black men are afraid to walk outside and get shot by the police.. it's not something that you do just because the times and the media take it away.. take away the freedom that we think we have, to go outside and just be free, and do what we want.. so yeah.

In all, there were examples throughout the interviews that suggested that the impacts of environmental trauma is playing a role in this group of young people's perception and participation in outdoor recreation. There were explicit connections made to Slavery, to the Jim Crow era, to civil rights, and to contemporary police brutality. The implications of these connections will be discussed in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

The following section could seem as a contradiction, as now I am tasked with doing what I have criticized throughout this thesis, make theoretical assumptions based on the data shared to me by people of color. However, this section is the most critical piece of the entire thesis. If not careful and strategic with every word, then this thesis could easily become another academic study in which a White male manifests radical assumptions to explain complicated social issues communities of color face. I am approaching this section with the understanding that all of the conclusions are grounded in the participants' words and figurational sociology. I also acknowledge that I cannot remove my Whiteness and therefore the writing will undoubtedly be influenced by my Whiteness. It is to that point that I am recommending that my findings and entire study be further examined and explored by academics of color. Furthermore, to stay true to the initial intention of presenting the voice of the participants, the following discussion will only discuss what was mentioned to me by the participants.

Before applying theory to these findings, I would like to remind the readers of the theory guiding my work, figurational sociology. There are four principles (mentioned in section 2.4) which will guide the figurational approach of the following section. These can be summarized as:

- i) Human beings are interdependent
- ii) Our lives develop in the webs of interdependence (figurations) that we form
- iii) These figurations are repetitively in a state of unrest, experiencing changes of different remits

iv)The long term development of figurations has been, and continues to be, largely unintended and unanticipated

### **Implications of Typology**

Chapter 4.1 highlighted the typology and definition the participants of this study associated with the term “outdoor recreation”. It was clear that the participants did not identify with the traditional sense of the word, as eleven of the twelve participants defined outdoor recreation outside the traditional boundaries. When using the term “traditional”, this thesis is referring to the larger works of policy, culture, and organizations that have historically been identified with outdoor recreation. In this study the majority of the participants associated the term with recreational sports played outside. However, as discussed in chapter 4.1, there were a variety of answers given by the participants, all of which challenged the traditional definition. It was clear during the interviews and data analysis that the interviewees of this study simply did not identify “outdoor recreation” with the traditional definition. An entire study could be dedicated to exploring why these individuals identify outdoor recreation in this sense, however that is not the intention of this paper, although it is a recommendation for future research. Instead, attention will be given to why these findings are important within the outdoor recreation figuration.

I begin with a question: Considering this group of people did not identify with the traditional sense, where do they fit within the construction of outdoor recreation policy and administration? In other words, if this is the understanding of this group, then it is entirely possible that people of color are marginalized within the policy making, as the policy makers are not talking about this group’s understanding of the word. For example,

let's consider the construction of the monumental 1964 Wilderness Act. Within section 2 of the Wilderness Act, the term Wilderness "Has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation" (Wilderness Act 1964). The wording of this statement and the power which a congressional Act carries, builds a foundation for how Wilderness and outdoor recreation is defined within the outdoor figuration.

However, the definition that is stated above does not match the definition of the participants from this study. In fact, there is a tremendous difference that should not be ignored, which is the word "solitude". In many ways, solitude has become synonymous with outdoor recreation. If one of the participants were to examine the marketing across the outdoor industry, it would be common for them to see a White man recreating in the wilderness alone and enjoying solitude, which simply does not identify with what they shared. Furthermore, not only was solitude not mentioned in the interviews, it was also common amongst the participants to discuss their fear of danger or violence when participating in an outdoor recreation alone (75%). From the perspective of the participants, outdoor recreation is something that should be done with friends and family. This core difference in interpretation provides insight into why these findings are important. Herein lies a connection of how our lives develop into webs of interdependence, some of which are constructed as exclusionary to members of the population.

The creation of the Wilderness Act informed how policy makers, Government officials, business owners and outdoor enthusiasts defined and viewed Wilderness. Although it could be argued that this perception has been used to influence a small portion of the outdoor figuration, it is still undeniable that the perception does not match

the opinions of the group of African Americans interviewed in this thesis. Despite these consequences being unintentional, they have formed an oppressive figuration that does not align with the perceptions of all the voices within the United States. The oppression and exclusion from discussion sends a message that their interpretation is not valued and therefore this form of recreation is not “theirs”.

This is, in essence, a systemic issue that has oftentimes been overlooked within academic literature. There is a general understanding that people of color are not participating in outdoor recreation as frequently as White Americans, but there has been little consideration that the terminology being used to describe these said activities may not be the appropriate or correct terms for all groups. Furthermore, by narrowing the definition of outdoor recreation into a box, we are eliminating the possibility of alternative perspectives. Considering the racial imbalance within outdoor recreation, it is fair to say that the industry has been highly influenced by White people and their Whiteness, and therefore the traditional definition has been highly motivated, and reinforced, marketed by, marketed for, a White perspective. In doing so, the outdoor recreation figuration is continuously overlooking and ignoring the perspectives of people of color, and then questioning why they (people of color) are not participating as frequently. In other words, there is an expectation for people of color to assimilate to the White understanding. Whenever they don't, there is confusion within the industry; and rather than reflecting introspectively, the question is asked, “Why don't people of color participate in outdoor recreation”? The findings of this study suggest that it is possible that African Americans may have a different opinion and perspective of what outdoor

recreation is, and how it should be performed, which is being consistently overlooked by the dominant narrative.

### **White Spaces and Habitus**

In chapter 4.4 it was highlighted that all twelve of the participants (100%) identified and/or discussed their understanding that outdoor recreation is commonly identified as a “White Activity” within communities of color. During the interviews they were asked to provide their understanding of why this may be. Their reasoning was then categorized into three topics (media/marketing, upbringing and exposure and systematic oppression) which were used to share their narrative. However, their reasoning and moreso their overwhelming identification, suggests that there has been and continues to be an unequal power imbalance within the outdoor figuration. In having a 100% identification rate, it is undeniable that this group of young people have been heavily influenced by the Whiteness associated with the outdoor figuration.

In chapter 4.5 it was highlighted that the collective trauma African Americans have endured throughout American history still heavily remains within the habitus of this group of young people. A majority of participants (66%) spoke about their fears and memories of what has happened to African Americans in outdoor settings. They spoke about lynchings, slavery, segregation and police brutality, and how that comes to mind when they participate or even think of outdoor recreation. These findings suggest that the collective trauma remains to be an aspect when discussing and examining African American participation in outdoor recreation. However, I am making a strategic decision to discuss Whiteness and habitus (collective trauma) together in this section, as they are

undeniably connected with one another. In fact, it should be made clear that the role of habitus is connected to every aspect of this study and does not act as just one proponent. Rather, it is embedded throughout the entire study because the collective trauma of African Americans is embedded within every web of configuration in the United States. The systematic oppression, racism, and violence towards African Americans has influenced power structures and the overall culture of American society. Therefore, it is with this thought in mind, that the identification of outdoor recreation as a “White activity” and the role of collective trauma, will be connected to and written about together.

The above decision has led me to a conclusion that Whiteness, oppression and trauma is intertwined within every aspect of how this group of young people perceive outdoor recreation. This statement, and the three proponents of the said statement (Whiteness, oppression and trauma) create the most critical point of this thesis. Which is that the participation of this group of African Americans in outdoor recreation involves a complex three-tier system of oppression that can be broken down into the following. One, the outdoor recreation figuration is heavily controlled and presented from a White perspective. It could be argued that this power imbalance is controlling the discussion of what outdoor recreation is, how it is presented and how it should be performed; which in turn does not match the perception of communities of color. Two, the long history of economic and financial oppression that communities of color have endured often times make activities like outdoor recreation unattainable, which also contributes to their understanding that it is not “theirs”. I disagree that people of color are not participating in outdoor recreation solely because of financial resources. In fact, I find this to be a racist

and degrading theory towards communities of color. However, I believe that the history of financial oppression towards communities of color plays a role in maintaining the power imbalance embedded in the outdoor recreation figuration. Three, the history of violent trauma that African Americans have encountered in outdoor settings create a trauma based barrier for African American participation. Furthermore, the environmental trauma has not been confronted or discussed within the outdoor figuration. The collective trauma creates thoughts and fears that White participants do not have to confront when going into the outdoors alone. Consequently, the fears and memories of Slavery, Jim Crow, lynching, segregation and White violence is consistently overlooked within the power structures of outdoor recreation. This forces people of color to have to personally confront their fears and accept that if they choose to participate in outdoor recreation (as many of the participants said they do), then they may be placing themselves in a historically racist and White setting where they could encounter violence.

These three aspects together (along with complex individual experiences that I cannot speak about) contribute to why I believe the participants of this study identified that outdoor recreation was not component of their upbringing, that outdoor recreation is a “White activity” and perhaps more importantly, may be a contributing factor to why African Americans are not participating in outdoor recreation as frequently as White Americans. It is important to acknowledge, that I am not inferring that one of the three is more important than the other. Rather, I am claiming that there is complex system of oppression at play, whereas all three aspects carry equal weight and should be examined and studied together. This is a bold statement, and my intention in writing it is not to present the whole truth. Rather, I think this could act as a starting place for future



research and future application within the power structures of the outdoor recreation figuration (Government, Outdoor industry and outdoor enthusiasts). There needs to be an approach which encompasses the multiple facets of this social phenomena, and I believe a good starting place is examining the Whiteness of outdoor recreation, the role financial and economic oppression communities of color have endured, and the history of Violent trauma that African Americans have encountered in outdoor settings.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to explore whether there are relationships between the socio-historical development of outdoor recreational spaces, existing environmental habitus and African Americans lived experiences in outdoor recreation. Considering the complexity of this question, I also constructed two sub-questions, which were;

- i) Is outdoor recreation constructed as a ‘white activity’ within African-American communities? If so, how?
- ii) Are racialized constructs influencing the quantity and *quality* of African-American participation in outdoor recreation? If so, how?

These questions could not be answered without talking to African American’s themselves. Therefore, the decision was made to not only interview African Americans, but to have their words guide the research and discussion section. The participants collected narrative uncovered several aspects to my research question and sub-questions. Considering that the sub-questions are less extensive, I would like to begin with them.

As has been discussed, the participants of this study all identified or discussed the idea that outdoor recreation is being constructed as a “White activity” within communities of color. It was either clearly stated that outdoor recreation is a “White activity” or that they had always been told that by other people of color. The participants gave several reasons for why this perception may exist. Their reasoning fell into the three following categories; media/marketing, upbringing and exposure and systematic oppression. Due to the overwhelming identification rate, it would be safe to say that this

group of African Americans are either identifying outdoor recreation to be a “White activity” or have been influenced by the perception that it is. Consequently, the quantity and quality of participation in outdoor recreation is being influenced by racial constructs, specifically for the group of African Americans that were interviewed. As many participants alluded to not participating at all, or more commonly when they do participate, there is a shared feeling that they are being observed and noticed as the only person of color. I cannot speak for the participants, but I can say that there was a shared experience that included a feeling of discomfort that White participants do not encounter.

The above findings are essential for understanding the overall research question and the conclusion that has been reached for this study. It became clear during the data analysis that the participants did connect the socio-historical development of outdoor recreational spaces, existing environmental habitus and their lived experiences in outdoor recreation. This was displayed throughout their interviews, but it became more clear during the construction of the findings section. Their connection leads me to the conclusion that the low participation rates of African Americans in outdoor recreation is a complicated social phenomena that is connected to multiple facets of oppression. Furthermore, the participants narrative led me to break down the facets of oppression into three tiers, which helps explain the complexity on a fundamental level. The tiers are as follows: One, the construction and maintenance of outdoor recreation as a White activity, and the Whiteness that is embedded deeply within the outdoor recreation configuration. Two, the history of financial and economic marginalization that communities of color have endured in the United States. And three, the environmental trauma that African Americans have experienced in outdoor settings throughout American history. These three tiers together

make the participation in outdoor recreation a different and complicated experience for African Americans. I am not claiming to have the only truth, as there are many African Americans in this country that regularly participate in outdoor recreation. Rather, I explain that due to systems of power, based primarily on Whiteness, the experience that African Americans have are different than that of White Americans. Nonetheless, this is an intensely complicated topic, and I think that there needs to be further research that critically examines the role each of the tiers of oppression in which I have identified in this study. I also strongly believe that in order for change to occur, the institutions of power within the outdoor recreation configuration need to discuss the oppression that African Americans have endured and experience within the outdoors. The change will not occur from expecting people of color to assimilate, therefore the change needs to come from the individuals and institutions who manage, market and participate in outdoor recreation.

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## **APPENDIX A. INFORMED CONSENT**

### INFORMED CONSENT

(African Americans and outdoor recreation)

You are invited to participate in a research study which will involve the analysis of how African Americans perceive and attach meaning to outdoor recreation. My name is Matthew Goodrid and I am a Graduate Student at the University of the Pacific, in the Health Exercise and Sport Science Department. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your race and age.

The purpose of this research is to expand our knowledge on the meaning African Americans attach to outdoor recreation. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take part in an in depth interview. Your participation in this study will last approximately 20-60 minutes.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please call me at 270-313-5068. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project please call the Research & Graduate Studies Office, University of the Pacific (209) 946-7367.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. To ensure your confidentiality, you will be asked to choose a pseudonym which will be used for the remainder of the study. The data obtained will be maintained in a safe, locked location and will be destroyed after a period of three years after the study is completed.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and your decision whether or not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

If you want to receive the final copy of the study then please email me at, [mgoodrid@pacific.edu](mailto:mgoodrid@pacific.edu)

You will be offered a copy of this signed form to keep.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY**  
(Attached to Informed Consent)

Please complete the following demographic questions:

1. Age
  - a. 18-20
  - b. 21-25
  - c. 25-30
  - d. 30-35
  
2. Gender you identify as?
  - a. Man
  - b. Woman
  - c. Trans-Man
  - d. Trans-Woman
  - e. Other
  - f. Prefer not to answer
  
3. Zip code(s) of the house(s) you grew up in?
  - a. Write in:
  
4. What high school(s) did you attend?
  - a. Stagg High School
  - b. Franklin High School
  - c. Edison High School
  - d. Caesar Chaves High School

- e. Health Careers Academy
  - f. Weber Institute
  - g. St. Mary's High School
  - h. Other:
5. The highest level of education your parent's/guardian's have completed?
- a. High School (GED)
  - b. Associates degree
  - c. Bachelor's Degree
  - d. Master's Degree
  - e. PhD or Doctorate
  - f. Trade Certifications
  - g. Did not complete High School
  - h. Other
6. Do you or your family own or rent the house you live in?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
7. What are your parent's/guardian's current occupations?
- a. Retired
  - b. Part time employment (20 or less hours)
  - c. Full time employment (more than 20 hours)
  - d. Unemployed but seeking
  - e. Not currently working

## APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS/STRUCTURE

“I have a few questions jotted down that I hope we can get to, but if there’s anything you want to talk about, feel free to ask me questions. I intend for this to be more like a conversation so please feel free to take the conversation wherever you want it to go.”

Q. I mentioned this word “outdoor recreation” I am really interested in what that word means to you?

Listening for: when (participate), where, what they do outdoors, why, who they participate with. Listen for their general feelings/thoughts towards outdoor recreation. This question may open up opportunities to discuss barrier to participating. I will respond to their answers with questions that require participants to expand in their own words. For example, “walking in the park”. Who do you go with? When do you tend to go? How do you feel when you’re out there?

If they have never heard of the word, or don’t use the word then I will ask questions that require them to expand on why they think that is, or who they think participate in outdoor recreation. Example, “why not”. Intentions will be to open participants up to talk about the barriers that exist.

Q. What are your favorite natural landscapes?

“Could you tell me your favorite natural landscapes to look at, ones that you have spent time in, favorite ones to spend time in, have you spent time in any of these places, ones you would like to go to, ones that you would be scared to spend time in.”

Identify: Places they have spent time, places they have not spent time, why they haven’t, what kind of people they think spend time here, did they feel safe etc.”

Walk through each reason. “It sounds like you haven’t spent much time in X, why is that?” “You have spent a lot of time in X, can you tell me about your experience?” “Did you enjoy it? Would you do it again?” “You haven’t spent much time X; what kind of people do you think spend time here? Can you describe these people?” “When you were in these types of settings, how did you feel? Who was with you? Did you feel safe?” “Would you like to spend time in these areas, if yes, then I will ask about the barriers that are preventing them from doing so.”

Q. What's the most memorable experience you have had at one of these places? How did it affect you?

Q. What's your favorite place to spend time outdoors?

Listen for: Benefits, why people spend time outdoors.

Q. How do people look that are "outdoorsy"? (What do they wear? What kind of hair do they have? What kind of food do they eat?) Okay, now close your eyes and picture someone that looks outdoorsy? What kind of clothes do they wear? What kind of car do they drive? What kind of music do they listen to? What kind of hair do they have? What do they eat? Does this person look like you?

**OR experience:**

Q. How do you spend your time outdoors?

Q. Where do you like to spend your time outdoors?

Q. Do you

Q. Have you participated in any outdoor trips? Could you describe your experience?

Q. Can you tell me the most meaningful /important experience you have had in the outdoors?

**YES:**

Q. Did you feel you safe on those trips?

Q. Would you invite friends or family on these trips?

Q. Do you think your friends or family would be interested in going on these trips?

**YES/NO:**

Q. How does your family or friends react when you tell them you are going hiking, or camping? Or How do you react when someone tells you that they are going hiking, or camping?

Q. Do you have any role models that participate in outdoors?

Q. Would you feel safe hiking alone? Why?

Q. What is your biggest fear in the outdoors?