Departing from the Norm: Diversity, Representation and Community-building in Outdoor Recreation

By
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Abstract

Though it has been extensively critiqued, the idea that nature-based recreation is not part of Black American culture has persisted in both popular culture and academic literature for decades. In recognition that race has been undertheorized within the context of leisure studies, leisure scholars have called for the application of critical race theory (CRT) to "ethnic" recreation. The central problem with this approach is that it reinforces Whiteness as the norm against which other groups are compared, rather than situating leisure within the broader context of a racialized society. CRT, which emerged in the field of law, has been applied to other disciplines to make visible the ways in which white supremacy is embedded, protected, and stabilized within a discipline's theory and practice. In this study I used a CRT framework to understand how racism has shaped and continues to shape leisure patterns. I conducted an analysis of texts and images in over 8,000 Instagram posts spanning a three-year period from 2017 to 2020. My analysis compared outdoor organizations that presumed a general audience with those specifically identified as their audiences as nonwhite, LGBTQ, fat, and/ or women. By looking at how gender, sexual orientation, body size and race intersect, I found that what has long appeared to be the norm in outdoor recreation is not representative or inclusive of the majority of Americans. I found no evidence that Black Americans are less interested in connecting to nature than White Americans. I also found no evidence that the way people perceive or value nature is related to their racial identity. However, for people with marginalized identities, who feel that the dominant culture surrounding outdoor recreation is unwelcoming, building community may be a precursor for participating in nature-based recreation. Access to community could be a mediating factor between identity and participation.

> "Who created this myth that Black People Don't Spend Time in the Outdoors? That leaves us feeling isolated, ashamed or thinking that perhaps we are the only one. Who perpetuates the lie that Black People need to be taught the physical and mental benefits of spending time in the outdoors by non profits that curiously include "zero Black decision makers" (@teresabaker11)and have zero appreciation of Black history? Are these the same individuals who read that "Black children ages 5 to 19 drown in swimming pools at a rate more than five times that of white children" (USA Today) and think "laziness" and parental neglect versus more than a century of Jim Crow, segregation, and the defunding of America's public pools after integration?
>
> Who tells our stories? Is it us or someone else with no understanding of our history?"
>
> -Instagram post from Melanin Base Camp [@MelaninBaseCamp], 2018

INTRODUCTION

White supremacy obviously has had material consequences for Black leisure choices. White people had the power to shape Black recreation opportunities, not just in the Jim Crow South, but throughout the country and well into the 1970s (Wolcott, 2012). Whites have had an interest not only in keeping Blacks out of certain spaces, but in claiming these activities as culturally White (Foster, 1999; O'Brien, 2015; Wolcott, 2012). The residual effects of segregation on Black leisure norms are discussed in the literature (Lee & Scott, 2017). However, a White need to lay claim to certain activities *as White* did not disappear with the softening[1] of spatial segregation. McDonald (2009) and Roberts (2009) call attention to the ways in which Whiteness "operates to advantage white hegemony" (McDonald, 2009, p. 5) within leisure contexts. More work is needed to explore how this marking of cultural territory impacts contemporary narratives about what constitutes a White recreational activity in the eyes of Whites and Blacks. Where White people have an interest in maintaining claims on recreation, Black exclusion can be justified by attributing Black absence to cultural difference.

[1] Segregated neighborhoods and schools are still prevalent in many parts of the United States.

When scholars frame questions about racial disparities in nature-based recreation by asking "Why do so few minority people visit…" (Weber & Sultana, 2013) or "Whence comes this aversion among African Americans…" (Krymkowski, 2014, p. 40) they risk reinforcing a popular assumption that the outdoors is open to everyone and if Black people don't show up it's simply their choice. On social media accounts dedicated to diversity in the outdoors, posts show a collective familiarity with this attitude. For example, Unlikely Hikers, which started as an Instagram account for hikers who don't see themselves adequately represented in the outdoors, addresses this mentality on the main page of their website: "We understand that no one is getting a handwritten invitation to our National Parks and trailheads, but exclusion isn't always verbal" (Bruso, n.d.).

The "no one receives an invitation" framing shifts focus away from understanding how Whiteness functions in the great outdoors. Responses to a 2016 Sierra Club blog post entitled "The Unbearable Whiteness of Hiking" capture this sentiment clearly. The post discusses how people of color have been excluded from participating in outdoor recreation and offers tips for White allies who would like to promote inclusion (Vestal, 2016). In the comments section, several people expressed disbelief that race could play a role in the outdoors: "There's no application to go into nature… There's no test, where someone might discriminate against you and not let you camp. There's no special brochure that gets handed out to white families: Hiking the white way. you. just. go." and "If certain people don't go [to state or national parks] it's because they have no interest in going."

Additionally, respondents expressed outrage at the idea that White people could be partly responsible for racial disparities in the outdoors. Several accused the authors of being racist against Whites. Similar responses were elicited by a seemingly innocuous series of Instagram posts made in May of 2020 by the Wilderness Society to address, "the racist barriers people of color face when

outside" (The Wilderness Society, 2020). One follower wrote, "Are you serious? Unfollow. You guys are part of the problem & are just trying to separate us. I don't give two shits what color your skin is, just take care of the trail." Another comment emphasized the common theme that nature does not see color: "get real the wilderness does NOT see any of those things just humans putting labels on everything/ everybody and causing problems when there neef [sic] not be none [sic]!" Such responses suggest that White people have a stake in believing that Black Americans face no constraints to recreating in natural areas. Confronted with an alternative explanation that roots racial disparities in racial power dynamics, White people may respond with discomfort, anger, and defensiveness.

Research shows that an unwillingness to interrogate how White norms function in outdoor spaces may extend to park staff as well. In her survey of National Park Service employees in South Florida, Finney (2014, p. 82) found that some respondents were wary of the idea of incorporating more diverse stories into park exhibits. Semi-structured interviews with NPS employees at two urban national parks (Santucci et al., 2014) revealed that employees perceived an organizational culture that was resistant to change when it came to attracting a diverse audience. Some employees expressed frustration with what they perceived to be the dominant narrative within the NPS – that people ought to want what the parks offered – and the apparent unwillingness to reflect on why the demographics of park visitors did not reflect those of the metropolitan area.

Social media activists have created platforms for Black outdoor enthusiasts to analyze the ways in which Whiteness impacts their experiences of nature. Black hikers draw an important distinction between hiking as a White activity and the trail as a White space (Finney, 2014; Anderson, 2015) that must be navigated with caution by Black hikers. Anderson defines the White space as a "perceptual category," "a situation that reinforces a normative sensibility in settings in which black people are typically absent, not expected, or marginalized when present" (Anderson,

2015, p. 10). Accounts written by Black hikers offer nuanced perspectives on the treacherous terrain they navigate in order to hike. Many of the barriers to access that hikers discuss in newspapers, magazines, blogs and social media posts are already extensively discussed in academic literature, such as lack of childhood exposure and representation in the media. Some hikers also identify generational trauma stemming from decades of racial terrorism in the outdoors as an additional barrier to overcome, supporting the findings of Erickson et al. (2009) and Johnson (1998). However, the threat of violence and discrimination is not is not a thing of the past (Finney, 2014, p. 118). Since, Mowatt (2018) detailed recent acts of violence against Black people in the outdoors, numerous other incidents have occurred.

In one of the most high-profile examples, which occurred in May of 2020, a White woman called 911 to say that Black birder, Christian Cooper, was trying to assault her. Cooper recorded the interaction (Nir, 2020). After he asked that the woman, Amy Cooper (no relation), to leash her dog as per park rules, she said she would tell the police, "there's an African American man threatening my life." She then proceeded to call 911 and report an "African American man" "threatening" her and her dog. The video shows her crying into the phone, "I am in Central Park, I'm being threatened by a man in the ramble! Please send the cops immediately!" Following this incident, a group of Black educators, scientists and professionals in STEM fields, started #BlackBirdersWeek on Twitter. This campaign prompted numerous Black birders and naturalists to detail the precautions they take in order to be safe in the outdoors, like making sure that that gear like binoculars and clipboards are visible. The need to provide visual cues to justify one's presence is discussed extensively by Anderson in his work on the White space. In spaces where White people are not expecting the presence of Black people, they will demand that Black people present credentials to demonstrate they have a legitimate reason to be there. Christian Cooper experienced a bold act of aggression. Anderson's research has shown that such experiences of "acute, racially-

based disrespect" – often referred to as "the n- moment" within Black communities (2015, p. 15) – are the devastating price Black people are forced to pay for access to any space controlled by Whites.

However, racist aggression need not be as bold as the "the n- moment" to drain the joy out of being outdoors. Blog posts on Melanin Base Camp, a site aimed at "increasing the visibility of outdoorsy black, indigenous, people of color," detail how smaller, micro-aggressions impact experiences of recreation. For instance, Leah Keinama Hasse, a Black hiker, recounts being ignored by ten different employees as she shopped for outdoor gear. When her White relative joined her, she noticed that employees began to smile and offer assistance. She writes, "The point of this story is that people have the power to take something you love and make you feel like you have no right to be there" (Hasse, 2018). Another Black woman describes the fear of violence that she carries with her as she hikes. She writes about the terror she felt upon encountering a White man in an empty parking lot at the trailhead. She felt him watching her as she passed his truck, which was covered in "far-right" bumper stickers:

> These are my bogeymen: these white men who seem to be going nowhere and doing nothing. I cannot remember the exact moment in my life when I was taught to be afraid of white men… Was it some deep down biological knowledge passed on by my maternal ancestors who had experienced violence at the hands of white men for generations? I didn't know the exact root of the fear, but it felt familiar and finely honed, and legitimate. (McClain, 2018)

All of these stories are in keeping with Anderson's work on the White space, where "the n-moment" can occur at any time and the potential for violence is ever present. They cannot be dismissed as mere anecdotes because they fit well-established patterns of racism that have been

documented in other spheres. There is no reason that the outdoors should function differently than other types of White space. Recognizing that the trail, the campground, and the park often function as White space should help researchers formulate new questions about how nature-based recreation can be made more inclusive.

Confronting Stereotypes within Black Communities

Numerous accounts by Black hikers discuss the stereotypes heard from other Black people regarding activities like hiking. One member of Outdoor Afro, a national organization devoted to developing Black outdoor leadership, recalled "Every Saturday I'd go out hiking and I was the only African American there. At school I'd get laughed at, people saying, 'That's just weird. Why are you out in the woods?'" (Milman, 2016). On the Instagram account Unlikely Hikers, a Black hiker captions a selfie on the trail by describing a similar experience, "Growing up I used to hear comments such as 'black people don't hike,' 'black people don't snowboard,' and 'that's for white people.' And in my mind I would just shrug it off and say well then I guess I'm different" (Unlikely Hikers, 2019). A Melanin Base Camp blog post entitled, "Black People Don't Do That!" delves into this topic. The writer, a Black hiker and climber, notes that, "growing up one of the worst insults that could hear as a young Black child was, 'you're hella white'" (guest user, 2018). The author describes how linking activities to Whiteness limited him in his youth and implores his readers to break free of these stereotypes.

The accusation that one is "acting White" has a long and stinging history that reveals class tensions. Frazier was making just such an accusation in *Black Bourgeoisie*. The caption on the cover of the 1997 edition reads "the book that brought a shock of self-revelation to middle-class blacks in America." After the original publication in 1957, "undergraduates crowded into his [Frazier's] classes at Howard to hear him berate them for aspiring to enter a world of delusions and 'nothingness'" (Platt, 2002, p. 71-72). Generally regarded as more of a polemic than a serious

sociological study,[2] the book lampooned those striving to be considered upper class, for their focus on status, for their frivolous leisure pursuits, and for their lack of solidarity with working class and poor Black Americans. Frazier's harshest critique of the Black middle and upper classes was that they harbored the "fantasy" that they would be accepted into the White world. As we saw in Chapter 1, nature-based recreation was presented as part of upper-class Black life. Inter-class tensions may have strengthened the association between nature-based activities and Whiteness.

Discussing the prevalence of this association between Whiteness and outdoor recreation within the Black community, Finney (2014, p. xiii) notes that since the 1960s there has been a tension between developing a sense of pride in Black identity and expanding idea of what fits within that Black identity. Critiques of integrationism from the 1960s and 70s provide important context for understanding the significance of these stereotypes. In his 1962 essay "Letter from a Region in My Mind" James Baldwin discusses the Nation of Islam's vision of Black nationalism and points out that Black Americans had every reason to question whether they wanted to be "integrated into a burning house" (para. 51) Baldwin goes on to say that White people needed to:

> divest themselves of the notion that they are in possession of some intrinsic value that black people need, or want. And this assumption—which, for example, makes the solution to the Negro problem depend on the speed with which Negroes accept and adopt white standards—is revealed in all kinds of striking ways. (Baldwin, 1962, para. 52)

This push back against White standards was central to Black nationalist movements which linked the assimilation of Black Americans into mainstream White culture with genocide (Peller, 1995). The legal scholar and critical race theorist Gary Peller makes clear that this was not a radical

[2] Frazier, who had written numerous sociological works, was amused that American Sociological Association gave him the prestigious MacIver award for this one (Platt, 2002).

stance, but reflected a common understanding within many Black communities that assimilation[3] threatened to wipe out Black identity.

Race-consciousness makes communities and individuals stronger and more resilient in the face of racial oppression (Guinier & Torres, 2002, p. 86). In this context, rejection of Whiteness and activities associated with White privilege, can be seen as means of protecting Blackness and Black communities. This line of thinking seems to inspire Washburne's original application of the ethnicity theory to Black recreation patterns. Writing in the late 1970s, Washburne rejected the mainstream assumption that Black Americans desired assimilation and suggested that leisure choices could reflect "a resurgent ethnic cultural autonomy" (1978, p.177).

While race-consciousness is empowering, Roberts (2009) and Finney (2014), who are both Black outdoor enthusiasts as well as scholars, worry that the boundaries that are sometimes drawn around Black identity can constrain participation in nature-based recreation. The extent to which certain outdoor activities are rejected because they are associated with Whiteness remains unclear. Given the structural constraints on participation and the long history of White claims to recreation pursuits, stereotypes arising within the Black community, although they exist, seem unlikely to be a primary driver of disparities in outdoor recreation.

Moving Forward

Washburne moved the conversation forward in the 1970s by acknowledging that people's experiences of the outdoors are not universal, that communities may relate to nature in different, but equally valuable ways. The younger generation of Black outdoor activists, who have inherited the tensions discussed above, are working to unstick the idea of outdoor recreation from the idea of Whiteness. They are trying to both uphold the validity of all types of nature experiences while also emphasizing that Black people belong on the trail, on the mountain summit and in the backcountry.

[3] As we saw in Chapter 2, many discussions of assimilation do not address this legacy.

For example, Nadia Mercado, a regular contributor to the Melanin Base Camp blog, writes about how traditional views of what it means to be 'outdoorsy' that emphasize mountain summits and rugged terrain, diminish other experiences of nature, like spending time at a local park. Recalling her own experiences growing up enjoying the outdoor spaces available within her working-class community in south Florida she writes, "This is how I experienced nature; it may not seem good enough in the eyes of the outdoor industry but it's good enough for my community. I was always outdoorsy, I dare you to say otherwise" (Mercado, 2018).

Hiking should not be privileged above other forms of outdoor recreation, such as fishing and barbequing. However, if an assumption is made that natural area recreation is not culturally relevant to Black people, Black hikers will continue to be perceived as out of place, potentially placing them in a more vulnerable position within a White space. So long as White people are surprised to see Black hikers on the trail, the legitimacy of their presence will be questioned.

Furthermore, underinformed attempts at cultural sensitivity or recognition of difference, have potentially disastrous policy outcomes. If, for example, park managers believe that a racial group is not showing up at the park because they are simply not interested or it is not part of their culture, those managers may not invest in outreach programs for that group. The nuance of nonwhite experiences in the outdoors can easily get lost. Rather than treating a community's culture as something static and monolithic, scholars need to be keep pace with the rapidly changing conversation about diversity and representation that is being led by outdoor enthusiasts of color.

Social media campaigns aimed at creating more inclusive outdoor recreation communities have proliferated in recent years. In January of 2018 a group of social media influencers launched the #diversifyoutdoors campaign. The hashtag has now been used over 79 thousand times on Instagram[4]. This hashtag is used by people who identify as Black, Indigenous, people of color

[4] As of December 11, 2020.

(POC), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ), female, disabled and/ or fat, who feel that the culture surrounding outdoor recreation is not welcoming.

In order to better understand the relationship between racial identity and outdoor recreation, I compared the Instagram accounts of organizations that identify their audience as underrepresented in the outdoors with those of established outdoor organizations that presume to speak to a general audience. I selected organizations that believe their members have been excluded from outdoor recreation because of their gender, sexual orientation, race, physical ability and body size. By looking at how these identities intersect with and diverge from the traditional idea of a White, straight, physically fit outdoorsman, I avoided using Whiteness as a norm against which other races are compared. Through this analysis, I sought to answer the following:

- What aspects of the human relationship to the environment does each organization emphasize? Do they communicate a dualistic or integrated vision of nature and culture?
    - Are the themes traditionally associated with the wilderness paradigm (i.e. escape, adventure, connecting to nature) more likely to be expressed by established organizations?
    - Are the organizations which explicitly promote inclusion more likely to focus on the individual rather than the universal experience?
- Is there a relationship between the values promoted in association with nature-based recreation and the identity of the audience? Is there any evidence of racial difference?

METHODS

I spent several weeks reviewing blogs and social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) to become familiar with the online landscape until I reached a point of saturation when I was no longer encountering new outdoor leaders, social media influencers, or organizations. Instagram was chosen as the platform for analysis because the posts have a consistent format, the content includes photos and text, and organizations update their accounts frequently. I used several criteria to determine which accounts to include in my analysis.

All accounts had at least 10k followers, demonstrating the relevance of their content to a large audience. They also posted content from numerous individuals, reflecting a diversity of opinions and experiences within the account. Posts from all accounts spanned three years, from September 1st, 2017 to September 1st, 2020. Posts were analyzed in six-month chunks to detect changes over time. I excluded outdoor retailers and touring companies due the difficulty of discerning whether the values promoted in association with nature-based recreation reflect consumer values or are intended to shape consumer values.

I also excluded accounts dedicated to specialized activities such as rock climbing, skiing, surfing, and skydiving because these sports require technical knowledge and gear, which can create a higher barrier to entry. Furthermore, the distinct cultural norms and jargon attached to these activities would make it hard to compare motivations for participation across different activities. I selected organizations that promoted nature-based recreation in general or hiking in particular. Day hiking has one of the lowest barriers to entry in terms of skills and equipment. The Mountaineers and Melanin Basecamp both feature more technical and extreme sports, but they also include posts about day hikes and trail runs.

The organizations selected fell into two broad categories. One category included accounts run by established organizations which promote outdoor recreation and do not specify any particular audience. These appear to assume inclusivity. The other category included organizations which

started out as social media accounts encouraging followers to participate in outdoor recreation. These organizations explicitly identify their audiences. Black Girls Trekkin' identifies its audience as "women of color who choose to opt outside" (Black Girls Trekkin', n.d.) Melanin Base Camp seeks to "increase representation and opportunities for people of color in outdoor adventure sports" (Melanin Base Camp, n.d.). Women Who Hike claims, "we are here to encourage women to be brave in exploration, proud in accomplishment and rich in self love" (Women Who Hike, n.d.). Unlikely Hikers also addresses disabilities and body type, stating "We are people of size, Black, Indigenous, People of Color, queer, trans and non-binary. We are people with disabilities [underline theirs] and people who utilize the outdoors to aid our mental health" (Bruso, n.d.). Fat Girls Hiking describes itself as a community of "fat folks, folks of all ages, races, ethnicities, religions, classes, abilities, genders and sexual identities" (Fat Girls Hiking, n.d.).

This selection of organizations shifts the analysis away from a Black/White binary in which Whiteness often function as the norm. The traditional image of an outdoorsman is White, middle-class to wealthy, cisgender male, and straight. This image represents a very narrow sliver of the American population.

Specific Audience	**General Audience**
Fat Girls Hiking	American Hiking Society
Unlikely Hikers	Leave No Trace Center
Outdoor Afro	The Mountaineers
Black Girls Trekkin'	The National Forest Foundation (NFF)
The Great Outchea	The Trust for Public Land
Women Who Hike	The Wilderness Society
Melanin Base Camp	

Figure 1 Organizations included in the analysis

Text and Image analysis

A total of 8,386 Instagram posts were reviewed.

Image analysis

Photos were categorized as "people" or "no people." The presence or absence of humans from the landscape was used as an indicator of the extent to which organizations subscribed to the dualistic view of nature as separate from humans (human/ nature divide). If the majority of photos conveyed an untrammeled wilderness, this would suggest adherence to dualistic view.
Number of people present on the landscape was coded as single, pair, or group (three or more). Photos were also coded for whether or not people's features were discernible. Solitary hikers photographed from a distance would suggest alignment with a traditional narrative of the wilderness as offering escape and adventure. Where human features were obscured, the photographs conveyed an idea of an abstract or universal human experience of nature. However, if facial features were clear, the photo more likely conveyed an individual's experience.

Additionally, I assessed racial diversity using "street race" (Lopez, 2017), a term for how individuals are raced by strangers based on physical characteristics such as skin color, eye shape, and hair texture. This is obviously a highly subjective and problematic process but enables comparison with previous assessments of diversity in outdoor publications (Finney, 2014; Martin 2004). Racial categories were White, Black or Person of Color.

Total images			
No people			
People	single	pair	Group (3 or more)
White			
Black			
POC			

mixed group			
Features indiscernible			

Text Analysis

To understand if cultural values broke down along racial lines, I examined image captions for values pertaining to outdoor recreation. To begin, I took screenshots of each post and filed them under codes that I had created. These codes were initially based on traditional values associated with wilderness, such as adventure and escape, and on the writing of racially diverse hikers who blog about their outdoor experiences. A post could contain multiple codes. For instance, if the writer discussed the beauty of the landscape and a sense of fellowship with other hikers, the post was filed under "beauty" and "community." Pasting the screenshots into digital files allowed me to refine the method. If over time I felt that a particular word or phrase did not fit under a code, I was able to go back and remove or transfer individual posts. I also kept an "unsorted" file for each account. These files contained posts which did not seem to match any existing codes and enabled me to look for missed patterns and recognize new themes. When I was confident that the codes I had developed reflected the content across accounts and over time, I created a rubric with twelve codes (see Appendix for full description of codes).

Achievement	**Enjoyment**
Adventure	**Escape**
Beauty	**History**
Community	**Representation**
Connect to nature	**Stewardship**
Empowerment	**Wellness**

Table 1 Codes for Instagram captions

The rubric listed not only words and phrases, but provided the context in which a unit of text would fit within one code and not another. For example, posts filed under "empowerment" and under "achievement" might both contain the word conquer. In this case the coder would need to determine whether the writer was referring to an internal process (ex. conquering fear) or an external process (ex. conquering a summit).

Intercoder reliability

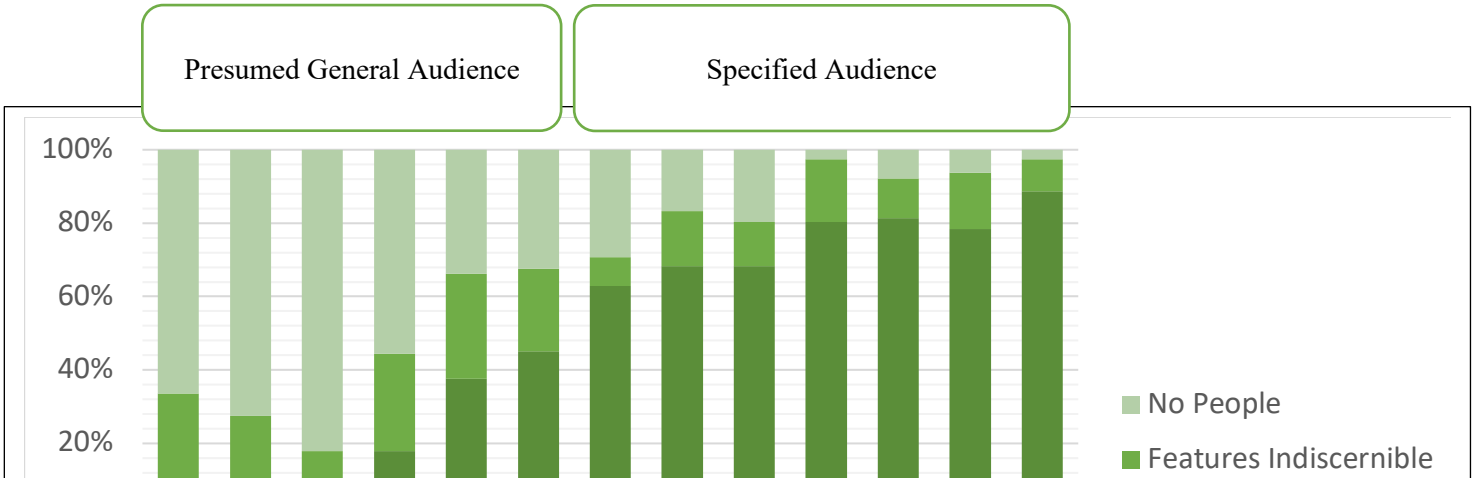
Using the completed rubric, one hour was spent training a second coder. This coder tallied the number of posts that fit within each theme for each account for each six-month period between September 1, 2017 and September 1, 2020. If she was uncertain about a post, she saved the link. We then reviewed the unsorted posts together and determined whether they fit under existing themes. To test intercoder reliability we independently reviewed a random sample of posts from each account. The sample size was between 3 and 4% for each organization. Intercoder reliability in this random sample was quite low, leading us to recognize that the existing codes left too much room for individual interpretation. We created a more robust rubric that included additional words and phrases for each code. We also further clarified contexts in which a given word would be coded or disregarded. For example, "happy" was only coded under enjoyment if it was explicitly used to describe an outdoor experience (as opposed to, for example, "Happy Friday!"). Finally, we detailed criteria for exclusion. We excluded posts that promoted products and phrases that were in the form of a hashtag, even if they matched the codes we had developed.

By time we began the last round of coding we had each reviewed thousands of posts and were confident that the rubric reflected the content. If a word or phrase did not fit precisely within the rubric, but the coder felt it was reflective of one of the themes, it was filed under "unsorted." Together we reviewed the unsorted posts and either disregarded them or incorporated words and phrases into the final rubric (see appendix). Only five new words and phrases were added during

this final round of coding. These units of text clearly matched a code, but were encountered infrequently, affirming that we had not missed any broader patterns.

RESULTS

Organizations that explicitly identified their audience as underrepresented in outdoor recreation were more likely to feature images of people than of nature on their Instagram accounts. Organizations that presumed a general audience (GA) were more likely to feature photos of landscapes than those organizations that specified their audience (SA). Furthermore, people's features were more likely to be discernible if the account belonged to the latter type of organization rather than the former. Consistent with the personal narratives often accompanying the photos, SA organization images were more likely to center on the individual or group of individuals. Where people appeared in images on the GA organization accounts, their features were frequently obscured. Across these GA organizations, less than 50% of posted images contained people with clearly discernible features. Four of the six – The Mountaineers, The Wilderness Society, The National Forest Foundation, and Leave No Trace Center – were more likely to show images of people whose features were indiscernible than discernible. In many cases, humans were shown as specks on the landscape or silhouetted against the sky. In closer shots, gear often obscured faces. These images seemed to convey the universal experiences of humans rather than the unique experiences individuals. When SA organizations posted images without people, they usually contained some type of text, rather than just a landscape.



When SA organizations , the “no people” category was often populated by text or graphics rather than an emphasis on landscape alone.

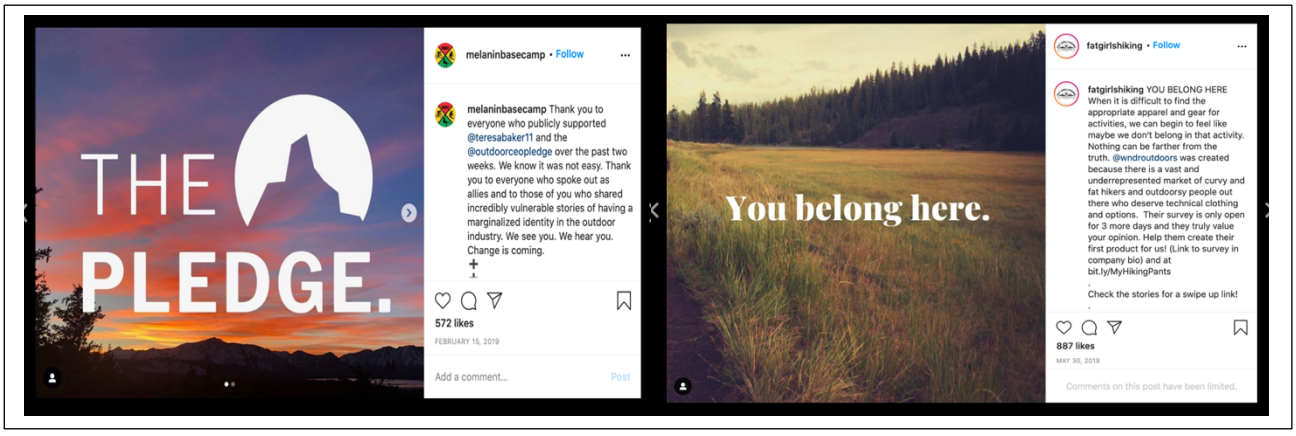


Figure 2 When organization that specified their audiences posted images of landscapes, they often served as backdrops for test.

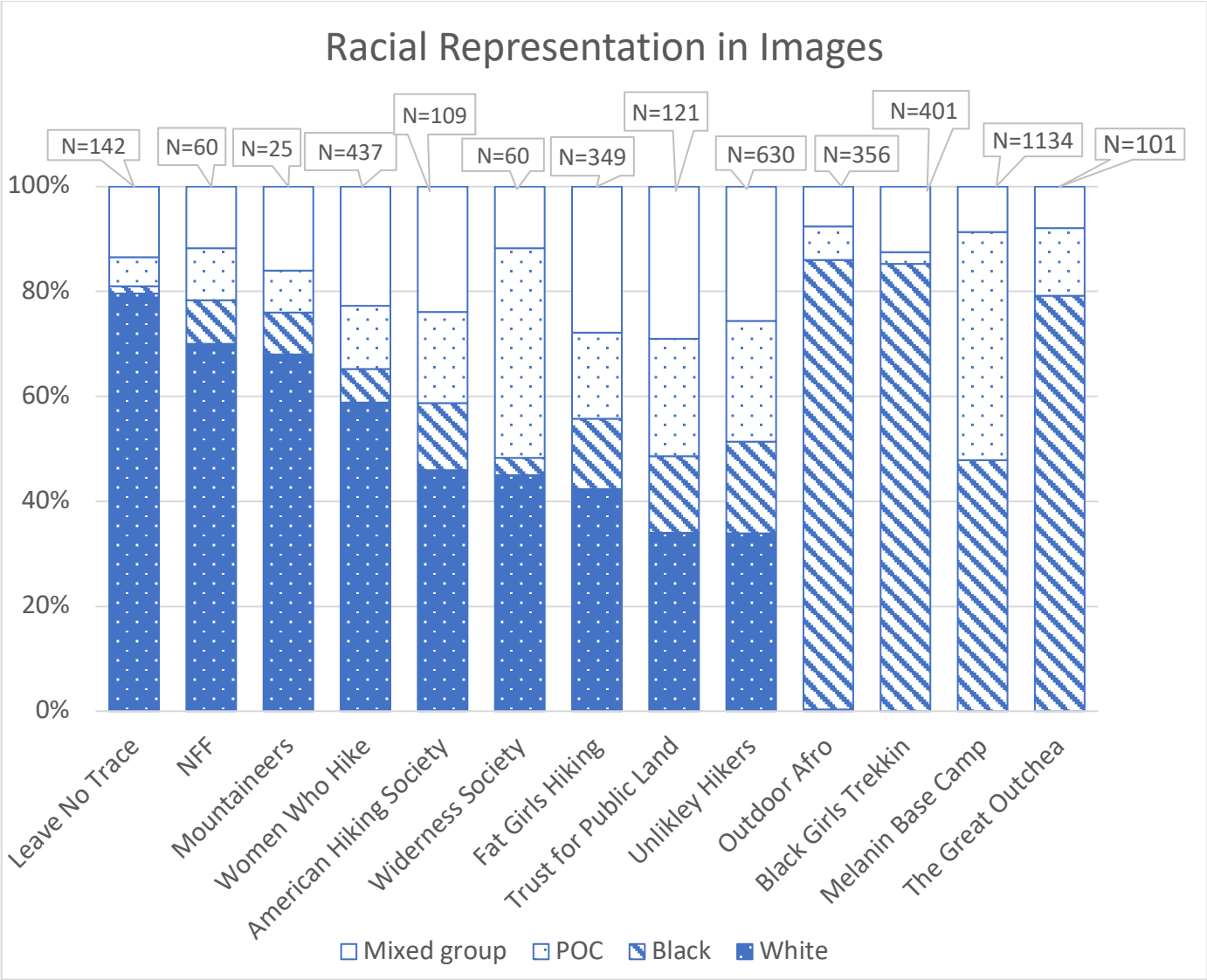
Obviously, organizations that specified their audience as POC or Black had the highest number of images containing POC or Black individuals. White people were present on these accounts only in photos of mixed groups. Melanin Base Camp, Unlikely Hikers and The Trust for Public Land showed the greatest racial diversity. The Leave No Trace Center, The National Forest

Foundation (NFF), and The Mountaineers had the highest percentages of White people in their photos. Fat Girls Hiking which explicitly addresses the need for greater representation for people of color in its mission statement showed greater racial diversity than Women Who Hike, which speaks to women in general, without explicitly recognizing racial difference.

Comparing racial diversity across organizations is challenging because some of the organizations have such a low number of images in which features are discernible. For example, Women Who Hike had a lower percentage of images of Black people (6.4%) than The Mountaineers (8%). However, Women Who Hike but had three more images of Black people (28) than the total number of Mountaineer posts (25) in which features were discernible (only two of which were of Black people).

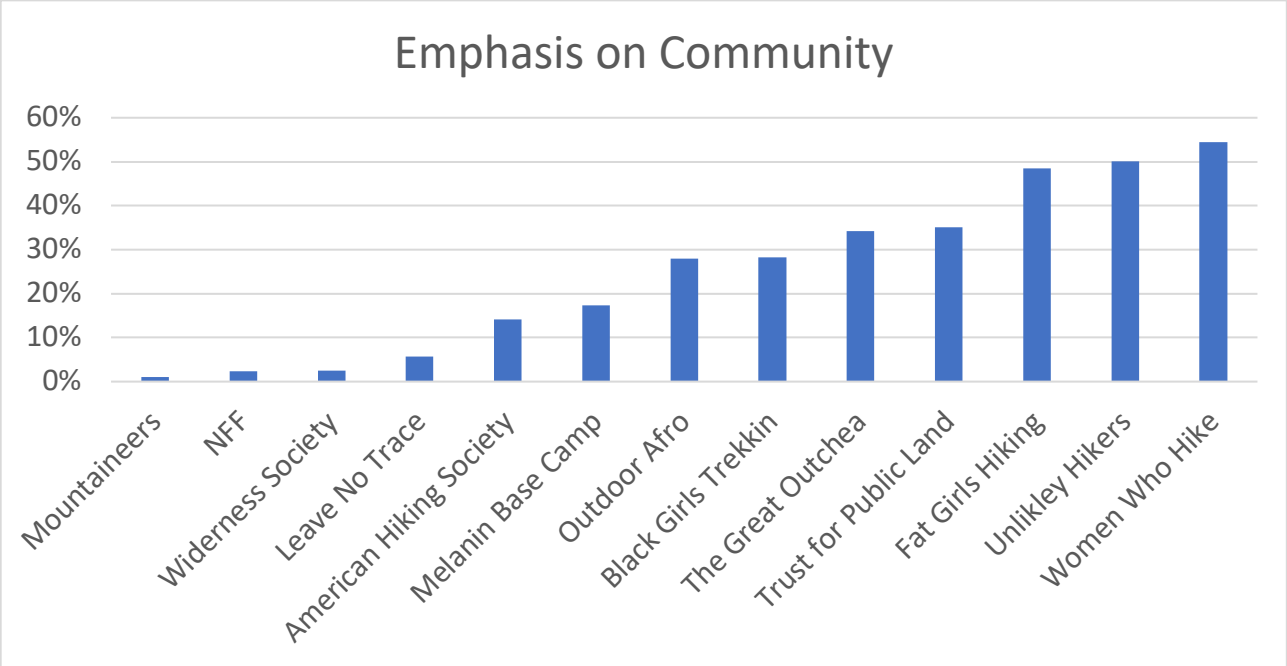
It is also difficult to discern the extent to which representation of Black Americans in the outdoors has increased since Martin (2004) reviewed magazine ads from 1985 to 2000. In Outside magazine, he found that only 1.3% of the models depicted in the "Great Outdoors"[5] were Black. The other 98.7% were White. The Leave No Trace (LNT) Center, which exhibited the highest number of posts featuring exclusively White individuals (79.6%) and the lowest number of posts featuring exclusively Black individuals (1.4%), featured racially mixed groups in 13.4% of its posts and people of color in 5.6% of its posts. All of the other organizations showed greater representation of Black people.

[5] Martin defined "Great Outdoors" ads as those that "exemplify a wilderness identity" or feature a person "engaging in a wildland leisure activity (e.g. hiking, camping, rock climbing or mountain biking" (Martin, 2004, p. 522).

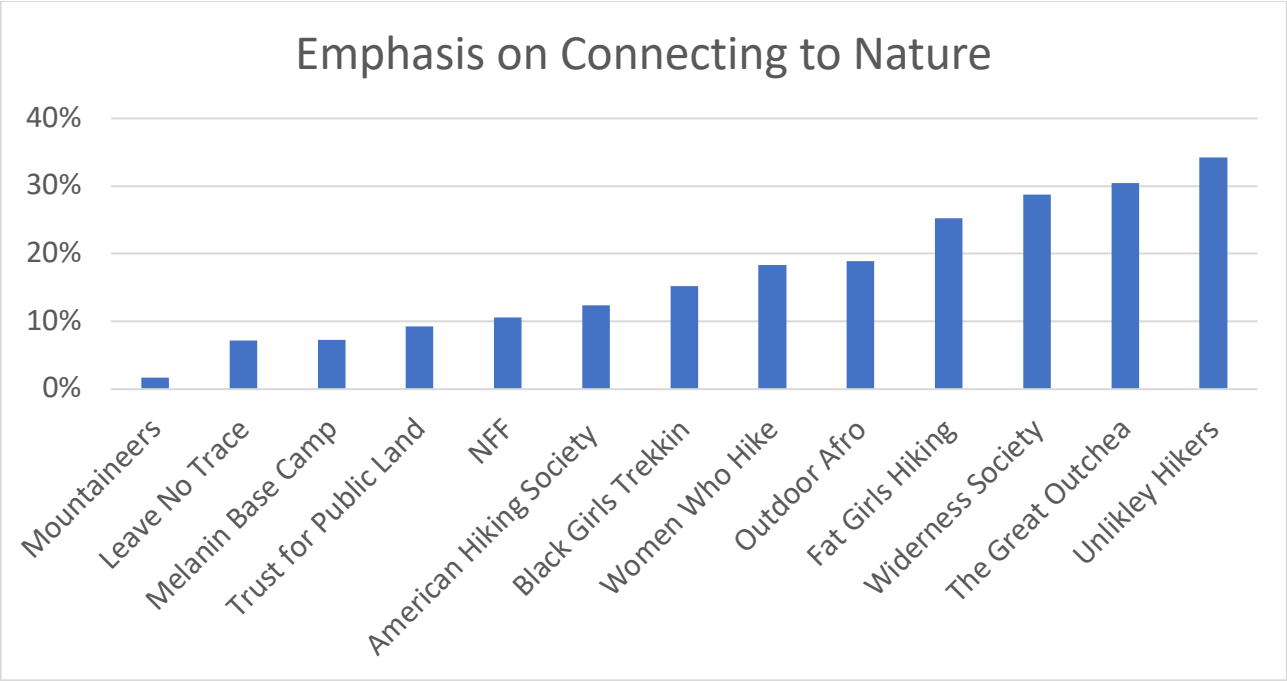


Organizations that specified their audience were more likely to emphasize outdoor recreation as a means of community-building. However, there is no clear relationship between race and the emphasis on community. The three Whitest Instagram accounts – those run by Leave No Trace, The National Forest Foundation (NFF), and the Mountaineers – also ranked low on frequency of mentions of community. Melanin Base Camp which had one of the most diverse accounts mentioned community in about 17% of their posts, whereas Women Who Hike, which featured only White people in 60% of its images had the highest number of posts mentioning community. In nearly 55% of its posts, this organization discussed community-building in relation to hiking.

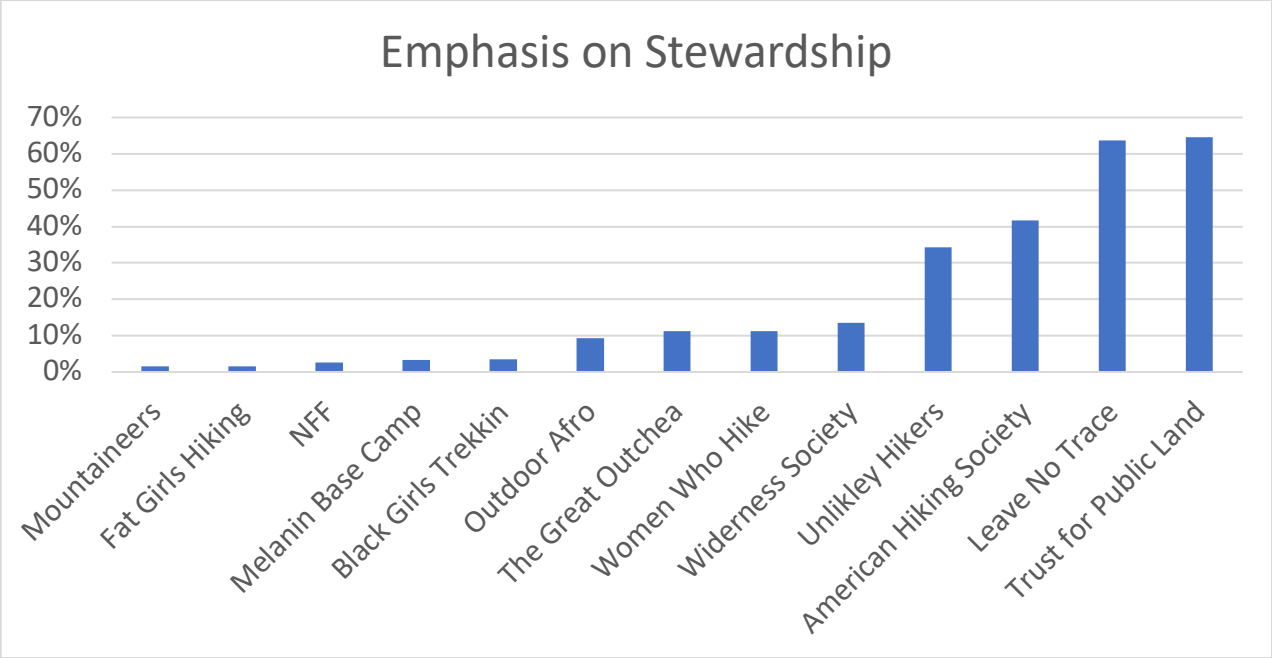
Ranking second for mentions of community was Unlikely Hikers, which displayed one of the highest rates of racial diversity. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) presented an interesting example of an organization that does not specify its audience, but still emphasizes community and racial diversity in the outdoors. One of TPL's biggest campaigns is the creation of a park within a ten-minute walk of every American. Identifying park access as a right brings this organization into conversation with the environmental justice movement, which has always been concerned with racial disparities in the distribution of environmental goods and harms. Working across the urban-rural spectrum, TPL addresses the needs of different types of communities.



No other clear relationships between race and values regarding outdoor recreation emerged from this analysis. For instance, there was no clear relationship between organization type or race and emphasis placed on connecting to nature.



Similarly, stewardship showed no clear relationship to organization type or to race.



DISCUSSION

This analysis shows that it is not just Black people or people of color, but White women, LGBTQ individuals, people who identify as fat, and people with disabilities who feel the world of

outdoor recreation is not currently inclusive. Organizations that explicitly address audiences that feel underrepresented or excluded are more likely, than those which presume to speak to a general audience, to prioritize community-building. These groups recognize that people who are not White, straight, males with full mobility might have a different experience of the outdoors not because their views of nature are different, but because they feel unwelcome in natural areas. Nature may be colorblind, but the other people on the trail are not. Building communities around historically marginalized identities creates opportunities for people to enjoy the outdoors without being othered.

The organizations that explicitly address underrepresented groups are more likely than those that presume to speak to a general audience to focus on individuals and their unique stories. Unlike the portrayal of people as specks on the landscape, representing mankind, this framing shows that human experiences of nature are not universal. By showing how social dynamics are present in the outdoors, these depictions of nature experiences pivot away from a dualistic view of nature as separate from culture. To the chagrin of those who still ascribe to the idea that "nature doesn't see color" these personal narratives demonstrate how nature and culture intertwine.

Interestingly, the organizations that were more likely to show scenes of seemingly untrammeled nature were not necessarily more likely to emphasize traditional wilderness themes, such as escape from society, adventure, and connecting with nature. This may be due to the fact that these organizations didn't do as much storytelling as the organizations that explicitly identified their audiences. Organizations that presume to speak to a general audience may not have felt the need to reflect upon the identity of their audience. They may assume that they have a shared understanding with their audience about the meaning and value of time in nature. This assumption of common norms and understandings could explain why newcomers to the world of outdoor recreation may feel excluded. Organizations that explicitly identified their audiences were also

more explicit about the different ways that people experience outdoor recreation and why it is meaningful to them. They also offered clear explanations of leave no trace principles and trail etiquette.

In the spring of 2020, all of the organizations acknowledged in some way the connections between police violence against Black Americans, the Black Lives Matter movement and racism in the outdoors. For instance, on June 2nd, The Mountaineers posted a black square with the following caption:

> All people should have equal opportunities and access to engage with nature. Our members, and the greater community at large, should be free to enjoy the outdoors without fear. They should be able to go birding (#ChristianCooper), go for a jog (#AhmaudArbery), walk to the store (#MikeBrown), walk with their family (#CliffordGlover), breathe (#EricGarner, #GeorgeFloyd), and live (#FreddieGray, #BreonnaTaylor) without being targeted for the color of their skin. Black lives matter, and we are committed to continuing to fight for equality. (The Mountaineers, 2020, June 2)

The Mountaineers did not revisit this subject in any subsequent posts between June and September 1st of 2020. Furthermore, there were no detectable change in the content of their posts (i.e. more people of color or more captions with personal narratives).

In May of 2020, The Wilderness Society posted, “We can’t think of people and communities as separate from nature” (The Wilderness Society, 2020). In late May and early June, they also posted a series of six messages about police violence and racism in the outdoors. However, throughout the summer, the majority of their posts continued to show scenes of seemingly pristine landscapes devoid of people. This organization may be in the process of a paradigm shift that is not yet reflected in how they tell their story visually.

On Instagram, The Leave No Trace (LNT) Center showed no clear indication that it would direct more resources toward addressing racism in the outdoors. Furthermore, the organization did little to address the concerns of outdoor enthusiasts of color who believe that LNT principles are used by White people to police the behavior of people of color outdoors and on social media (Williams, 2019). The LNT principles are intended to reduce harmful ecological impact, but they are also context-dependent and leave room for interpretation. Some outdoor leaders contend that, at times, the focus on LNT is more about who is transgressing (for example, going off the trail at the local park as opposed to breaking new trail in the backcountry) than the behavior itself. In the beginning of June, the LNT Center put up three posts condemning racism generally, but did not follow up on the subject through the remainder of the summer.

Limitations

This study only analyzed Instagram posts. It would be important to see if organizations communicate differently on other platforms such as Twitter and Facebook and in different formats, such as newsletters, emails, and blogs. It would also be important to see if there are generational differences in platform preferences and how such differences might inform outreach strategies. Another major limitation of this study is that it focuses on people who have self-selected into outdoor recreation. These people may not be representative of the views, interests and concerns of those who do not participate in nature-based recreation. However, given that the majority of studies looking at diversity in nature-based recreation focus on the constraints that prevent participation, focusing on the experiences of individuals who have overcome such constraints provides new insights. Finally, because this study engaged specifically with the body of literature on Black relationships to outdoor recreation, it did not focus on the experiences of other racial groups. Given that outdoor recreation today occurs on land stolen from native peoples, future scholarship on

racism in outdoor recreation should pay particular attention to the multiple organizations – including Natives Outdoors, Native Women's Wilderness, and Indigenous Women Hike – devoted to promoting outdoor recreation among native people.

CONCLUSION

If this study had compared predominantly Black outdoor organizations with established, traditionally White, outdoor organizations, the results may have reinforced the idea that Black relationships to nature-based recreation deviate from the norm. However, by looking at how gender, sexual orientation, disability, body size and race intersect, I found that what has long appeared to be the norm in outdoor recreation is not representative or inclusive of the majority of Americans. I found no evidence that Black Americans are less interested in connecting to nature than White Americans. I also found no evidence that the way people perceive or value nature is related to their racial identity. However, for people with marginalized identities, who feel that the dominant culture surrounding outdoor recreation is unwelcoming, building community may be a precursor for participating in nature-based recreation. Access to community could be a mediating factor between identity and participation.

Organizations that explicitly identified their audience posted photos and messages from beginner hikers, suggesting that they have developed successful outreach strategies. Organizations struggling to increase the diversity of their audience could adopt some of these strategies by: 1) featuring more posts about individual experiences of nature than beautiful images of landscapes without people 2) communicating their values clearly rather assuming a universal understanding 3) consistently speaking to the need to build more inclusive outdoor communities, rather than sporadically posting about enduring forms of oppression.

Instead of continuing to ask why certain groups are not showing up in natural areas, future research should seek to learn how racism is operating in outdoor spaces and institutions. Rather

than considering race in the narrow context of those groups that are raced as nonwhite, researchers need to ground their analyses in an understanding of how leisure as a whole is racialized. Furthermore, researchers need to recognize that cultural difference cannot be entirely disentangled from broader power differentials.

Within diverse communities of outdoor enthusiasts, the conversation is swiftly evolving, moving beyond calls for increased representation to an intersectional analysis of power and privilege. As more attention is paid to the White supremacist ideologies embedded within the conservation movement, it will be necessary to examine how collective ideas about the meanings of wilderness and public land change. If, as Tuck and Yang (2012) assert, decolonization is not a metaphor, but a process of restoring native control over land, then the existing coalition of outdoor recreation activists will have to wrestle with what this process looks like and what it means for their agendas. How conflicting needs and claims are prioritized within this movement will provide critical lessons for the environmental justice movement.

Appendix

Instagram Caption Codes

Empowerment – describes an internal process of personal growth or accomplishment.
Words and phrases: personal growth/ expansion**,** challenge/ push self, fulfill potential, go outside comfort zone, badass, brave, power of self, belief in self, recognize/ celebrate one's own strength/ endurance, overcome obstacles, conquer fear, self-actualization, reach full potential, follow dreams, be true to self, self-acceptance, "can do anything," "remind me of my power," confidence

Connect to nature – tactile (ex. grass beneath feet, smell of the ocean), emotional, spiritual or metaphysical experience of nature.
Words and phrases - find/feel/ be at peace, zen, reflection, tranquility, rejuvenate/ recharge, receive inspiration/ lessons from nature, be changed by nature, shift, receive understanding about oneself/ one's place in the universe, feel self to be part of something larger/ feel small, connect to God/ the divine, transcend, learn from nature, pay attention to nature, awe, learn about plants and animals through firsthand experience (not posts that are simply animal facts), forest bathing, wonder, marvel, part of nature/ one with nature, feel at home, belong in nature, feel the elements, feel a sense of belonging in nature

Wellness – explicitly related to physical or mental health (as opposed to "connect to nature" where there is a spiritual/ metaphysical dimension)
Words and phrases: therapy/ therapeutic, self-care manage/ cope with anxiety/ depression/ trauma/ symptoms, fitness, exercise, heal (include Hike to Heal campaign when it's not simply #), relieve stress

Escape - disconnect from society, influence of humans
Words and phrases:
freedom/ free, disconnect, get away, solitude, break away, off the grid, forget worries, unplug

History –Learn about history of place, not specific to natural areas.
Words and phrases: Harriet Tubman, black cowboys, monuments, lynchings/ legacy of racial terrorism, land dispossession, ancestral homelands of American Indians (not simply mentioning tribe name)

Achievement- external and measurable accomplishments, like distance covered, elevation gain, or level of difficulty (ex. rating of a climbing route or white water rapid)
Words and phrases: victory, conquering, mountain crusher, peak bagging, summit, I did it, completed portion of thru-hike (AT/PCT etc.), triple crown, level of difficulty, send, competition

Community – building in-person and/ or virtual community around outdoor recreation
Words and phrases: friends, family, loved ones, together, support, connect to other people, squad, quality time with children, crew, company, inclusive, team, welcoming, sisterhood, allies, collaborative, shared stories

Adventure – explore or journey (across landscape as opposed to internal journey), survive discomforts, dangers and unknowns in the outdoors (ex. getting lost, persevering through inclement weather)

Words and phrases: wander, roam, expedition

Enjoyment – words and phrases: relax, fun, playing, great time, smiles, laughter, Sunday Funday (only if this refers to time spent outdoors), good energy, positivity, nature as playground, joy, happy place, pleasure, stoked, had a blast

Stewardship – concern for natural environment at any scale (local to global) and/ or impact of environmental degradation on people
Words and phrases: environmentalist, advocacy, conservation, preservation, litter/ trash, ecological impact, trail building/ maintenance, respect wildlife, Bears Ears National Monument, invasive species, future generations, leave no trace principles, health of environment, pollution, protect environment, clean ups, legislation, environmental education

Beauty *(*of landscape)
Words and phrases: views, majestic, sunrise/sunset, bluebird/ clear skies, fall foliage/colors, wildflowers, starry skies, lovely, "nature is master sculptor," lush/ green, pretty, grand show, gorgeous, golden hour, stunning, display

Representation – inspire others with similar identity (not simply be "inspiring") to participated in outdoor recreation.
Words and phrases: melanin/ melanated, "outchea", share our stories, "Hike Like a Girl" campaign, set an example, change the narrative, be visible, increase visibility change definition of outdoorsy, break the stereotype, diverse/ diversity, uplift others like me, being only one/ being minority, "taking up space", reclaiming space, being unexpected in outdoors, amplify marginalized voices, "we've always been here you just haven't seen us," role models, ambassador

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