

CONSTRAINTS TO RACIAL/ETHNIC MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN THE U.S.  
NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM:  
AN ANALYSIS OF RECREATION BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDES IN ESSEX COUNTY,  
NEW JERSEY

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## **Introduction**

This thesis project explores the contemporary constraints to racial/ethnic minority participation in the U.S. national park system. I begin by providing a historical background of racial minority utilization of national parks as well as a description of the commonly hypothesized barriers that contribute to a persistent racial disparity in national park visitation. I then applied the notions presented in this literature review to a study of citizen-national park visitation patterns, preferences and ideologies in Essex County, New Jersey. I chose this particular county for its urban/racially diverse setting as well as its close proximity to various national park units. In order to collect a representative sample of Essex County citizens, this study applied surveys in the form of questionnaires and interviews in various towns throughout the county (towns with varying racial/ethnic compositions). Following the collection of data in

Essex County, NJ, a data analysis was employed in order to determine if traditional patterns of racial minority national park visitation and perceived constraints to visitation were upheld. Upon identifying the major patterns in visitation, preference and limitations to visitation for Essex County residents, I was able to compare my results/patterns with those of similar studies. This final comparison of trends allowed for me to develop appropriate recommendations to the National Park Service (NPS), community organizations and social institutions as to how to promote and accommodate an increased racial minority presence within the national park system.

My interest in this issue of racial disparity within the national park system (as well as in outdoor recreation in general) first developed when I was a child growing up in suburban New Jersey. I was fortunate enough to be raised by parents who had strong affiliations with the outdoors and often exposed my three siblings and me to the beauties of the natural world near and far from our nature-deprived upbringing. Growing up with an African American sister within a racially diverse town, I have always been particularly sensitive to issues of racial disparity and inequality. My awareness of such issues was often heightened when leaving our town for what appeared to be an otherwise very 'white' America. Given my family's strong affiliation to natural landscapes/outdoor activities and the disproportionate concentration of minority groups in urban centers, our typical vacationing preferences took us far and away from the racial diversity we experienced in our hometown. Whether it was hiking, rafting, canoeing or camping, I always wondered why we never saw more people who 'looked like my sister'. It's hard to say what exactly caused this curiosity. Maybe it was due to my exposure to diversity growing up, perhaps it was a subconscious desire for my sister to feel more comfortable, or maybe even an experience where I somehow noticed people's surprise or confusion at seeing the unique makeup

of our family. Whatever the cause, I have always noticed and continue to notice a significant and unsettling racial disparity within national parks and more broadly, within outdoor recreation. Whether hiking just outside of urban New Jersey, or deep in Rocky Mountain National Park, this phenomenon is consistently prevalent.

Although I partly chose this topic as a means to satisfy a lifelong curiosity, I believe it is relevant for far more important reasons. Firstly, I believe one's involvement in the natural environment, while not an obligation, can serve a very spiritual, cleansing, enjoyable and educational purpose. I believe that all people should have the opportunity to be exposed to nature and decide for themselves if it is to be a valuable part of their life. However, due to a variety of reasons, such an opportunity may not be available to all people. This research will look into how a lack of opportunity/exposure may contribute to trends of racial disparity in the outdoors. In so doing, it is my hope that solutions can be developed to help overcome barriers that limit outdoor participation and help afford all people an equitable opportunity in [the option of] outdoor exposure.

Despite its clear importance, equal opportunity to exposure/engagement in the outdoors is not just important because of the potential direct benefits (spiritual, enjoyment etc.) one may receive. Eliminating such limitations could provide millions of people/kids with a deserved and equal opportunity to interact with our most pristine, beautiful and important natural environments. Attempting to spread such notions of environmental appreciation, equality and sustainability are important not just for the individual's sake, but also for the future protection of our earth. If we wish to leave our future generations with similar or better natural environments, an environmental ethic must be adopted and carried by all citizens, not just those of a certain race, class, ethnicity or population.

## Background

In order to properly address this topic, we must first examine the historical context of racial/ethnic minority participation in the outdoors. Outdoor recreation participation by minority groups has been an area of considerable focus amongst outdoor recreation researchers for the past several decades. Trends in the underrepresentation of minority groups in National Park visitation have been continuously evident since this phenomenon was first formally identified in the 1960's (Gramann, 2006; Floyd, 1999). The lack of minority groups in outdoor recreation areas has been a widely uncontested circumstance in outdoor recreation literature and its prevalence is noted by renowned race and recreation researcher, Dr. Myron Floyd (1999), who states, "the African American/White disparity in outdoor recreation participation has appeared with regularity in research, spanning nearly four decades" (p. 11). The accuracy of this trend is further identified by a recently published National Park Service survey, in which data suggests that 78% of all national park visitors in 2008-09 were white, while only 7% of all visitors were African American and 9% were Hispanic (Taylor et al., 2011). Corroborating these results, a similar NPS study in 2000 found a park population that consisted of 83% white, 4% African American and 10% Hispanic visitors. Despite recent well-documented increases in United States minority populations (2000 Census Profile; 2010 Census Interactive Population), these changes have not been adequately mirrored in the demographics of outdoor recreation and trends in racial disparity have continued (Taylor et al., 2011).

Although the focus of this thesis will be on racial/ethnic minority (particularly African Americans and Hispanics) participation within the national park system, it must be noted that

minority group participation in outdoor recreation outside of national park designation has also been observed. Studies exploring minority visitation rates of parks at the regional and state level hoped to find increased minority participation given that national parks are often located in rural/non-diverse settings. In exploring the demographics of visitation rates of parks surrounded by urban areas and a racially diverse population, the results were disappointingly congruent to those of national park findings (Floyd, 1999; Tierney, 2001; Gobster, 2002; Thomson, 2008; O'Brien & Njambi 2012; Roberts, 2007). The results of such studies were derived from parks in areas such as Los Angeles County, Chicago, Cleveland, and the Bay Area and included plentiful participant respondent information from many minority groups (O'Brien & Njambi 2012; Gobster, 2002; Thompson, 2008; Dwyer, 1990; Roberts, 2007). Despite the proximity of these park studies to urban/racially diverse communities, findings of white over representation and low minority participation were markedly abundant; similar results were derived from numerous national parks in ethnically diverse areas by the Visitor Services Project (VSP), at the University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit (Floyd, 1999). This trend is best summarized by Floyd (1999) who states, "As documented by national, state, and regional studies, a higher proportion of Whites visit national parks than members of racial and ethnic minority groups...Racial and ethnic differences were also found in use of urban parks" (p.16).

Much of the aforementioned literature on the racial makeup of National Park visitation rates also explores the differing participation in outdoor recreational activities amongst ethnic groups. Such research attempts to contrast the different preferences, interests, and behaviors in outdoor recreation activities between minority groups and whites. Several studies have found that African Americans were more likely to engage in social activities/interactions within the park and strongly preferred "developed facilities and conveniences" (Floyd, 1999 p. 14). On the

contrary, whites reported the desire to ‘get away’ and expressed a greater preference for natural areas (Floyd, 1999). Generally speaking, it has been found that Whites exhibit a stronger participation in ‘adventurous wildland’ activities (i.e. camping, hunting, hiking) whereas African Americans displayed a preference for social activities (i.e. picnicking, outdoor sporting events) (Gramann, 1996; Kraus, 1994; Floyd, 1999).

In an attempt to understand the cause of current racial/ethnic differences in outdoor preferences/relationships, race and environment theorist Bruce Braun (2003) examines the historical racial context of natural environments in America. Braun argues that natural environments have been racialized as places of white privilege/identity since the westward expansion of the American frontier (initiated by white explorers). This identification of nature as a ‘white’ place was reinforced during the creation of national parks in which racist sentiments drove city-dwelling whites to nature in search of refuge/racial purity and restored sense of national pride from the degeneracy associated with the increased immigration of minority groups (Braun, 2003; Hickcox, 2012). Braun claims that current environmental attitudes/practices can be attributed to this historical racialization of natural places and that these racial identities in nature are still perpetuated in modern environmental discourse (Braun, 2003).

The formation and perpetuation of these racial identities in nature also included the entrenched place of whites in ‘risk taking’ activities (i.e. mountain climbing, camping etc.). This adoption of ‘adventurous’ activities in nature as a stamp of white identity began with the framing of whites as explorers and pioneers of the American west and the erasure/neglect of Native America, African American and Spanish/Mexican history in western settlement (Kosek, 2006). Whites determined themselves to be the sole source of modernity/development and the founders of an ideology that separated nature from society; therefore, due to the idea that minority cultures

were primitive, it was perceived to be a white-only responsibility or obligation to rediscover a natural past. The white claim to adventurous/risk-taking activities in nature has been reinforced by what Braun calls “citationality”, wherein, through various mediums, whites are repeatedly portrayed as the primary adventurers, explorers and dominators of wilderness. Braun argues that this racist and exclusionary process is an important contributor to the current racial/ethnic disparity observed in wilderness areas, parks and ‘adventurous’ outdoor activities (Braun, 2003).

This literature may serve to explain, at least partially, the varying preferences and engagement(s) in outdoor recreation amongst racial/ethnic groups. However, as we will discuss more thoroughly in the following section, race/ethnicity alone cannot be used as the sole determinant in explaining or predicting one’s environmental agenda. Not only is it inaccurate and racist to generalize outdoor recreation preference(s) for a whole group or population, assuming preference alone dictates one’s visitation of outdoor recreation area/national parks is naïve and erroneous. The following section of this paper will provide an in-depth look at the historical exclusion of racial/ethnic minority groups from national parks and outdoor recreation as well as the most prevalent constraints/barriers to greater minority participation.

## **Literature Review (history)**

Beginning with its creation in 1916, the National Park Service (NPS) has been assigned the duty of protecting some of our nation’s most pristine/beautiful natural environments and historical monuments for the benefit and enjoyment of the American people. This duty granted the NPS the responsibility of managing and designating ‘National Parks’ and monuments with the hope that such resources will be left intact for the enjoyment of future generations.

Unfortunately, as specified in the literature analyzed above, participation in our nation’s national

park system has been historically dominated by America's white majority. The origins of this phenomenon can be traced back to the formation of a nationalist narrative in which 'true nature' was conceived as places isolated from human presence (O'Brien & Njambi, 2012). This dualistic view of nature and society is presumed to have provided the foundation for the human development of landscapes as well as the protection of such landscapes from further human influence. However, in further critiquing the impacts of this dualism, O'Brien and Njambi (2012) claim, "the nature/society divide that separates pristine from fouled landscapes is the same dualistic hierarchy that separates and privileges self-proclaimed "civilized" white males from their "primitive" and otherwise "inferior" Others" (p. 18). Although the inherent racism and exclusionary nature of this historical sentiment has by now been formally acknowledged in the environmental community, notions of a superior 'white' environmental ethic are still prevalent today in environmental discourse and within white communities (Hickcox, 2012).

It is claimed by critics that the dualistic ideology that once justified the conquering of wild/primitive landscapes and people by superior or civilized forces is now replaced by its contemporary opposition in environmental agendas: protecting the 'wild' from the impacts of civilization. Nonetheless, as reported by O'Brien and Njambi (2012), both cases of duality have contributed to a system that "privileges maleness and whiteness- the purported sources of civilization- in relation to their nature-associated, and hence marginalized, others" (18). The history of National Park use in the United States is certainly not exempt from this trend of 'whiteness' in the outdoors, and, as many critics have pointed out, this played a large role in shaping contemporary racialized identities.

Prior to the social, institutional and legislative reform that accompanied the Civil Rights Movement and the following decades, exclusionary policies and practices were quite prevalent

within the outdoor recreational context. While the contemporary National Park system and mainstream environmentalism still exhibits a varied collection of exclusionary practices, for now I will focus on the historical exclusionary barriers that were embedded in racist and discriminatory park-visitor behavior. Evidence of blatant racist behavior as deterring African American participation in the parks is documented in Gramann's research (1996) on underparticipation and underutilization of the parks. Examples of such discriminatory practices were provided in accounts by African American interviewees who encountered signs stating, "Niggers not welcome here" (Gramann, p. 32) as well as instances in which they were told to leave (to put it nicely) by white park visitors and policemen (Gramann, p. 33). Further supporting the existence of historical racially discriminatory sentiments, O'Brien and Njambi (2012) provide accounts where African Americans were unwelcome and harassed for being in nature. The existence of racism/fear as contributing to the dichotomy of white versus black outdoor participation is best summarized in an account authored by Mei Mei Evans (2002) which states, "Whereas straight white men look to nature to offer up something—the 'elements' or large animals with big teeth—against which they can prove themselves; women, people of color, and gays and lesbians go into nature in fear of encountering straight white men" (p. 191).

Although most contemporary research suggests a decline in acts of blatant racism/discrimination within National Parks, its historical legitimacy (as well as current discrimination) continues to shape African American perceptions of their 'place' in nature. In a recounting documented by Mei Mei Evans (2002), an African American woman expressed that "her internalized fear of getting "closer-to-nature" is linked to a history of violence against her ancestors that encountered whites in rural wooded areas" (p. 186). The historical context of discrimination in the outdoors plays a significant role in shaping African American interest in

exploring nature. Although contemporary research suggests that physical discriminatory practices such as acts of violence have largely disappeared, critics claim that stories, experiences and historical accounts of such practices contribute to a modern ‘perceived discrimination’ (Gramann, 1996; Floyd, 1999). Perceived discrimination can be manifested as expected discrimination due to its historical context, stories of discrimination, and/or projections of practices, actions, behaviors within a setting that are interpreted as discriminatory (Floyd, 1999). Recent surveys exploring the constraints to minority participation in outdoor recreation have noted ‘perceived discrimination’ as among the few key factors inhibiting greater park visitation by minority groups (O’Brien & Njambi, 2012; Tierney et al., 2001; Floyd, 1999; Gramann, 1996). Recent literature on ‘perceived discrimination’ is accompanied by definitions of ‘actual’ or ‘real’ discrimination, which will be described later in this review.

At this point we have discussed the historical context in which National Parks have been created as a ‘white space’ (Finney, 2006), as well as how earlier acts of racism/discrimination contribute to a racial disparity in National Park usage. Now, we must proceed with a discussion of additional contemporary constraints to African American participation in national park visitation. In revisiting the previously mentioned constraint topic of discrimination, contemporary research has provided that current, not just historical, practices of discrimination play a large role in discouraging minority participation in outdoor recreation (Roberts, 2007; Gramann, 1996; Floyd, 1999; O’Brien & Njambi, 2012). Floyd (1999) cites this barrier as the ‘discrimination hypothesis’ and further defines it as an “attention to contemporary (rather than historical) sources of discrimination arising from interpersonal interaction with other visitor groups or management personnel”(p. 5). These types of discrimination can be labeled as ‘perceived’ or ‘real’, and categorization is largely dependent on whether the discriminatory act is

“expected” or an actual, documented and widely recognized experience. No matter the label, instances of institutional (i.e. lack of minority park staff), visitor interaction, and expected discrimination exist in respondent surveys and are well documented as contributing to lower minority visitation in National Parks (Floyd, 1999; Roberts, 2007). The extent to which ‘actual’ discrimination in National Parks is relevant to impacting minority visitation varies significantly by study, but instances of rude/unwelcoming/suspicious staff and visitors are not uncommon (Roberts, 2007; Roberts & Rodriguez, 2008). Despite the ambiguous findings on actual discrimination, there is wide consensus that perceived discrimination is a significant factor in limiting minority visitation, particularly amongst African Americans (Roberts, 2007; Roberts & Rodriguez, 2008; Floyd, 1999; O’Brien & Njambi, 2012; Gramann, 1996).

Another perceived limitation to minority participation in National Parks is economic constraints. According to Washburne (1998), this concept is known as the ‘marginality hypothesis’ and posits that “low participation in wildland recreation among ethnic minorities results from limited access to socioeconomic resources which, in turn, result from historical patterns of discrimination” (as cited in Floyd 1999, p. 3). This hypothesis assumes that in eliminating economic barriers and allowing for socioeconomic equality, minority groups would exhibit similar National Park participation patterns to the white majority. This concept is important in that it recognizes the historical context in which minority groups have been marginalized and unjustly forced into situations of lower socioeconomic status (generally speaking). This hypothesis has proved beneficial in that several studies show that economic barriers are a significant and relevant barrier for minority participation in National Parks (Gramann, 1996; Roberts, 2007; Floyd, 1999; Kraus, 1994; Finney, 2006; Tierney et al., 2001).

The effects of this economic marginalization is recorded by African American survey respondents who note that issues of transportation, park fees, cost of leisure time (from not working) etc. affect their visitation to National Parks; these factors are clearly tied to limitations in economic resources. Furthermore, a study by Richard Makopondo (2006) found in the accounts of African American respondents that, given the marginalization of minority groups, such groups are more likely to be preoccupied with fulfilling their basic social and economic needs rather than environmental agendas. However, this hypothesis fails in that several studies have controlled for socioeconomic status and found that the disparity between minority group and white participation in National Parks persists (Gramann, 1996; Floyd, 1999).

In finding flaws within the marginality hypothesis, many studies have suggested the subcultural/ethnicity hypothesis as an alternative to explaining lower rates of minority participation in outdoor recreation. The subcultural hypothesis states that racial and ethnic variations in outdoor participation can be attributed to differing paradigms, interests/value systems, and socialization procedures inherited by racial and ethnic groups (independent of socioeconomic factors) (Floyd, 1999). In an early attempt to simplify this concept, an essay by Meeker (1973) explains that, “while Whites view parks as places for refuge and escape from urban stressors, African Americans and Native Americans display little enthusiasm for parks and wilderness because these places are reminder of their subjugation and oppression” (as cited in Floyd 1999, p. 3-4). While this may seem to be a broad generalization and oversimplification (particularly in noting parks as reminders of oppression), several contemporary studies have found that African Americans and other minority groups tend to place a lower value on outdoor recreation/National Parks in comparison to the white majority (Steer & Chambers, 1998; Gramann, 1996; Roberts, 2007; O’Brien & Njambi, 2012; Thompson, 2008; Makopondo, 2006).

Often, when discovering that African Americans (as well as other minority groups, but to a lesser extent) tend to value their environmental participation less than whites, studies have found that respondents attribute this to a lack of socialization as children into outdoor recreation (Roberts, 2007). Despite several studies affirming the validity of African American preferences as impacting their outdoor recreation participation, broadly claiming that African Americans don't value or aren't interested in the outdoors, as often perceived by white survey respondents, is flawed and unjust (Roberts, 2007; Dwyer, 1990). Roberts and Rodriguez (2008) note, "there seems to be a persistent myth that ethnic minorities do not value the outdoors or related outdoor recreational activities" (p. 48). Furthermore, Roberts and Rodriguez (2008) claim that in conjunction with recent literature, respondents in her research expressed strong values for outdoor recreation, the parks and the natural environment.

The common perception amongst whites that minority groups don't value the outdoors in the same way they do has been found to be prevalent even in the most progressive, liberal and environmentally-oriented communities (i.e. Boulder, Colorado) (Hickcox, 2012). This exclusionary myth has its origins in the historical notions of 'white privilege' in the outdoors and has continued through modern environmental discourse, agendas and policies. Whites perceive themselves as insiders to the environmental movement and they have adopted the belief that a proper/healthy environmental ethic is contingent upon class status, specifically, white middle class status (Hickcox, 2012). Although there is some evidence to suggest why environmental attitudes may differ amongst racial/ethnic groups, as shown in the debunking of the 'minorities don't value nature' myth by Hickcox (2012) and numerous other studies, race/ethnicity alone cannot be used to predict one's relationship with natural environments.

The previously discussed topics of the marginality and ethnicity/subcultural hypothesis have provided important explanations as to why racial/ethnic minority groups tend to exhibit lower participation in outdoor recreation. However, as examined in earlier sections, such hypotheses have flaws and cannot be used to explain the full extent of limitation to racial/ethnic minority outdoor participation. Just as current economic constraints to outdoor participation have been shaped by historical discrimination, we will now examine additional factors, both historical and current, that have contributed to constraints to racial/ethnic minority participation in the outdoors.

A common theme in research exploring contemporary constraints to African American participation in National Parks is that there is general lack of knowledge/education on the environment and outdoors in minority communities. Although it is often explored as a separate constraint in literature, I will claim that the topic of ‘communication’ contributes to this lack of knowledge/awareness on the environment and National Parks. There is general consensus amongst minority respondents that there is a lack of available and promoted information on National Parks within school systems and community groups in minority communities. Studies conducted by Roberts (2007) and Finney (2006) indicate that African Americans often expressed that they simply did not know that certain National Parks existed, how to get to them, or what to do in the parks. This can be attributed to historical discrimination contributing to the structure of minority educational curriculums as well as a lack of communication in contemporary media/advertising. The latter has been claimed to be of particular importance in contemporary research (Roberts 2007; Roberts & Rodriguez, 2008; Finney, 2006; The National Park Service, 2002).

Finney (2006) and Roberts (2007) describe the traditional and contemporary lack of representation of African Americans within white and black magazines as further contributing to the notion of the outdoors as a 'white space' as well as African Americans not identifying with nature (also Braun, 2003). This is noted by Finney (2006) when she describes a 2006 copy of *Vanity Fair* magazine listing prominent environmental activists in which only 2 of 63-pictured activists were African American. This notion is also supported in traditional 'black' magazines such as *Ebony* and *Jet*, when respondents in Roberts' (2007) research claimed a lack of African American representation in environmental ads and articles. Respondents in this study as well as others have also noted that the NPS is ineffective [and invisible] in promoting awareness of National Park existence, access, and activities in minority communities (Roberts, 2007). Such respondents further claim that an increased NPS presence in minority communities promoting and providing information on National Parks would be helpful in generating minority interest/participation.

Braun (2003) also examined the impact of media, particularly magazines, in contributing to the current shape of outdoor recreation preferences amongst racial/ethnic groups. After describing the association of whites with 'risk taking' or adventurous outdoor activities (described in the background section), he explains how minority figures have been consistently excluded from more 'extreme outdoor activities' in outdoor magazines. Braun (2003) largely attributes this racialization of activities to companies seeking to market to communities that are perceived to have the "security and resources" to take risks versus those who are "continuously positioned at risk" (Braun, p. 177).

Further supporting this trend in a lack of African American awareness and identification with outdoor recreation is the well-identified problem of a lack of African American/minority

representation within NPS employment/recruitment. African American respondents in various surveys have expressed that a lack of African American NPS employees serves a deterrent to their participation; this trend contributes to the idea of National Parks as a 'white space' and produces feelings of being unwelcome or unwanted (Finney, 2006; Roberts, 2007). Roberts (2007) also found that African American respondents often expressed that they did not feel that Black people were adequately represented in the history/story of the park. In cases where the National Park attempted to include black history into the park, African Americans were often offended to have a white ranger inaccurately tell 'their' story (Roberts, 2007). Instances of African Americans encountering black rangers have all indicated positive responses, and felt such experiences promoted their interest in revisiting and identifying with National Park (Roberts, 2007). It was further noted by several African American respondents in Roberts (2007) that the presence of black rangers within their community (at job fairs, school career days etc.) would greatly promote employment interest within the NPS as well as a more general interest/awareness of National Parks.

Although the development of racialized identities in the outdoors is often discussed as a product of a pre-civil rights and exclusionary/racist society, notions of racial superiority in the outdoors have persisted in modern/liberal mainstream environmentalism. Despite claims of this movement's commitment to racial equality, mainstream environmentalism continues to be largely void of minority voices and has failed to recognize the importance of structural racism in its historical context and propagation/reinforcement in modern society. Through these failures and a continuing environmental discourse that urges the adoption of a 'white' idea for change and inclusion, mainstream environmentalism continues to uphold notions of racism and white privilege. (Hickcox, 2012)

In recent history, the formation of the environmental justice movement has surfaced as an attempt to bring attention to and transform the racial inequalities embedded in mainstream environmentalism (Hickcox, 2012). This movement points to the evolution of racism [in modern environmentalism] as a product of the increasing racialization of cities, in which urban areas and their inhabitants are criminalized and suggested to be inferior/degenerate; nature is promoted as the necessary escape from the ‘infectious moral inferiority’ of inner city areas (Braun, 2003). The environmental justice movement has realized this embedded racism in American society/environmental agendas, and seeks to attain an equitable minority voice in environmental policy/decision making and eliminate the traditional inequality in the distribution of environmental burdens and benefits. Despite the efforts employed by the environmental justice movement and other grassroots environmental groups, racism and exclusion continues to permeate the majority of contemporary environmental agendas/opinions/discourse (Braun, 2003).

Thus far we have discussed the major and most-commonly identified constraints to racial/ethnic minority participation in outdoor recreation. A few other, less prevalent constraints have surfaced in surveys of minority communities/park visitors and these will be briefly discussed below. Several studies have noted that small proportions of racial/ethnic minority respondents expressed a safety issue/fear of unknown fauna as a barrier to greater participation (Roberts 2007; Roberts & Rodriguez, 2008; O’Brien & Njambi, 2012; Gramann, 1996). Additional factors occasionally described as barriers to park visitation include crowding in park areas, a desire of cleaner/more modern facilities (discussed briefly above as a desire for ‘developed’ conveniences), and more commonly, a lack of mass transport (Roberts, 2007; Floyd, 1999; Finney, 2006). To summarize the findings discussed in the above sections, contemporary

research holds that African Americans and other racial/ethnic minority groups attribute their limited visitation to national parks to a variety of factors: economic constraints including the cost and affordability associated with parks (opportunity cost of time, transportation, food, & entrance fees); lack of education/knowledge/awareness of national parks; perceived and real discrimination; lack of representation in media/NPS employment and culture/advertisements; and socialization as a child leading to altered value systems/exposure.

Given the fact that studies have controlled for socioeconomic status and found that whites still exhibit higher national park visitation rates compared to racial/ethnic minority groups, it is important to consider how other constraints have impacted minority participation in national parks. The role of education, proposed by Thompson (2008) to be the strongest predictor of national park visitation, as well as awareness (Finney, 2006), transportation/access, various kinds of discrimination, NPS culture and media influences/initiatives are of particular importance in addressing low minority participation within the National Park system (Roberts, 2007; Roberts & Rodriguez, 2008; Finney, 2006; Gramann, 1996; O'Brien & Njambi, 2012; Tierney et al., 2001)

## Methods

### Hypothesis

In order to determine if the visitation patterns and constraint theories discussed in the preceding literature review can be applied to all national park units/regions in the United States, this study focused on citizens within Essex County, NJ. This county was chosen for its high racial diversity (i.e. 33.5 % Non Hispanic White, 42.2% African American & 20.8% Hispanic) (US Census, 2010), as well as its proximity to various National Park units. The natural-urban interface exhibited by many of these parks and their surrounding regions was expected to provide interesting information regarding citizen use patterns and knowledge of the parks. This study is unique because it examines the constraints to racial minority participation as experienced/believed by both minority and majority groups. The white misperceptions of constraints to minority group visitation that surfaced provided useful information about the current shape of visitation trends, the extension of exclusionary ideals/behavior and the effectiveness of current diversity initiatives.

Throughout the implementation of these surveys, I expected to uncover a similar trend of racial/ethnic minority underrepresentation in the national parks. Although such a finding would largely corroborate the results of other studies, I suspected the degree of disparity in racial group visitation would be much less severe in Essex County. An increased minority presence in the parks was hypothesized due to the substantial racial/ethnic diversity of the area as well as the local and urbanized nature of many of the proximal parks. Several of the parks listed on the questionnaire are historic parks, beaches and smaller recreation areas that are generally

considered less 'wild' than say, Yosemite or Rocky Mountain National Park. Consideration of the 'wildness' of a park as a predictor of the degree of minority visitation has been determined a reasonable hypothesis in several studies (Gramman, 1996; Steer & Chambers, 1998; Navarro, 2010). To reiterate this claim, park service officials will often point out that park demographics can vary, and that parks like MLK Jr. National Historic Site and Manzanar National Historic Site will often draw quite diverse crowds. This expectation of increased minority visitation in Essex County's surrounding (largely historic and urban) parks can also be traced to findings in several studies that highlight a minority preference (forced by the historical development of wilderness as a place of white privilege) for more developed facilities, 'less adventurous' outdoor activities, and more proximal, less 'wild' parks (Floyd, 1999; Kraus, 1994).

In addition to expecting an increased minority presence in nearby parks, I anticipated that the disparity between white and minority activity preferences observed in various studies and mentioned above would be present. In agreement with previous findings, I hypothesized that the white majority would exhibit a greater affinity for activities such as camping and hiking, while minority groups would display a greater interest in more social park activities. Moving on from park visitation/behavioral expectations, a more elusive and controversial aspect of this study is the perceived constraints to racial minority visitation. I anticipated the constraint findings of this study to be especially interesting as confidence/consensus in constraints identified by previous studies has consistently wavered. Although I expected many of the commonly identified constraints, such as economic constraints, to surface frequently in my study, I also anticipated significant disagreement amongst racial/ethnic groups in identifying the most prevalent constraint to racial minority participation.

### **Implementation of Surveys:**

Over the course of a three month period in 2012, I employed surveys in the form of questionnaires and one-on-one interview sessions in various towns throughout Essex County, NJ. Questionnaire distribution locations were chosen based on the racial/ethnic composition of towns in order to gather a representative sample of Essex County's population. Interview opportunities were made available to any enthusiastic or interested questionnaire respondents, and were conducted either on site or at an alternative location/time conducive to the interviewees' convenience.

The questionnaires utilized for this study were structured to determine a respondent's personal affiliation to national parks (i.e. visitation and preferred activities), as well as their personal experiences and opinions of potential constraints to racial minority visitation. Questions regarding potential limitations or constraints to minority visitation were constructed based off common or reoccurring themes discussed in the above literature review. The interviews utilized for this study employed a similar structure to the questionnaires, but allowed for more open ended responses/discussions as well as individual recommendations as to how to combat the issue of racial disparity within national park visitation.

Within the towns targeted for questionnaire distribution, I stationed myself outside/within local parks, outdoor shopping plazas, community fairs/concerts and other heavily visited public areas. A total of 221 questionnaires were administered, but only 182 will be used for this study. Questionnaires that were not completed or returned, via voluntary respondent withdrawal, were discarded and not used in this study. The questionnaires were administered by the principal investigator, Richard Martoglio, and took approximately 3-7 minutes per respondent. The greatest frequency of respondents occurred on weekends or after work hours at community fairs, concerts and other events. This is likely due to the influx of people not at work, as well as the

nature of the event as a leisurely activity. Questionnaire distribution in shopping plazas and local parks proved to be more difficult and respondent recruitment was generally quite low. Within the outdoor shopping plazas, people generally did not want their shopping time interrupted and were in more of a rush. Many potential respondents would avoid and ignore eye/verbal contact completely. Distribution of questionnaires at local parks also proved to be difficult unless there was some sort of event taking place. There was a general lack of density of respondents at the park; people were spread out and taking part in individual activities, making questionnaire distribution quite difficult and often awkward.

Recruiting willing interviewees for this project proved to be much more difficult than locating questionnaire respondents. In total, 4 in-person interviews were conducted, only one of which was on site, directly following the respondent's completion of the questionnaire. The other 3 interviews were acquired through interested questionnaire respondents but took place at a separate time and place. One of these interviews was a group interview, consisting of myself and two acquaintance respondents. The two remaining interviews were conducted as one-on-one sessions. Each of the 4 interviews was approximately 30 minutes in duration. An additional two questionnaire respondents wished to conduct an interview through email, but after sending them a set of questions and discussion points they failed to reply. The anecdotal data collected from interviews will be interspersed/integrated throughout the results section of this paper in order to provide a more personal description of respondent opinions/trends.

The biggest obstacle in implementing the questionnaires and interviews was attracting respondents. Offering no compensation for participation in my survey, I was unable to incentivize respondent efforts. It seems, as was often stated by respondents and passersby, that offering compensation for participation or some type of direct incentive would have increased

my respondent base greatly. An additional and somewhat surprising problem that I encountered was that many people simply did not know what a national park was, where they were, or if they had been to one. This problem occurred regularly with respondents of every race/ethnic group, but it was a trend observed most frequently within minority groups (particularly African American respondents).

The lack of awareness of local national parks was problematic in that many respondents would assume that they haven't been to a national park, but upon reading the list of local national parks displayed on the questionnaire (see question # 3 in appendix A) would realize that they had actually been to one or several. This lack of awareness also worked in the opposite direction in that many people assumed they had been to a national park, but upon asking me if a certain park qualified as a national park unit, their assumption was revealed to be wrong. There seemed to be a significant amount of confusion amongst respondents in being able to distinguish between a state park/forest, a county park and a national park. This confusion on how to distinguish a national park caused many surveys to be lengthier than anticipated and caused questions to be filled out incorrectly (i.e. respondents would check "no" for having ever visited a national park but then would check "yes" for visitation of several local national parks).

Although this common lack of awareness of local national parks may have slowed the distribution/analyzation of surveys, it may have shed light on an interesting inhibitor to national park visitation in the Tri State area. Upon inquiring as to what a national park was or which parks were national parks, many respondents would ask, "what do you mean by national park, like Yellowstone or Yosemite?" This may speak to the fact that the national parks surrounding Essex County do not have the reputation, size or physical grandeur of the more famous national parks such as Yellowstone, Yosemite or the Grand Canyon. Many respondents with knowledge

of the local national parks claimed that these units did not often charge fees, a notable aspect of many famous parks, as well as lacked signage and National Park Service (NPS) representation (in the form of employees and tourist information offices). Although the comparatively lacking size, reputation and grandeur of these parks may certainly contribute to decreased visitation and awareness, it seems as though a failing effort to publicize the existence of these parks can also be to blame. A seemingly reasonable and common complaint voiced by respondents was that the NPS needs to make an enhanced effort to advertise the existence and benefit of local parks, particularly within urban communities. However, the lack of public awareness of local national parks cannot be completely the fault of the NPS as several respondents explained, such awareness issues are also rooted in failing education curriculums, community outreach initiatives and other social institutions.

### **Data Analysis:**

Upon completing the surveying segment of this study, the first set of data to be analyzed was the questionnaires. The questionnaires were first separated according to racial/ethnic category. A total of nine categories were identified; Non Hispanic White, White, African American, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian or Native Alaskan, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Two or more races, and Other. The distinction between Non Hispanic White and White is that 'White' can include people of Hispanic ethnicity who also self identify as white; corroborating its usage by the U.S. Census and other race and recreation studies, this study's discussion of 'white americans' refers to Non Hispanic Whites only. Developing these categories allowed me to determine the number of respondents from each racial/ethnic group as well as the percentage of total respondents each category represented.

After separating the questionnaires according to racial/ethnic category, each grouping of questionnaires was individually entered into an excel spreadsheet for a statistical analysis. Columns were developed for every potential choice (answer) offered on each of the survey's 14 questions. The choice(s) selected by individual respondents were then tallied in each column. After counting the total number of tallies for each potential answer, I was able to determine the percentage of respondents from each racial/ethnic category that chose certain answers for each question. With the questionnaire data now stratified by racial/ethnic group and by what percentage of each group selected a certain answer, I was able to compare how each racial/ethnic group responded to a particular question.

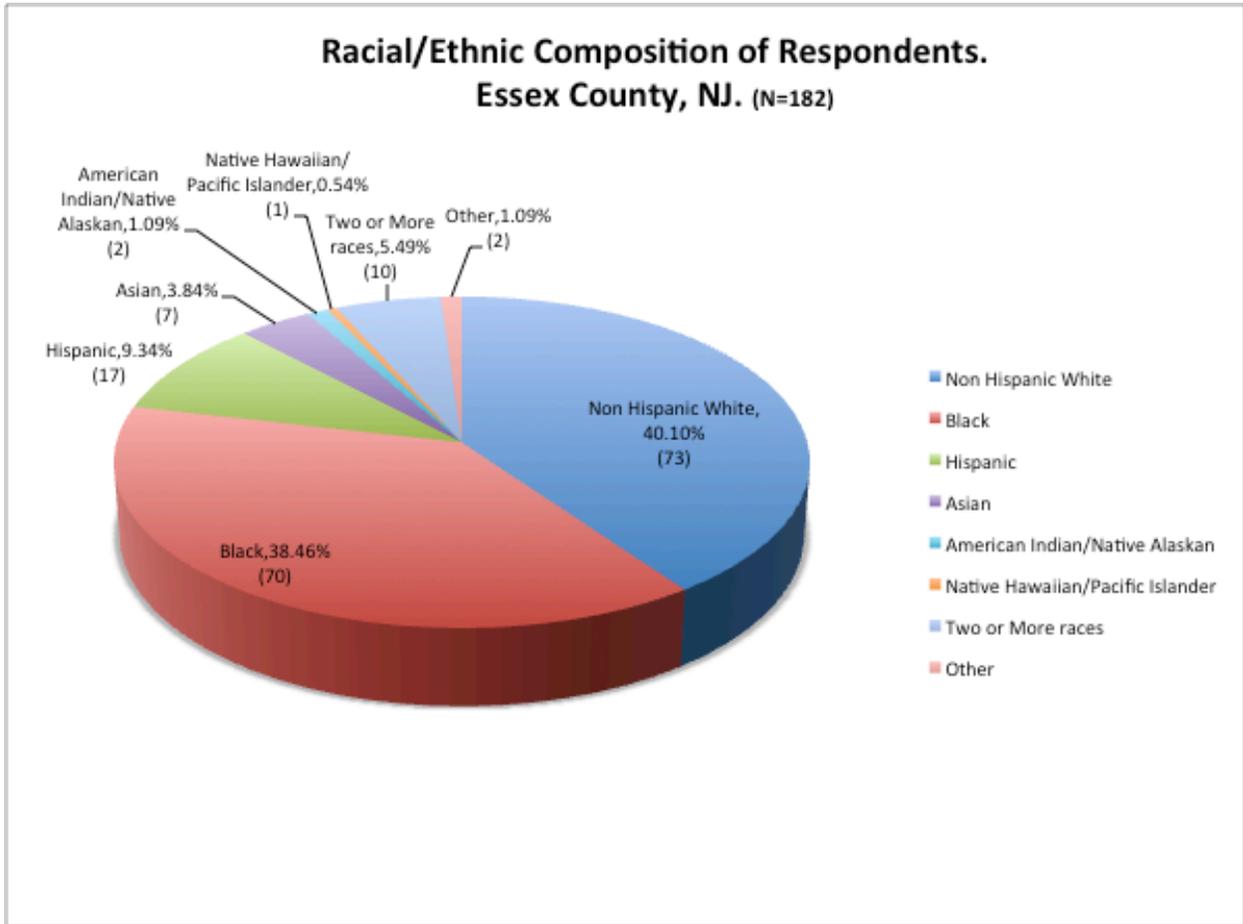
This statistical analysis of questionnaire data allowed for the identification of patterns amongst each racial/ethnic group (i.e. what percentage of African American respondents camp when they visit a national park). It also allowed for the comparison of patterns exhibited by each racial/ethnic group, which was conducive to determining how visitation, constraint perceptions, and park experiences/values vary according to each group. The quantitative data gathered from these questionnaires was then compiled into pie charts and bar graphs in order to visually depict the various patterns observed in this study.

## Results/Findings

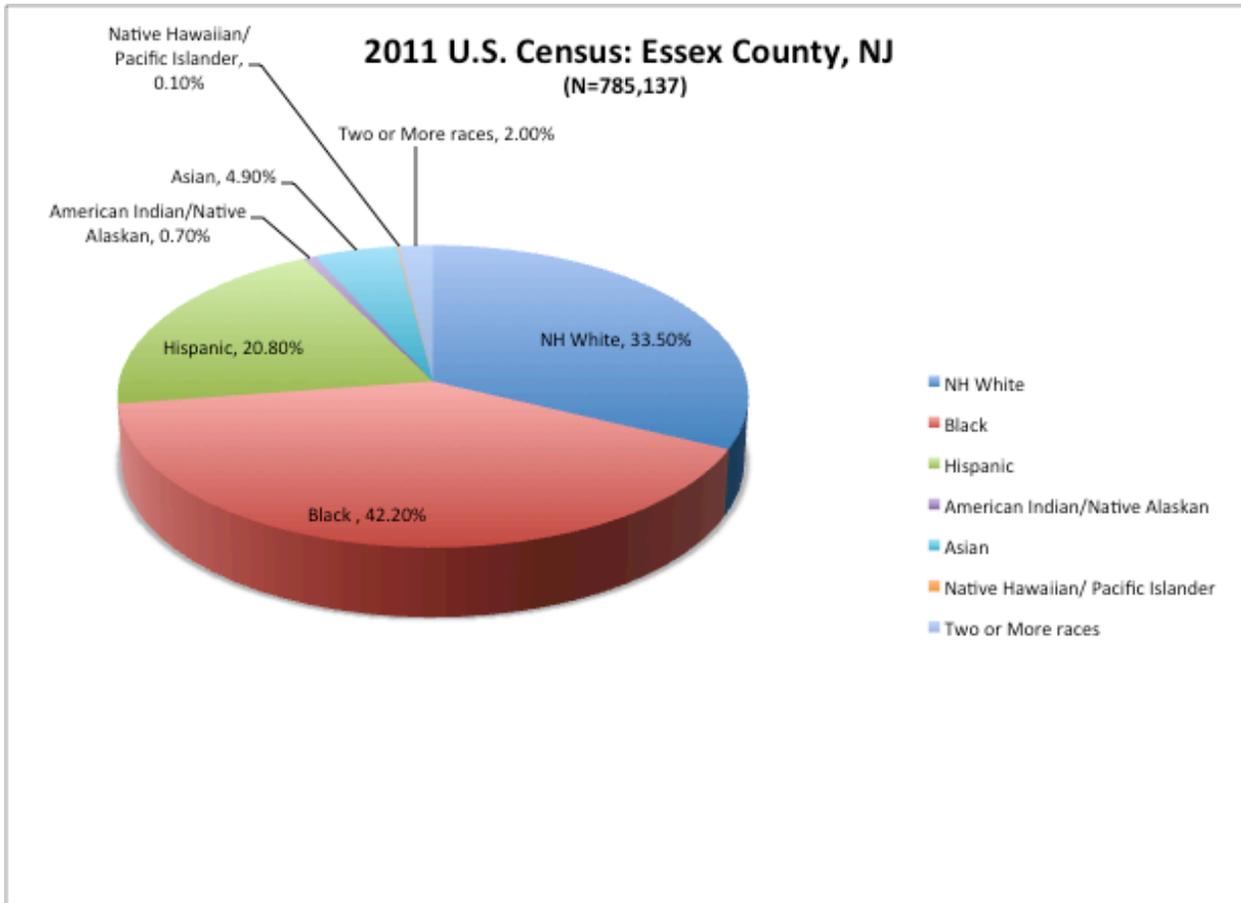
### Racial/Ethnic Trends in Visitation:

Upon analyzing the questionnaire data gathered during the survey portion of this study, I found that the racial/ethnic composition of my sample was largely representative of Essex County's population. The U.S. Census Bureau suggests that in 2011, Essex County's population was (33.5% Non Hispanic White, 42.2% African American, and 20.8% Hispanic. The respondent population for this study was 40.10% Non Hispanic White, 38.46% African American, and 9.34% Hispanic (for the complete racial/ethnic percentage breakdown of this study in comparison to 2011 U.S. Census statistics see **Chart 1a & 1b** below). The Essex County data on the remaining racial/ethnic groups (Asians, American Indians/Native Alaskans, Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders, Two or more races, and other) will not be included in the following sections due to their small subsamples (thus making results very approximate), but figures for these groups are recorded in the **Appendix**. It should also be noted that although the results for Hispanics will be discussed, they should be considered approximate due to the small subsample size. The largely congruent census – study population statistics suggest that results gathered from this study are accurately representative of Essex County's greater population.

Chart 1a:



**Chart 1b:**



The first findings to be analyzed for this study were the results from park visitation rates exhibited by respondents. Essex County residents exhibited a national park visitation rate higher than those discovered in polls of national/regional visitation rates. Out of 182 respondents in this study, 138 or 75.82%, claimed they had been to a national park at least once in their life. In a comprehensive survey of the American public, the National Park Service found that 68% of U.S. residents had been to a national park unit at least once in their life (NPS, 2002). The slightly higher visitation rate exhibited in Essex County can likely be attributed to greater park accessibility in this region in comparison to that of most U.S. citizens. For example, there are 4 national park units surrounding Essex County that are within a 30-mile radius of the county.

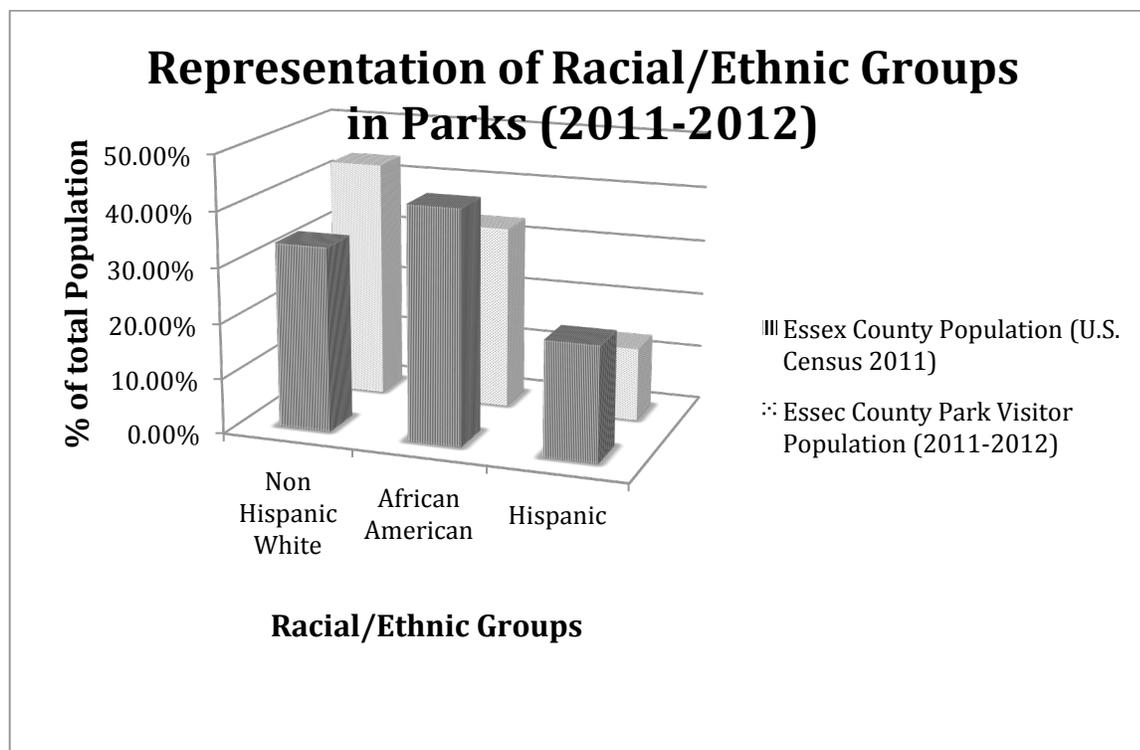
There was no evidence collected (in this study or others) to suggest that this increased visitation rate can be attributed a greater affinity to national parks or outdoor recreation in Essex County.

Now that we have determined the total (and percentage of) of park visitors in Essex County, it is helpful to know what percentage of each racial/ethnic group has ever visited a national park. This study found that 90.41% of Non Hispanic Whites, 65.71% of African Americans, and 88.23% of Hispanics (any race) had ever visited a park (see **Table 1** in Appendix). In order to make these statistics more relevant, we will compare them to national averages of racial/ethnic visitation as determined by a recent NPS survey. However, the NPS findings for racial/ethnic visitation are based on whether respondents visited the park in the last two years, not if they have ever visited a park. To appropriately contrast visitation data, this study found that 52.42% of Non Hispanic Whites, 42.8% of African Americans, and 70.5% of Hispanics had visited a national park in the last two years. In contrast to national demographics, the most recent NPS survey (2008) found that 53% of Non Hispanic Whites, 28% of African Americans, and 32% of Hispanics (any race) have visited a national park in the past two years (NPS, 2009).(See **Table 2** in Appendix).

In comparing the results from both studies, it seems as if the percentage of visitors from each racial/ethnic group in the past two years are largely congruent between Essex County and national findings. However, for certain racial/ethnic groups, there was a bit of a discrepancy between the two studies. In the Essex County study, it was found that 70.5% of Hispanics have visited in the past two years, compared to only 32% of Hispanics in the NPS 2009 study. This numerical discrepancy could be due to the large difference in sample size between the two studies, the significant difference in each study's racial/ethnic respondent composition as well as

the approximate nature of the Essex County study's Hispanic figure (due to small subsample of this group).

To further clarify the trends observed in this study (as well as their congruence to recent findings) we must examine the Essex County data in terms of the percentage of total park visitors (in 2011-2012) each racial/ethnic group constitutes. Basically, by comparing the percentage(s) each racial/ethnic group makes up of the total respondent population to the racial composition of total park visitors in 2011-2012, we are able determine if a group's presence is under or over represented in the parks. It was found that in Essex County, the 2011-2012 park visitor composition was 43.33% Non Hispanic White, 33.30% Black, and 13.30% Hispanic. In comparing this data to the Essex County population demographics (U.S. Census) listed in the opening paragraph (or seen in **Chart 1b** above), it can be seen that Non Hispanic Whites were 'over-represented' in the parks, while African Americans and Hispanics were 'under-represented'. This data is depicted in chart below and results for the remaining racial/ethnic groups can be found in **Table 3** in the **Appendix**.



In 2009, the NPS published a similar analysis comparing their demographic breakdown of the American public respondent population to the racial/ethnic composition of park visitors in 2008-2009. Their respondent population was composed of 70% Non Hispanic Whites, 12% African Americans, 13% Hispanics, 3% Asians, and 2% American Indian/Alaskan Natives. They found that the 2008-2009 park visitor population consisted of 78% Non Hispanic Whites, 7% African Americans, 9% Hispanics, 3% Asians, and 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native (NPS, 2009)(See **Table 3**). From these results it is seen that Non Hispanic Whites were over represented in the national parks, Asians were equally represented, and the remaining minority groups were under represented. Although the degree of difference in representation differs slightly between the Essex County study and the NPS findings, it is consistent that Non Hispanic Whites are over represented in national park visitation and minority groups are under represented.

Generally speaking, the trends observed in visitation rates by each racial/ethnic group in Essex County were largely congruent to the numbers generated in recent national surveys and independent research publications. Such trends show us that Non Hispanic Whites continue to make up a disproportionate majority of national park visitors, while lower visitation rates are exhibited in minority groups. This trend was consistently observed in each analysis of Essex County respondent visitation data. In the first data analysis it followed that, among Essex County respondents who had ever visited a national park, Non Hispanics Whites had the highest percentage of visitors. Contrary to outdoor recreation literature, a significantly high percentage of Hispanics were park visitors. African American and Asian groups had much smaller percentages of visitors (corroborating historic trends in visitation).

The second set of data to be analyzed for Essex County respondents was the percentage of each racial/ethnic group that has visited a national park in the past two years. This data set was unusual in that it showed Hispanics to have the highest percentage (~70%) of park visitors in the past two years; this figure may be viewed as only approximate due to the group's small subsample (17). However, in observing trends for other racial groups, it was found that the disparity between Non Hispanic Whites and African Americans remained; Non Hispanic Whites had a higher percentage of park visitors in the past two years, while African Americans lagged behind by a significant margin (~10%). This data on visitation patterns in the last two years was compared to findings from a recent NPS survey, which found the highest percentage of visitors in the last two years in Non Hispanic Whites and Asians, and much lower percentages for African American, Hispanic and other minority groups. Although larger trends such as consistently high Non Hispanic White percentages and low African American percentages were found in both studies, actual visitation percentages and patterns (particularly among Hispanics)

differed. This can be attributed to the profound difference in racial/ethnic composition of respondents between the Essex County study (very diverse) and the NPS national survey.

The last set of data to be analyzed was the racial/ethnic composition of total park visitors in 2011-2012 (who has visited a park at least once in the past two years). In determining the percentage of total park visitors each racial/ethnic group composed, we were able to see which groups were accurately represented within the parks in comparison to their population's total percentage in Essex County. Again it was found that Non Hispanic Whites had the biggest percentage of 2011-2012 park visitors, while percentages were notably lower for African Americans and Hispanics. In comparison to their total population in Essex County, Non Hispanic Whites were over represented as 2011-2012 park visitors, while African Americans (by the largest margin) and Hispanics were under represented as visitors. Similar trends were noted in an NPS study of 2008-2009 visitors, in which Non Hispanic Whites were over represented and most other minority groups (most significantly African Americans) were under represented. The most notable difference between the two studies is that the NPS study showed a much greater margin of Non Hispanic White over representation than Essex County.

### **Location(s) of Visitation:**

Following the first two questions on the questionnaire regarding individual's visitation (if ever and frequency) to national parks, the questionnaire seeks to determine which national parks the respondent has visited. This question gives the respondent 7 options to choose from, 6 of them being relatively local national parks while the last option is "other", meaning any national park not listed. The 6 national parks listed include the recently designated Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park, Gateway National Recreation Area, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, New Jersey Pinelands National (Biosphere) Reserve, Morristown National

Historical Park, and Edison National Historical Park. Of these 6 parks, 4 of them are within 30 miles distance from the geographical center of the county (West Orange, NJ), and all 6 parks are within 60 miles of distance from this point.

Recent literature and NPS studies have determined travel distance to parks and the ‘wildness’ of a park (activities/conveniences available) to be significant barriers to increased participation (NPS, 2002; NPS, 2003; Faucher, 2009; Gramman, 1996; Steer & Chambers, 1998; Kraus, 1994). While these factors have been observed to serve as barriers to visitation for people of all racial/ethnic groups, studies hold that such constraints play a much bigger role in deterring minority group visitation (as opposed to whites). For example, in a 2003 NPS national survey, 54% of all respondents listed “Distance” as a reason for not visiting national parks; when the same question was separated by racial/ethnic category, it found that 52% of Non Hispanic Whites, 67% of Hispanics, and 63% of African Americans listed “Distance” as a reason for not visiting (NPS, 2003).

The 6 national parks listed on the Essex County questionnaire offer varying degrees of wilderness exposure, developed/historically significant sites and seclusion. Approximately half of the national park units listed are located within or very near to urban centers, and contain historically significant preservation sites, developed facilities and limited natural scenery/wilderness. The remaining national park units are a farther distance from urban settings (secluded), more oriented around their preservation of natural features/settings and lack many developed facilities. The particular nature of a park unit (as oriented towards historical relevance or natural preservation) has been determined by several studies to impact visitation patterns across racial/ethnic groups. In a study employed in the urban center of Chicago, Illinois, researchers found that African Americans had a stronger inclination to “developed facilities and

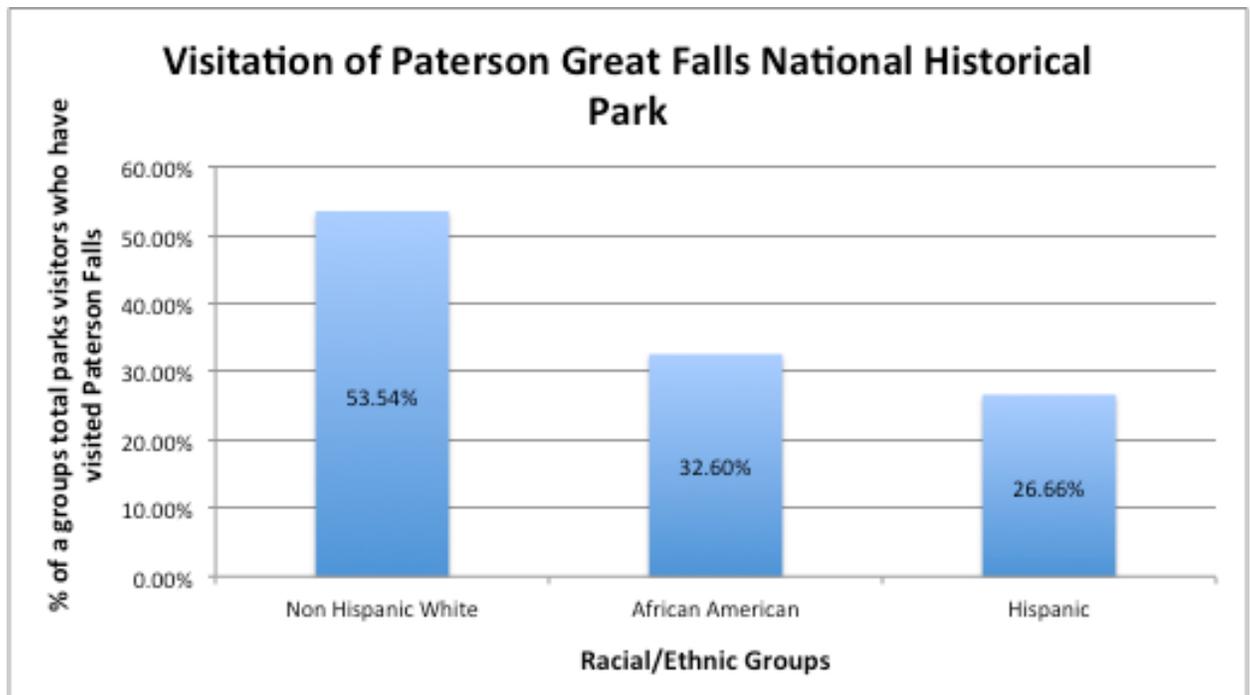
conveniences” rather than “preserved natural areas” (Dwyer & Gobster, 1992). Similar studies in urban areas have found that whites display a stronger inclination than African Americans to “get away” or experience ‘wild areas’ (Gramman, 1996; Steer & Chambers, 1998; Roberts & Rodriquez, 2008).

Given the varying ‘types’ and distances of national parks listed in the Essex County study, examining the percentage(s) of respondents from each racial/ethnic category that visited a certain park should provide insight as to whether trends (discussed above) in park participation are upheld by residents of Essex County. For a visual representation of the percentages of racial/ethnic groups that visit national parks near Essex County, NJ, please see **Table 4** in the appendix; data from this table will be referenced in the following sections.

#### **Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park**

The first national park unit we will examine is Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park. This recently designated park is just 10.5 miles from the geographic center of Essex County and boasts one of the nation’s largest waterfalls. This relatively small park (only 118 acres) is located in the heart of downtown Patterson, NJ, which has remained a major urban/industrial center since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The ‘Great Falls’ of Patterson played a large role in powering the industrial economy, and today the falls and related on-site industrial mills/buildings, museum exhibits, organized events and a Cultural Center make up the park’s main attractions. Due to the park’s historical significance/nature, location and size, it lacks outdoor activities traditionally associated with national parks (i.e. camping and hiking). In the Essex County study, it was found that 54.54% of Non White Hispanic park visitors, 32.60% of African American park visitors, and 26.66% of Hispanic park visitors had visited this park at

least once (see graph below). Data for the remaining racial/ethnic groups can be observed in **Table 4** in the appendix but will not be examined because of the small subsample size.

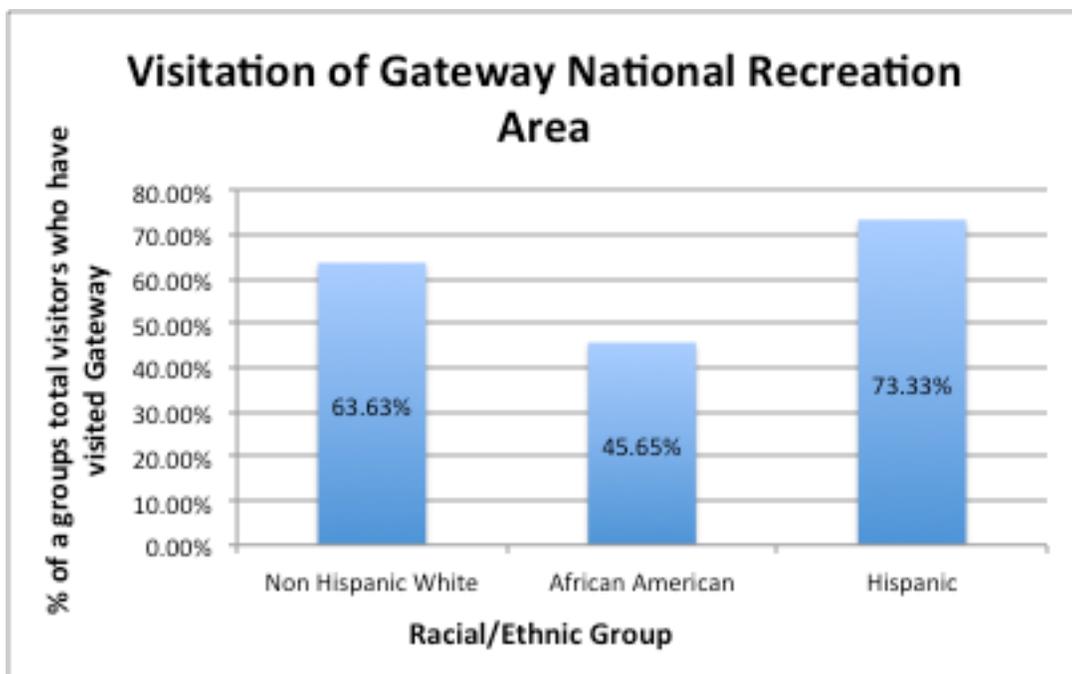


### Gateway National Recreation Area

The next national park unit to be examined is Gateway National Recreation Area. This dynamic national park unit has 3 central locations; one in Sandy Hook, NJ, and two in Brooklyn and Queens, NY. Gateway National Recreation Area's New Jersey destination is located 54 miles from the center of Essex County, while the other two New York locations are just 25 miles away. Gateway is much larger than the aforementioned Paterson Great Falls unit (26,000 acres), and boasts a wide array of landscapes (terrestrial and marine), wildlife and outdoor activities. Gateway is known as one of the premier places in the U.S. to view bird migrations (over 325 species of birds) and the park's versatile terrain/features allow for activities such as hiking,

canoeing/kayaking, camping, the exploration of historical sites (Civil War forts and aircrafts), fishing, bicycling and beach-going.

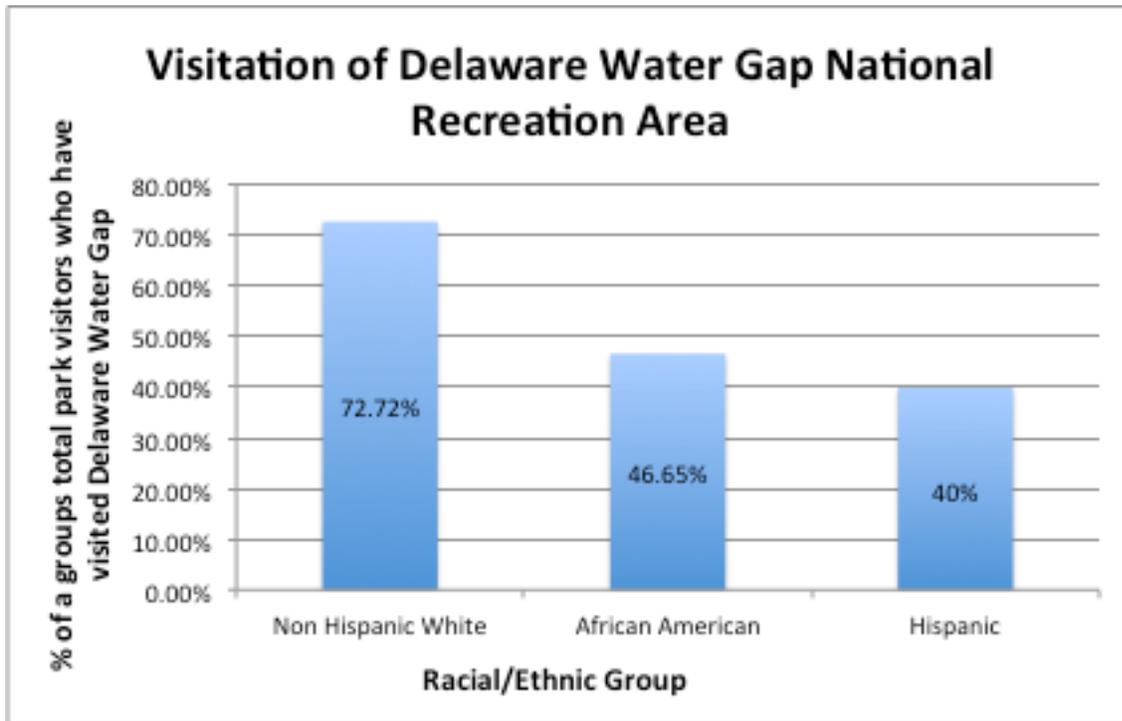
In the Essex County study, it was found that 63.63% of Non Hispanic White park visitors, 45.65% of African American park visitors, and 73.33% of Hispanic park visitors had visited this park at least once. 50% of people reporting two or more races visited the park at least once, while no one in the remaining racial groups reported having visited this park (see graph below).



### **Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area**

The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area encompasses 70,000 acres of scenic and adventure-filled terrain just 55 miles from the center of Essex County, NJ. This national park unit is known for its large stretch of river and beautiful ridges/mountains that host bountiful wildlife, kayaking/canoeing/boating, hiking, swimming and camping opportunities. The

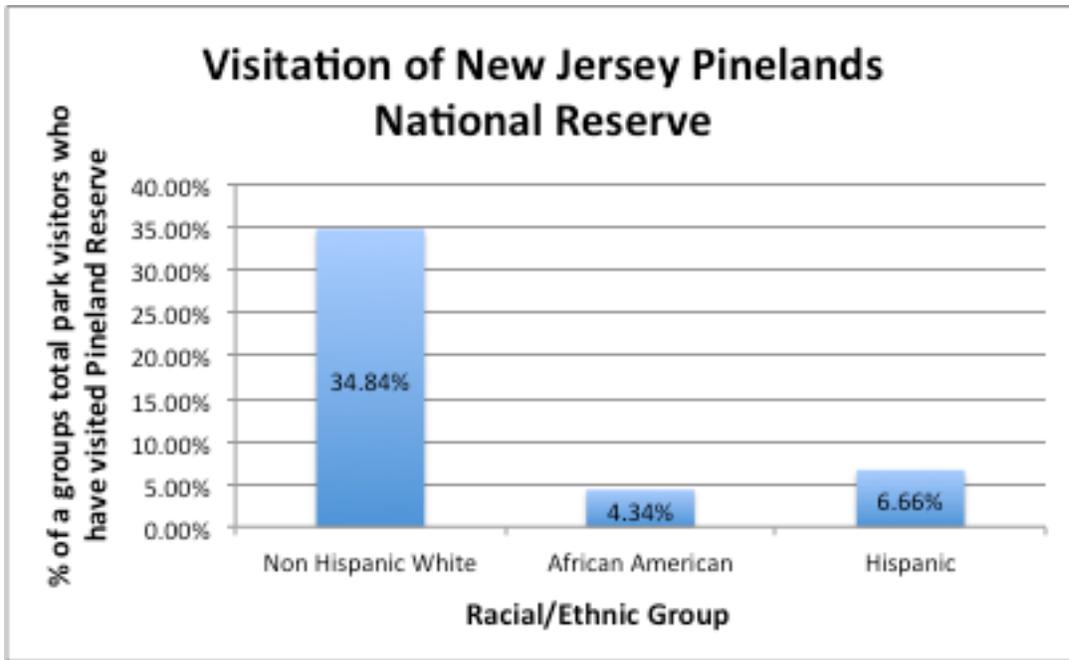
Delaware Water Gap also provides a small selection of picnicking areas, cultural/historical sites, and roads in which to drive the scenic countryside. The data from the Essex County study shows that 72.72% of Non Hispanic White park visitors, 46.65% of African American park visitors, and 40% of Hispanic park visitors have visited this national park unit (see graph below).



### **New Jersey Pinelands National Reserve**

The one million acres that makes up the New Jersey Pinelands National Reserve is located 60 miles from the geographic center of Essex County, NJ. This national park unit preserves some of New Jersey’s most pristine and important wetlands and forests (it also includes farms, and several communities/suburbs for permanent residents). The Pinelands National Reserve is a popular destination for those seeking opportunities to camp, hike, kayak/canoe, fish, view wildlife, and hunt. The Essex County study found that 34.84% of Non

Hispanic White park visitors, 4.34% of African American park visitors, and 6.66% of Hispanic park visitors have visited this national park unit (see graph below).



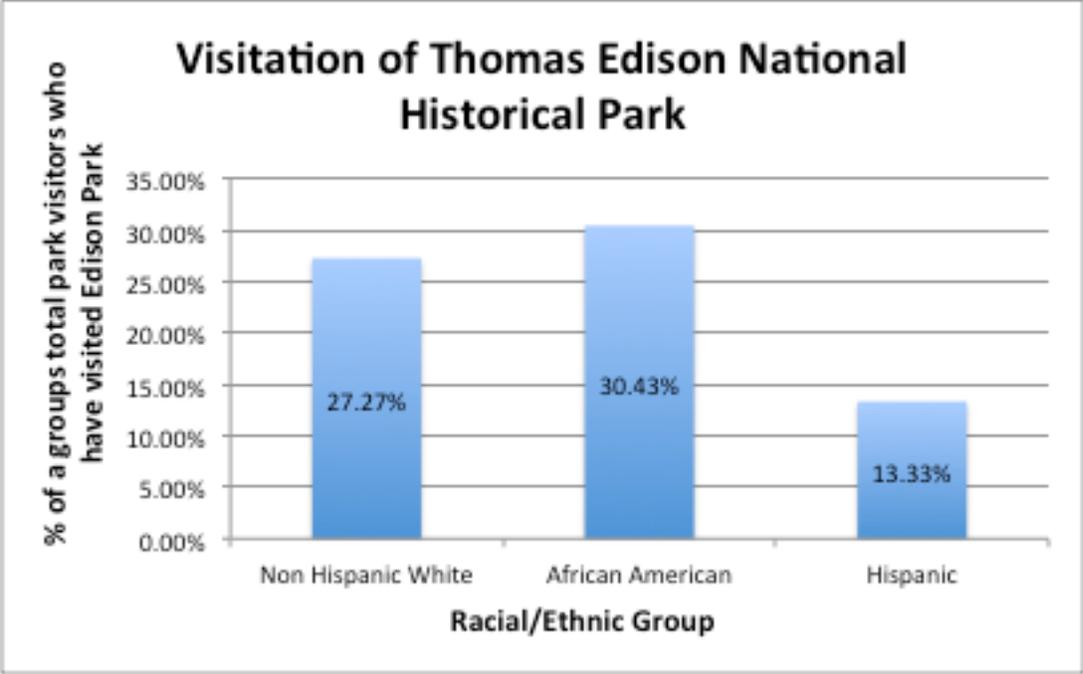
### Morristown National Historical Park

Morristown National Historical Park is located 25 miles from the geographic center of Essex County. This park encompasses the sites of George Washington and the Continental army's winter encampment area during the American Revolution (1779-1780). This park features the mansion that was once inhabited by George Washington himself, as well as several other preserved historical areas (farms, gardens). Morristown National Historical Park also contains a large tract of protected wilderness that served as camping grounds and a timber source for Continental army soldiers; this forested area boasts (limited) opportunities to hike, bicycle, bird watch, and snowshoe in the winter. The Essex County study found that 28.78% of Non Hispanic White park visitors, 17.39% of African American park visitors, and 13.33% of Hispanic park visitors had visited Morristown National Historical Park (see graph below).



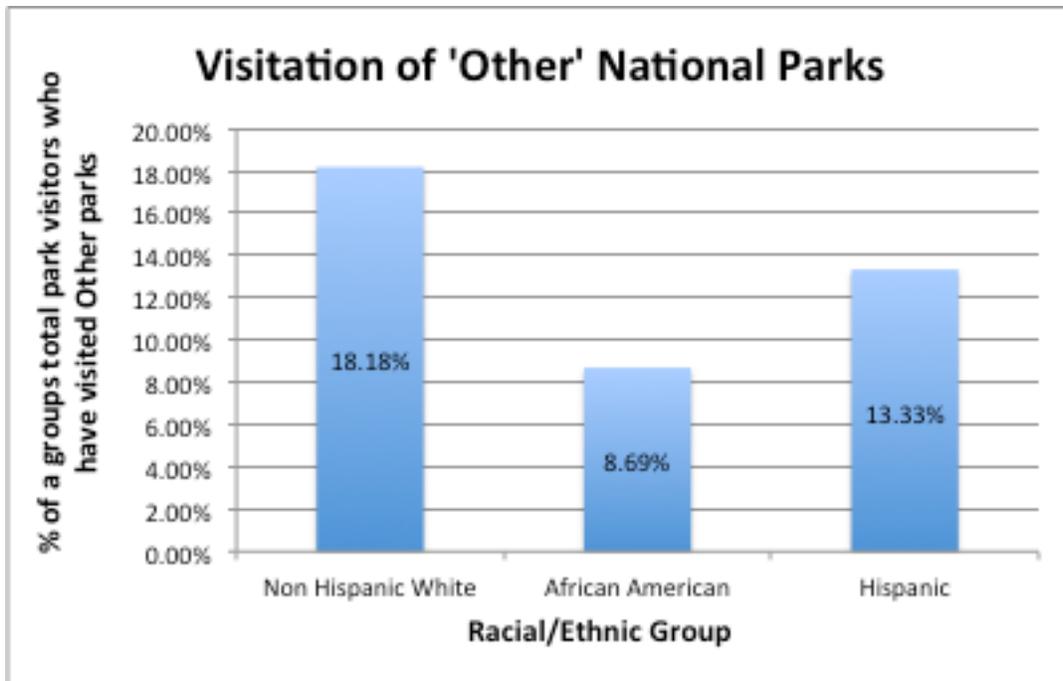
### Thomas Edison National Historical Park

Thomas Edison National Historical Park is located within Essex County and is just 1.5 miles from the County’s geographic center. This national park unit contains the factory, various buildings and estate once occupied by one of America’s most famous inventors, Thomas Edison. The park offers tours of the Edison mansion/estate as well as an in depth look at the laboratory, factory, and Black Maria building (motion picture production) that allowed for Thomas Edison’s many world-changing inventions. The Essex County study found that 27.27% of Non Hispanic White park visitors, 30.43% of African American park visitors, and 13.33% of Hispanic park visitors have visited Thomas Edison National Historical Park (see graph below).



**Other National Parks**

In the question determining which national parks a respondent had visited, the respondent was given a selection of the 6 local parks discussed above, as well as an option which read “other”. This “other” option allowed respondents to simply note (check) that they had been to other parks as well as space for respondents to write which ‘other’ parks they had visited. Of the respondents who opted to describe the other parks they had frequented, the majority listed parks including Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, and Acadia. In the Essex County study it was found that 18.18% of Non Hispanic White park visitors, 8.69% of African American park visitors, and 13.33% of Hispanic park visitors had visited parks other than the 6 local national parks listed (see graph below).



## Conclusion

Upon analyzing and comparing the data on visitation of local national park units for each racial/ethnic groups, several trends became apparent. Non Hispanic Whites exhibited the greatest percentage of visitors for every park except Gateway National Recreation Area and Thomas Edison National Historical Park. For these particular national park units, Hispanic respondents displayed the highest percentage of visitation for Gateway National Recreation Area, while African Americans respondents exhibited the highest percentage of visitation for Thomas Edison National Historical Park. However, despite there being a smaller percentage of Non Hispanic Whites visiting each of the two parks, their percentages were just slightly lower than African Americans at Thomas Edison National Historical Park and Hispanics at Gateway National Recreation Area.

When examining the national park units that dominantly attracted Non Hispanic White visitors, the percentage of minority visitors was generally significantly lower. This trend was

particularly prevalent for parks that were a farther distance away (~50 miles), such as New Jersey Pinelands National Reserve and Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. Approximately 70% of Non Hispanic White park visitors had visited the Delaware Water Gap, while only ~45% and ~40% of African American and Hispanic park visitors, respectively, had visited this unit. A similarly large disparity is observed for New Jersey Pinelands National Reserve in which ~35% of Non Hispanic White park visitors had visited this park, while only ~4% and ~6% of African American and Hispanic park visitors (respectively) had visited this unit. This significant disparity in the racial composition of visitation for these two parks can be attributed to many potential factors. The significant distance to these parks (both over 50 miles) is perhaps a larger constraint to minority groups than whites. This could be due to the travel time, travel cost and lack of access to transportation; such factors have been listed as barriers to visitation for all people but are more likely to be identified as constraints by minority groups (NPS, 2003).

Although distance, travel or transportation related factors may have certainly served as constraints to greater minority visitation of Pinelands Reserve and the Delaware Water Gap, these are likely not the only contributing factors. As discussed above, the parks in which minority groups displayed the highest percentages of park visitors include Thomas Edison National Historical Park and Gateway National Recreation Area. These parks are unique in that they are either located in or just outside of very urban areas with high racial/ethnic minority populations. On the other hand, the Delaware Water Gap and Pinelands Reserve, the parks with the highest percentage of Non Hispanic White visitation, are both located a large distance away from heavily urbanized and diverse areas. It seems that the proximity of a national park unit to urban centers and racially diverse communities plays a large role in dictating minority visitation

to that area. Burns et al. (2006) supports this assertion and discusses a strong minority, particularly African American, preference for areas that are not “off the beaten path”, close to urban centers and ‘well maintained with clean amenities’. This could point to a desire of minority groups to avoid moving outside of their comfort zone (where they know they will see and be near to other minority groups), which has been identified by several recreation researchers and was voiced by several respondents in the Essex County study (Gobster, 2002; Roberts, 2007; Floyd, 1995). This perceived minority preference for less wild areas can also be attributed to the historical prevalence and reinforcement of wilderness areas as places of white refuge/belonging (as discussed in the background section) (Braun, 2003).

For the Essex County study, it seems that distance/travel related constraints likely play a slightly bigger role in deterring minority participation than the urbanity/diversity of a parks surrounding area. This is determined by examining the visitation data from Paterson Great Falls National Historical Area and Morristown National Historical Area. Both of these parks are located in/around urban centers and diverse populations and yet they display lower percentages of minority visitors in comparison to those of Non Hispanic Whites (the racial group with the greatest visitation of both parks). Further supporting this notion of travel/transportation being a bigger deterrent to minority visitation than white visitation is the racial composition of respondents who have visited ‘other’ parks. Given that the 6 parks listed were the closest national park units to Essex County, any ‘other’ parks must be more than 50-60 miles away (and likely much farther). The Essex county study found that 18.18% of Non Hispanic White park visitors, 8.69% of African American park visitors and 13.33% of Hispanic park visitors have visited ‘other’ parks. This data further confirms the finding of distance (due to travel time, access

to transportation etc.) as having a greater impact on racial/ethnic minority visitation than white visitation.

Another pattern that can be identified from this data is the impact the ‘type’ of park has in influencing the racial/ethnic composition of its visitors. ‘Type’ of park refers to the parks designation as a recreation area or historical park, the type of setting (natural vs. urban) it encompasses, and the activities it offers. As we have seen from the description of the parks noted above, the 6 local national parks differed greatly by setting, size, orientation and offered activities. The 6 parks listed on the survey can essentially be broken into two categories, historical parks and nature parks. Of the 6 parks listed in the Essex County questionnaire, the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and Pinelands National Reserve can be considered ‘wildland’ parks, while Paterson Great Falls, Thomas Edison, and Morristown are considered ‘historical’ parks. Gateway National Recreation Area is unique in that exhibits features pertaining to both wildland and historical parks.

To clarify on how such national park units are categorized, the ‘historical’ parks are known for their preservation of historical or cultural sites, contain little ‘wilderness’ related activities, and contain an abundance of developed facilities and conveniences. The ‘nature’ parks are known for their preservation of pristine, scenic or otherwise important natural landscapes, plentiful opportunities for ‘adventurous’ outdoor recreation and are usually more removed from urban centers. Building off of this, recent studies of national historical parks have shown higher minority visitation figures than those documented by the nationwide NPS surveys, which document visitation of all parks (Navarro, 2010). The patterns in the Essex County study largely corroborated the results of recent studies in that the racial disparity in visitation was generally greater in ‘wildland’ parks than historic parks. One oddity that surfaced in identifying visitation

patterns in ‘wildland’ versus ‘historical’ parks was that 45.65% of African American park visitors documented visiting the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, which can be considered a ‘wildland’ park. Although the disparity in visitation between Non Hispanic White and African American visitors of this unit was still large (72.72% of Non Hispanic Whites and 45.65% of African Americans), this unit and Gateway National Recreation Area were the parks most frequented by African American park visitors. This statistic slightly differs from findings identified in previous literature where African Americans exhibit their highest visitation rates in national historic parks and much lower rates in ‘wildland’ parks.

The general patterns identified in this section corroborate those from past studies in that Non Hispanic Whites exhibit higher percentages of visitation of national parks than those of minority groups (in this case African Americans and Hispanics). Furthermore, it was seen that this pattern in racial disparity was more notable/severe in ‘wildland’ parks than ‘historical parks. Slight deviations from these trends occurred in Gateway National Recreation Area, Thomas Edison National Historical Park and Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (discussed above). Factors of park distance, park location/proximity to urban or diverse areas, and park ‘type’ surfaced as likely constraints to greater minority visitation. Analyzing the outdoor recreation activities preferred by racial/minority groups should shed more light on why patterns in racial disparity differed by park type (available activities); this will be discussed in the following section.

### **Preferences in Outdoor Recreation Activities:**

Analyzing how preferences in outdoor recreation vary by race/ethnicity is commonly used to partially explain the racial disparity in visitation of certain parks. As mentioned before, the setting or orientation of a park (‘type’) greatly influences its variety of available outdoor

activities; for example, camping/hiking in a wilderness park versus museums/tours in a historical or developed site. According to the vast majority of outdoor recreation literature, studies have shown that whites exhibit a stronger preference for ‘wildland’ activities (camping, hiking) while minority groups have a stronger preference for social activities/interactions and ‘developed facilities or conveniences’ (Dwyer & Gobster, 1992; NPS, 2008; Gramman, 1996; Faucher, 2009; Steer & Chambers, 1998; Floyd, 1999).

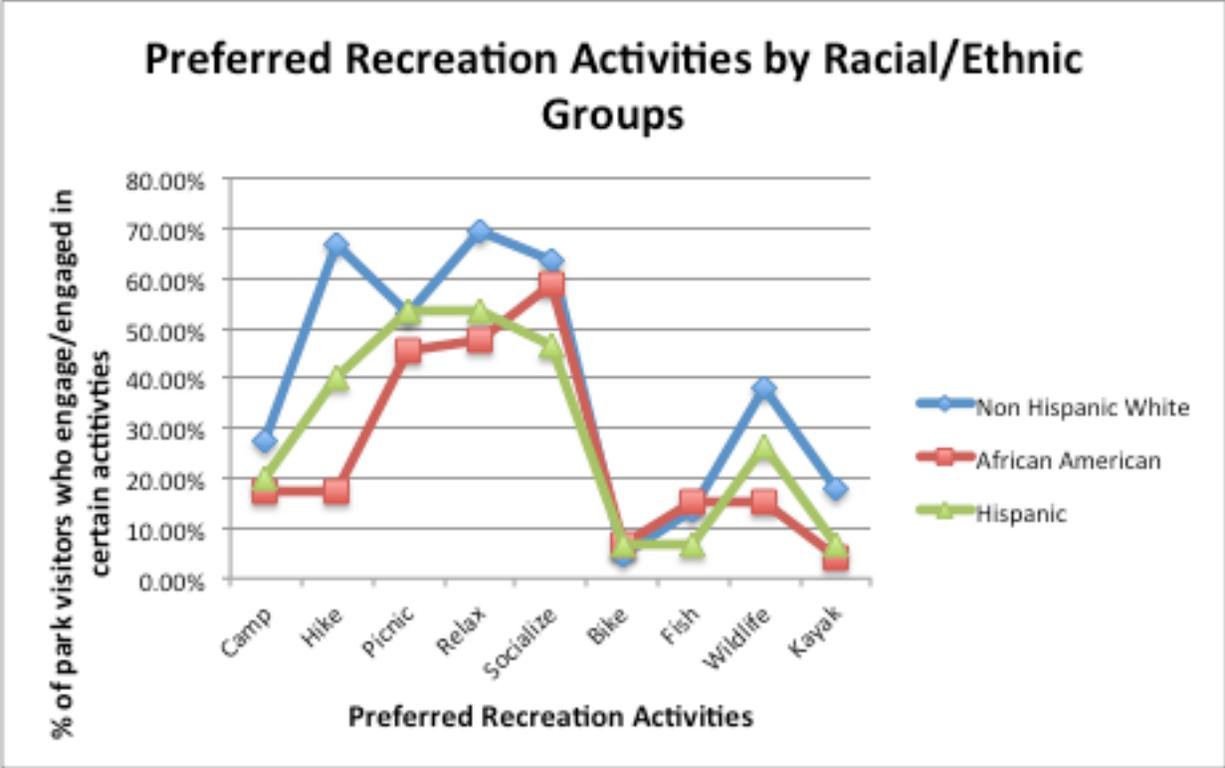
In an extensive examination of variations in outdoor recreation preferences, Floyd (1999) found the strongest preference for ‘adventurous’ outdoor activities (camping, hiking, kayaking etc.) in white respondents and the least preference for these activities in African American respondents (strongest preference for social interactions and outdoor plays/dances/events). This study also found that such variation in recreation preferences persisted for parks at the National, State and Regional level, and that increased minority participation (particularly African American) was experienced at historical parks and parks closer to urban centers. Further confirming these trends, a more recent study (2011) conducted by The Outdoor Foundation found that overall participation in outdoor recreation (all outdoor activities) was highest among Caucasians and lowest among African Americans. This study also found that the most popular outdoor activities among minority groups were ‘running, jogging and trail running’, while the most popular activities for Caucasians were fishing and camping (Outdoor Recreation, 2011).

Understanding these patterns in outdoor recreation preferences is important when attempting to determine the potential reasons for racial/ethnic disparity in national park visitation as well as how such rates of racial/ethnic disparity differ according to the ‘type’ of park. Varying preferences in recreation activities can be attributed to differing desires, perceived benefits, sense(s) of belonging/comfort, and cultural values/norms amongst racial/ethnic groups. There is

a likely correlation between the development of varying racial/ethnic preferences and the historical context of ‘whiteness’ in the outdoors (discussed in detail in the background section).

In order to determine the objective validity of the aforementioned trends in outdoor recreation preferences, the Essex County study (conducted in a modern, urban and racially diverse setting) asked respondents to list the recreation activities they engaged in upon visiting a national park (question # 4 in the questionnaire, see **Appendix**). This question applied only to park visitors and allowed respondents to choose any of nine common recreation activities exhibited in national parks; the activities included camping, hiking, picnicking, relaxing, socializing, biking, fishing, viewing wildlife and kayaking (or other boating activities). The results from this question were then separated by ethnic/racial category in order to determine trends and variations in preferred recreation styles.

The results from the Essex County study showed that Non Hispanic White park visitors had the highest proportion of engagement in all recreation activities except picnicking, fishing and biking. In the picnicking category, 53.03% of Non Hispanic Whites park visitors and 53.33% of Hispanic park visitors reported engaging in this activity. In the biking category, 4.54% of Non Hispanic White park visitors, 6.52% of African American park visitors and 6.66% of Hispanic park visitors reported engaging in this activity. In the fishing category, 13.63% of Non Hispanic White park visitors and 15.21% of African American park visitors reported engaging in this activity. In summary, the few recreation activities with higher percentages of minority versus white engagement exhibited very small numerical variations (.3% to 2.12%). A visual depiction of the percentage of park visitors from each racial/ethnic group that participated/preferred a certain recreation activity can be found in the line chart below.



As seen in the above chart, the outdoor recreation preferences observed in Essex County, NJ largely corroborated the trends identified in past literature in which whites generally exhibited a greater preference for ‘wildland’ or ‘adventurous’ activities. The greatest preference for camping, hiking, viewing wildlife and kayaking was exhibited by Non Hispanic White park visitors. Wildland-associated activities such as fishing and biking observed a higher percentage of participation amongst minority visitors. All park visitors (from every racial/ethnic category) showed a strong preference for relaxing, socializing and picnicking. The greatest disparities in recreation preference amongst racial/ethnic groups was observed for camping, hiking, relaxing and viewing wildlife, in which Non Hispanic Whites showed a significantly greater preference than Hispanics and an even greater (bigger disparity) preference than African Americans. The most popular or preferred activities amongst African American and Hispanics were socializing and picnicking, respectively. Non Hispanic Whites showed the greatest preference for relaxing,

and an almost equally large preference for hiking. (For the exact figures on percentages of participation in recreation per racial/ethnic group see **Table 5** in the **Appendix**).

In contrasting the trends in outdoor recreation identified in the Essex County study (above) with the results of recent national park surveys and assorted recreation studies, it is evident that patterns in recreation preferences by racial/ethnic groups remain largely constant. In the Essex County study, the most prominent disparity in participation of a certain recreation activity by racial/ethnic groups was observed for hiking (66.66% of Non Hispanic White, 17.39% of African American, and 40% of Hispanic park visitors reported participating in this activity). Similar findings were identified in a comprehensive study of Illinois State Parks (55% of whites, and 27% of blacks reported hiking as their preferred recreation type) as well as in a recent National Park Service-issued survey (62% of white, 61% of Hispanic, and 41% of African American park visitors engaged in hiking) (Dwyer & Gobster, 1992; NPS, 2008).

The Essex County study also shows that Non Hispanic Whites have a stronger preference for camping than racial/ethnic minority groups; it was found that 27.27% of Non Hispanic White, 17.39% of African American, and 20% of Hispanic park visitors have or usually engage in camping. As noted in studies of racial/ethnic group recreation patterns both within and outside of U.S. national parks, Non Hispanic Whites have the strongest preference for camping activities, followed by Hispanics and African, respectively. The large disparity in racial preference for kayaking/other boating activities in the Essex County study (18.18% of Non Hispanic Whites, 4.34% of African Americans and 6.66% of Hispanics) corroborates broader trends identified in past literature wherein whites exhibit a stronger preference for ‘adventurous’ national park activities; however, it is often found that for ‘swimming and other boating

activities' African American and Hispanic preference level often parallels if not surpasses that of Non Hispanic Whites.

An additional trend that was observed in the Essex County study was that there was significant disparity in racial/ethnic group preference for viewing wildlife. It was recorded that 37.87% of Non Hispanic White, 15.21% of African American, and 26.66% of Hispanic park visitors reported engaging in 'viewing wildlife'. This trend is contrary to results in recently published studies that suggest that minority groups place a strong preference, equal to or greater than that of whites, on view nature/wildlife (Burns); this is supported by National Park Service findings that suggest 69% of white, 68% of African American, and 76% of Hispanic park visitors partake in 'viewing or photographing animals and plants' (NPS, 2009). Essex County's deviation from previously recognized trends could be explained by the fact that many of the parks closest to Essex County are not known for and do not contain significant wildlife. Although New Jersey is already not perceived by the general public to be haven for wildlife, the parks known for their abundant wildlife (i.e. Pinelands Reserve) are quite a distance from Essex County. As distance to parks has been determined to be a significant deterrent to visitation for minority groups (minority groups are more likely to visit closer parks), it could very well be the case that the majority of racial/ethnic minority park experiences are in areas without abundant (if any in the case of some historical sites) wildlife. The figures listed in the national surveys findings represent a broader (nationwide) population of people and parks, where minority groups may have better access to parks known for their abundant wildlife; thus resulting in a more equitable spread of wildlife viewers amongst racial/ethnic groups.

In the Essex County study, there were a few recreation activities that seemed to attract similarly high numbers of participation for all three racial/ethnic groups. These activities

included ‘socializing with friends/family’ and ‘picnicking’. These two rather related activities exhibited high percentages of participation, ranging from approximately 45% -70%, amongst Non-Hispanic Whites, African Americans and Hispanics (for exact figures see **Table 5** in the **Appendix**). The popularity of these activities indicates a strong value for social interaction amongst all racial/ethnic groups in Essex County. Although previous studies do not report exact figures on ‘social interaction’ within the parks, recent literature holds that African Americans generally place the highest value or preference on social interaction of all racial/ethnic groups (Floyd, 1999). This was not the case in the Essex County study, wherein Non Hispanic Whites (63.66%) exhibited a slightly stronger preference for ‘socializing with family/friends’ than African Americans (58.69%). However, in support of past studies that found a stronger preference for social interaction (compared to other recreation activities) for African Americans, the Essex County results show that ‘socializing with family/friends’ was the most popular/preferred activity amongst African American park visitors (Floyd, 1999; Burns, ; Dwyer & Gobster, 1992).

One recreation type that has yet to be discussed is ‘relaxing’ and this activity was accompanied by rather interesting results. Although recreation preferences such as ‘picnicking’ or ‘socializing with family/friends’ may be considered by most to be relaxing or leisurely activities, when Essex County respondents were inquired as to their participation in ‘relaxation’ while visiting national parks the results differed significantly from the two aforementioned activities. As mentioned before, the distribution of park visitors who engaged in ‘picnicking’ and ‘socializing with family/friends’ was fairly equitable amongst all racial/ethnic groups. However, in examining respondents who reported ‘relaxing’ while visiting national parks, the anticipated equitable distribution of participation by racial/ethnic groups was not found. The disparity

observed amongst racial/ethnic groups engagement in ‘relaxing’ is depicted in the following figures: 69.69% of Non Hispanic White, 47.82% of African American, and 53.33% of Hispanic park visitors reported ‘relaxing’ when visiting a national park.

Although no comparable data exists on trends in ‘relaxation’ amongst racial/ethnic national park visitors, such results for Essex County are particularly interesting. This disparity in racial/ethnic groups portraying park visits as relaxing experiences may be explained personal/cultural differences in the perceived benefits of national parks. Several studies have examined the varying purposes of national parks pertaining to different racial/ethnic groups. A common theme arising from these studies has been the association of national parks as a place of refuge or an escape/means to get away from society for whites. Although there is certainly evidence supporting national parks as providing an important spiritual/cleansing benefit to minority groups, the majority of literature holds that minority groups are more likely to identify national parks as a way to meet people and recreate with family/friends (Dwyer & Gobster, 1992; Burns, ; O’Brien & Njambi, 2012). This racial/ethnic disparity in the perceived or desired benefits to be derived from national park visitation could partially explain how certain groups differ in their association of national parks as a relaxing experience. To clarify, differing perceived benefits of the outdoors may result in whites generally seeking relaxation through national park visitation while minority groups look towards opportunities of social interaction/family time.

The identification of trends in recreation preferences among racial/ethnic groups in Essex County helps shed light on why certain visitation patterns may have emerged from the (6) national park units discussed in the previous section (see Location of Visitation). Racial/ethnic perceptions and associations with the outdoors are undoubtedly shaped by the historical

exclusionary practices which created national parks and ‘wildlands’ as areas designated for ‘privileged whites’ (Braun, 2003). Today, it seems that such historical developments have manifested themselves in the adoption of differing attitudes (sense of belonging/comfort) and perceptions (perceived benefits) of the outdoors by racial/ethnic groups. The development of these differing attitudes and perceptions has likely played a large role in shaping visitation patterns (i.e. white preference for remote/wild areas, and minority preference for developed or historical areas close to home) and recreation preferences (i.e. white preference for ‘wildland’ activities and minority preference for socially-related activities) amongst racial/ethnic groups.

### **Constraints to Racial/Ethnic Minority Participation in the National Park System**

One of the central research objectives in this project was to determine the contemporary and most prevalent constraints to racial/ethnic participation in the national parks. Over the last several decades, an abundance of academic focus has been directed at determining the cause(s) of a consistent racial/ethnic disparity in national park visitation. As discussed in the literature review above, several common barriers to greater racial/ethnic participation are consistently identified but general consensus on the most prevalent cause(s) of this phenomenon remains elusive. In attempting to unravel the curiosities that surround this issue, the Essex County study requested respondents to describe the barriers they believed to be most relevant in deterring racial minority participation in the national park system. A list of ten barriers was developed according to the most commonly identified constraints presented by recent literature/studies on this topic. Respondents were asked to select any/all options they believed to be relevant barriers; these options included: Discrimination by other visitors, Discrimination by park employees, Financial constraints, Lack of interest/value in nature, Lack of education/awareness/knowledge,

Lack of access to transportation, Culture of the national park system, Upbringing/childhood/culture, Safety issues, Lack of marketing/advertising towards minority groups and Other.

The Essex County study found that there was significant disagreement amongst racial/ethnic groups as to the importance of several barriers as well as variation in the most frequently chosen constraints in each racial/ethnic group. **Table 6** in the **Appendix** shows the percentage of respondents from each racial/ethnic group who chose each of the 10 options (11 options counting “Other”). The results will be discussed in a constraint-by-constraint basis in the follow sections.

#### **Discrimination by Visitors:**

This constraint can be understood as both perceived (expected) and/or actual (experienced) discriminatory experiences that negatively impact racial/ethnic minority participation in national parks. Such experiences may arise from ‘other’ park visitors being rude, unwelcoming, verbally abusive, threatening, staring or suspicious of visitors of racial/ethnic minority status. While actual discriminatory acts carried out by visitors has been reported as consistently declining, perceived discriminatory acts (not attending a national park due to expectation of not feeling welcome) are still determined to be relevant in deterring racial/ethnic minority participation in national parks (see pg. 11-12).

It was found that Hispanics (17.64%) and African Americans (17.14%) were more likely than Non Hispanic Whites (13.69%) to view ‘discrimination by other visitors’ as a relevant constraint to racial/ethnic minority participation. This disparity could be due to the fact that many whites don’t believe or want to believe that such racist and exclusionary practices still exist. It also could be due to the fact the whites had never had to worry about feeling welcome in

the outdoors or in national parks (as they have been the majority in the parks since their creation) and therefore have never given this constraint much consideration. Although the racial/ethnic disparity in viewing ‘discrimination by other visitors’ as a significant barrier to visitation is an interesting dichotomy, this constraint was not found to be a huge barrier (relative to other factors).

### **Discrimination by Park Employees:**

This constraint factor is quite similar to the previously discussed barrier (discrimination by other visitors) except that perceived or actual discrimination experienced by racial/ethnic minority groups is due to the practices/actions/behaviors of National Park Service employees. As stated before, this barrier can be manifested in the perceived (expected) or experienced actions of NPS employees as rude, unwelcoming, suspicious et cetera.

The Essex County study found that this barrier is most relevant for African Americans (8.57%) and less relevant for Non Hispanic Whites (6.84%) and Hispanics (0%). The slight disparity between African Americans and Non Hispanic Whites in choosing this constraint as an important barrier may be due to a white reluctance to believe that such discriminatory practices still exist as well as the fact that they have likely never witnessed such behavior/actions taking place. Compared to other constraint factors, ‘discrimination by park employees’ was not found to play an important role in limiting racial/ethnic minority visitation of national parks. No conclusive explanation can be offered to understand the deviation in choosing this barrier exhibited by Hispanic respondents (0%) other than their relatively small subsample size (small number of respondents rendering this statistic approximate).

### **Lack of Access to Transportation:**

This constraint is commonly identified in literature as a barrier to racial/ethnic participation in outdoor recreation. Constraints such as the ‘distance to parks’ or ‘too far to travel’ can certainly be viewed as intertwined or incorporated within a ‘lack of access to transportation’, however, due to the relative proximity of Essex County to many national park units, distance was not included as a constraint option. National park studies have found the ‘distance or travel time to parks’ to be a significant barrier to visitation for all racial/ethnic groups, but slightly more so for racial/ethnic minority groups. Such factors are commonly explained by minority groups as an unwillingness to travel to remote locations, the high cost of gasoline, and an inability to sacrifice the time required for travel. The constraint factor of ‘lack of access to transportation’ attempts to highlight the disproportionate ownership of automobiles by racial/minority groups as well as a lack of public transportation to parks from urban communities.

The Essex County study found that 42.46% of Non Hispanic Whites, 37.14% of African Americans and 52.94% of Hispanics believed that ‘lack of access to transportation’ serves as an important barrier to racial/ethnic minority visitation of national parks. Although there was some disparity amongst racial/ethnic groups in the level of importance placed on this barrier, it is clear that all racial/ethnic groups believed it to be significant. The high percentage of Hispanics identifying this barrier corroborates the results of past studies, which indicate Hispanics as the ethnic group most likely to identify ‘transportation’ or ‘distance/travel’ time as a constraint to minority visitation of outdoor recreation areas (Gramman, 1999).

Throughout the course of surveying in Essex County, many African American interview and questionnaire respondents identified the high cost of transportation as a significant barrier to

their participation. Many of these respondents also explained that the provision of free or affordable mass transportation to national parks would increase racial/ethnic minority visitation significantly.

**Lack of Education/Awareness/Knowledge:**

This constraint describes how a lack of information on/about national parks may impact racial/ethnic minority visitation of national parks. National park studies have consistently identified a ‘lack of education/awareness/knowledge’ (or more commonly listed as a ‘lack of information’) on national parks as a significant constraint to visitation for all racial/ethnic groups. However, when examining the ‘lack of information’ on national parks, studies have found this to be a more significant barrier to racial/ethnic minority visitation than to white visitation (NPS, 2003; Taylor, 2011; Burns et al. 2006). The lack of education/awareness/knowledge on national parks in racial/ethnic minority groups could be attributed to a variety of factors. This could be due to a lack of focus on national parks/the environment in minority educational curriculums, a lack of focus on national park by community organizations and other social institutions, the lack of minority groups represented/addressed in outdoor media/advertising, or a lacking effort by the National Park Service to spread information in minority communities (the latter two factors are discussed further in later sections). Although some of these factors are specific to and more significant in minority communities, results from National Park Service studies show that a general lack of information on national parks affects park visitation for all racial/ethnic groups (NPS, 2003; Taylor, 2011).

The Essex County study found that 50.68% of Non Hispanic Whites, 47.14% of African Americans, and 47.05% of Hispanics believed that a ‘lack of education/awareness/knowledge’ was a significant barrier to greater racial/ethnic minority visitation of national parks. These

numbers were substantially higher than those presented in previous NPS studies. One particular study observed that 30% of all visitors listed “I just don’t know that much about NPS units” as a constraint to their own national park visitation. When controlling for racial/ethnic groups, the same study found that 26% of Whites, 56% of African Americans and 34% of Hispanics believed this to be a factor in deterring their own visitation of national park units (Taylor, 2011). In comparing the data from previous studies with the results from the Essex County study, it is clear that a ‘lack of information’ on national parks is a relevant barrier to visitation for all racial/ethnic groups, yet it is a factor that more significantly impacts minority visitation (particularly African Americans).

The Essex County study did not record data on how whites felt a ‘lack of information’ or a ‘lack of education/awareness/knowledge’ impacted their own visitation patterns. Instead, the study sought to determine if there was a large discrepancy between whites and minority groups in assessing the importance of a ‘lack of information’ in deterring racial/ethnic minority visitation. The Essex County results show that there was not significant discrepancy between the racial/ethnic groups in reporting this factor as an important constraint; it is clear from the results that all racial/ethnic groups believed this to be a significant barrier to greater racial/minority visitation of national parks.

Although no data was recorded on this factor as a constraint to white visitation in Essex County, there is reason to believe that factors of a lack of information, awareness and knowledge play a very large role in impacting the visitation of national parks by all racial/ethnic groups. Throughout the course of my research in Essex County, respondents of all racial/ethnic backgrounds (whites included) commonly voiced the following concerns: they did not know the parks listed on the survey were national parks, did not know if they had been to a national park

(how to distinguish national parks from other parks), did not know that several national parks were surrounding Essex County, did not know the benefits of visiting a national park. Although these concerns were voiced by respondents of every racial/ethnic group, they were more frequently expressed by racial/ethnic minority respondents and within more urban communities; these findings are corroborated by Finney (2006) and Roberts (2007) wherein a lack of awareness on national parks was most frequently expressed by African American respondents.

I believe that the lack of information on national parks amongst all racial/ethnic groups is a more prevalent issue in Essex County than the locations of other studies on national park visitation. I believe there are a number of factors contributing to this problem. First and foremost, due to the shortsighted perception of New Jersey, many Essex County residents embrace a mentality that New Jersey does not support valuable outdoor recreation opportunities and extends only as far as its densely populated suburbs and urban sectors. Secondly, many of the national parks in the Essex County area do not fall into traditional frame of national parks (for example, respondents asking “a national park? You mean, like Yellowstone?”) and are smaller parks that embrace a unique urban-natural interface (or simply small historical parks like Thomas Edison park). Due to the unique nature of national parks surrounding Essex County, I think they are often simply overlooked. Thirdly, it is clear that from the concerns voiced by Essex County respondents that the National Park Service is not doing an adequate job dispersing information on national parks. Many respondents stated that local national parks lack signage, park employees, and entrance gates administering fees/information, all of which are traditionally notable aspects of national parks (giving them distinction and the ‘national park’ designation’).

The previously examined aspects of the New Jersey ‘outdoor mentality’ and unique (and lacking) traits associated with local parks are likely a large part of the common ‘lack of

education/awareness/knowledge' on national parks discussed by respondents. However, as discussed before this factor of a 'lack of information' is often more prevalent within racial/ethnic minority communities. In Essex County, this phenomenon may be due to the perpetuation of a lack of information on national parks by educational curriculums, social institutions, community organizations, biased media, and a lacking national park presence (in informational/advertising campaigns, employee recruitment etc.).

The role of education curriculums in minority/urban communities as contributing to a lack of environmental information or awareness surfaces several times throughout this study. The origins of this issue have been linked to the early American history in which minority groups particularly African Americans were not provided with equal education opportunities. This inequality stretches as far back as African American slaves being denied the right to learn to read (Gruenwald & Manteaw, 2007). Despite some societal progress in alleviating racism and providing equal opportunities to all racial/ethnic groups, structural inequality and discrimination in the U.S. education system have persisted. Today, minority/inner-city schools continue to receive disproportionate funding, resources and attention relative to 'suburban' institutions (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The inequalities subjected to minority schools have likely contributed to a lack of attention being placed on current on 'progressive' topics like the environment.

Further contributing to the lack of environmental education in minority school systems, Gruenwald and Manteaw (2007) claim that the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) has persuaded minority schools to exclude environmental agendas from their curriculums. The NCLB has forced minority/inner-city schools to focus solely on closing the 'achievement gap' between their schools and suburban schools and in so doing the foundation of their curriculums

are concentrated on boosting standardized test scores. By placing a disproportionate importance on test scores (schools must attain certain achievement levels in order to receive funding and stay open), minority schools/curriculums have not been able to adequately stress/reflect the importance of environmental education (Gruenwald & Manteaw, 2007). The continued inequalities placed upon minority/inner-city schools contribute to the disproportionate lack of environmental information available to minority groups.

### **Lack of Interest/Value in Nature:**

In the last several decades, literature on outdoor recreation has often discussed the oversimplified notion that minority groups are simply not interested in the outdoors/nature. While studies claiming that minority groups value nature less (than whites) certainly exist, such literature has largely been dismissed as invalid and/or racist. Several studies on racial/ethnic minority perceptions of outdoor environments/nature have indicated that there is no reason to suggest that racial/ethnic minority groups value nature any less than whites. A recent study by Nina Roberts and Donald Rodriguez (2007) in Golden Gate National Recreation Area found that minority groups have a high value for parks and natural resource issues. Broader trends of a lack of interest impacting all racial/ethnic groups visitation are supported in several national park studies that suggest that 8-11% of visitors from every racial/ethnic category report 'lack of interest' as a reason for not visiting national parks (NPS, 2003; NPS, 2002).

In order to determine if whites still subscribed to the traditional myth that minority groups are not interested in the outdoors, the Essex County study asked respondents to declare whether they felt that a lack of interest amongst racial/ethnic minority groups was a barrier to greater visitation. The results followed that 32.87% of Non Hispanic Whites, 34.28% of African Americans, and 29.41% of Hispanics believed a 'lack of interest/value in nature' was a constraint

to racial/ethnic minority visitation of national parks. From these results, it can be seen that a significant percentage of all racial/ethnic groups believe a ‘lack of interest’ is a relevant barrier to minority park visitation. There is also not clear evidence of whites adopting an inaccurate ideal that minority groups don’t value nature (given the proximity in percentages of white vs. minority groups reporting a ‘lack of interest’ impacting minority visitation of parks).

Throughout the course of implementing surveys in Essex County, I encountered a wide array of perceptions on how minority groups value nature. Amongst white respondents, some voiced their subscription to the traditional/racist notion that minority groups aren’t interested in and don’t value nature; others asserted that assessing that minority groups aren’t interested in nature is an inaccurate and racist generalization. A similar sentiment was exhibited amongst minority respondents (particularly African Americans) wherein some voiced that nature is not culturally relevant or important within their community, while others expressed that minority groups value nature just as much as any other racial/ethnic groups. These findings suggest that there is no empirical correlation between race/ethnicity and value on natural environments. Questions number 10 and 11 (determining racial/ethnic values on nature and national parks) on the questionnaire examine this topic further and this data is discussed below.

### **Culture of the National Park System:**

This constraint factor is not as commonly explored within outdoor recreation literature as the previously discussed barriers. Culture of the National Park System (NPS) was most notably used/identified as an important barrier to racial/ethnic minority park visitation by Nina Roberts (2007). Roberts (2007) describes this barrier as a factor measured by, “NPS is geared towards traditional visitors/middle to upper class whites; lack of minority representation of park employees; no “invitation” to participate, lack of feeling welcome”. Similar studies on

racial/ethnic minority participation in national parks have also noted the importance of this barrier but more commonly describe this constraint as minority groups feeling uncomfortable/unwelcome in national park units, a lack of employment/recruitment/representation of minority groups, or that whites perceive national parks to be ‘their place’ (NPS, 2003; NPS, 2009; Finney, 2006; Floyd, 1999; Roberts & Rodriquez, 2008).

The Essex County study found that 15.06% of Non Hispanic Whites, 21.42% of African Americans and 17.65% of Hispanics believed that the ‘Culture of the NPS’ is a barrier to racial/ethnic minority visitation of national parks. These results indicate that all racial/ethnic groups believe that the culture of the NPS is a valid barrier to minority visitation of parks, yet it is not viewed as important as other barriers presented to Essex County respondents. This slight disparity between Non Hispanic Whites and African American respondents in selecting this constraint (15.06% vs. 21.42%) may be explained by a differing perception on the inclusive/exclusive nature of the national park system. Considering Roberts’ (2007) description of traditional park visitors (discussed above) and the historical context of parks as white entities, the Essex County results indicate that minority groups are likely more perceptive of the exclusive nature of parks. In addition to whites overlooking this issue, some may be reluctant to identify this constraint because they don’t want to believe they are part of or contributing to such a racially exclusive system.

### **Upbringing/Childhood/Culture:**

This constraint topic had been consistently identified throughout outdoor recreation literature as an important barrier to racial/ethnic minority national park visitation. Studies often refer to this factor as simply ‘socialization patterns’ or ‘cultural differences’ (encompassed by

the ethnicity hypothesis) (Floyd, 1999; Gramman, 1996; Roberts, 2003). In order to ensure the clarity of this constraint for all respondents, the Essex County study defined it as the influence of one's 'upbringing, childhood and culture' in impacting future visitation patterns and preferences. Certain upbringings, childhoods and cultures may, for many potential reasons, contain patterns such as lessened familial/parental values on nature, lacking exposure to nature, and lessened social 'permission or acceptability' of being involved in nature (i.e. peer pressure). These patterns are thought to disproportionately occur amongst racial/ethnic minority groups perhaps due to the marginalized nature of minority groups (i.e. financial constraints, residence in urban communities), the historical racial context of the parks/the outdoors, and/or differing cultural values/interests.

The Essex County study found that 56.16% of Non Hispanic Whites, 30.00% of African Americans, and 23.52% of Hispanics identified 'Upbringing, Childhood, Culture' as a barrier to racial/ethnic minority visitation of national parks. These results largely corroborate the trends identified in previous literature wherein socialization practices play an important role in determining racial/ethnic minority recreation preferences (i.e. national park visitation). However, the Essex County study found that there was significant discrepancy (+ 26% diff.) between whites and minority groups in valuing the importance of this constraint as impacting racial/ethnic minority visitation of national parks. These findings are particularly interesting because they indicate that many whites perceive racial/ethnic minority socialization practices/patterns as lacking an emphasis on nature/park visitation and thus playing an important role in perpetuating lower minority visitation of parks. Racial/ethnic minority groups, while agreeing that upbringing/socialization certainly plays some role, disagree as to the extent that this constraint impacts their visitation patterns. This discrepancy may be due to racial stereotyping

being adopted by many whites wherein they subscribe to an ideal that ‘minorities don’t value nature’ and therefore pass those values along to their children (thus resulting in over-assessing the importance of this constraint by whites). Such a discrepancy may also be due to racial/ethnic differences in the perceived impact of one’s childhood/upbringing/culture in impacting their future visitation or recreation patterns (i.e. whites believe such socialization patterns play a bigger role in determining future visitation than racial/ethnic minority groups).

Ignoring the slight discrepancy between whites and racial/ethnic minority groups in assessing the importance of ‘upbringing, childhood, culture’ in impacting visitation patterns, it was clear that still a significant percentage of minority respondents believed this to be a relevant constraint. This was further supported throughout the course of my research when several African American respondents voiced that going to parks/being interested in nature was not “part of the black community” and that they would receive considerable flak from their friends for showing interest in such things. In addition, one African American interviewee expressed how her upbringing had been “unique” in that she was often exposed to natural environments and how this has had a positive impact on her affinity to national parks today.

### **Safety Issues:**

‘Safety issues’ is a common constraint identified in literature. It seeks to evaluate if varying perceptions on the safety of national parks exist among racial/ethnic groups and how such perceptions may impact one’s park visitation patterns. ‘Safety issues’ may include the fear of dangerous animals, natural hazards, and/or crime/violence by other visitors. Although national park studies usually find this constraint to be of minimal importance amongst total park visitors, when controlling for racial/ethnic groups they have found much higher concern for safety amongst Hispanic and African American groups (NPS, 2009; NPS, 2003).

The Essex Count study found that 4.10% of Non Hispanic Whites, 12.85% of African Americans, and 11.76% of Hispanics believed that ‘safety issues’ were a relevant barrier to racial/ethnic minority visitation of national parks. These results largely mirror those of previous studies by reporting a low overall importance of safety concerns as a barrier to (racial/ethnic minority) visitation. However, the results also show that whites are less likely to perceive ‘safety issues’ as a deterrent to racial/ethnic minority visitation than African Americans and Hispanics. As previous studies have pointed out, racial/ethnic minority groups are more likely than whites to be concerned of instances of violence against them carried out by other visitors (NPS, 2009; NPS, 2003). This is likely due to the historical context of parks wherein perceived and actual instances of racially motivated discrimination/violence were experienced by racial/ethnic minority groups. Racial/ethnic minority groups are more likely to remember and be concerned about such experiences, whereas whites are more likely to be uninformed/to deny the historical and current relevance of this issue. This dichotomy may explain the slight disparity observed in racial/ethnic groups reporting the importance of ‘safety issues’ as a constraint to minority visitation of national parks.

#### **Lack of Marketing/Advertising towards Minority Groups:**

This constraint examines the impact of lackluster NPS advertising/informational campaigns (particularly in minority/urban communities), lacking representation of minority groups in outdoor media/advertising, and the lack of marketing outdoor opportunities/products towards minority groups on racial/ethnic minority visitation of national parks. In a recent study on African American attitudes in the Great Outdoors, Carolyn Finney (2006) highlights and discusses the importance of the aforementioned factors amongst African American respondents. She also describes a well-supported desire amongst African Americans for the ‘continued

acknowledgment of black stories' as they actually happened, not from the 'white' perspective. Roberts (2007) corroborates these findings in her study on ethnic minority groups in Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and describes the importance for minority groups in 'having their story told by them' (i.e. story of buffalo soldiers told by an African American ranger). This constraint topic is closely related to the previously discussed factor of a 'lack of education/awareness/knowledge' in that many of the facets of a 'lack of marketing/advertising' very much contribute to a lack of awareness/information on national parks (i.e. lackluster NPS informational campaigns).

The Essex County study found that 45.20% of Non Hispanic Whites, 42.85% of African Americans and 29.41% of Hispanics believed that the 'lack of marketing/advertising towards minority groups' is a relevant barrier to racial/ethnic minority visitation of national parks. From these results, it is clear that all racial/ethnic groups in the respondent population felt that a 'lack of marketing/advertising towards minority groups' plays a significant role in deterring minority visitation of national parks. These results were further supported throughout the course of administering surveys when several African American respondents voiced statements such as, "it would be cool for us seeing and interacting with a black ranger", "I never heard of the national park service before this", and "I had no idea that was a national park (referring to Paterson Great Falls)".

Although there is no research or empirical data on the impact of 'knowing where a park is' or 'knowing that a park is a national park' in affecting actual visitation rates, I hypothesize that having such knowledge would booster national park visitation. For example, if a citizen lives near a park that they have never visited or learned about, I think that they would be more likely to visit it if they discovered it was a 'national park' versus just another 'ordinary' or

neighborhood park. I believe that the national park distinction suggests to many that the park must be of particular significance and importance to our country and its residents, more so than a neighborhood or local park given the “National Park” designation. It seems to me that most people would be more inclined to visit a park deemed a ‘national park’ versus a town or county park; this is why I believe that knowledge of a parks designation and location are likely to impact one’s visitation.

In addition, during one my interviews an African American female expressed the importance of putting black people in media campaigns. She began by explaining the role of media in perpetuating stereotypes and misrepresentations of minority groups, stating how she has noticed that in media, “blacks/latinos are often pictured at the pool, while whites are at the beach”. The respondent further explained that in outdoor-oriented media/advertising, it shouldn’t be just “light skinned, light eyed black people” that are portrayed because that comes off as “only those types of blacks can go”. Such media should include “real black people” (the interviewee did not elaborate on what she meant by ‘real black people’).

**Other (constraints):**

In addition to the ten previously discussed constraints, Essex County respondents were given the option to choose “other” and list another factor/barrier they felt was relevant in impacting racial/ethnic minority visitation of national parks. Out of 182 respondents, only 4 (3 Non Hispanic Whites and 1 African Amerian) selected “other” and provided an additional constraint. Interestingly enough, all 4 of these respondents listed “time” or “lack of time” as this alternative constraint. This factor, often listed as “too busy”, has been identified by several NPS studies as a major constraint to national park visitation amongst all racial/ethnic groups (slightly more so by African American and Hispanic respondents). However, this constraint was not

included within the Essex County study because of the comparatively short distance to many local national park units as well as the smaller size of many of these parks (thus not requiring not large amounts of individuals' time).

### **Conclusion:**

While there was certainly some discrepancy amongst racial/ethnic groups in selecting certain constraints to minority visitation, the Essex County study found significant similarity in the most frequently chosen constraints (top 3) by each racial/ethnic group. The 3 most frequently selected constraints for each racial/ethnic groups are listed below:

#### **Non Hispanic White:**

1. Upbringing/Childhood/Culture (56.16%)
2. Financial Constraints (52.05%)
3. Education/Awareness/Knowledge (50.68%)

#### **African American:**

1. Education/Awareness/Knowledge (47.14%)
2. Lack of Marketing/Advertising towards Minority Groups (42.85%)
3. Financial Constraints (38.57%)

#### **Hispanic:**

1. Financial Constraints (66.66%)
2. Access to Transportation (52.94%)
3. Education/Awareness/Knowledge (47.05%)

### **Most Important Constraint(s) to Racial/Ethnic Minority Visitation of National Parks**

The previous section examined the constraints to racial/ethnic minority participation most frequently chosen by respondent groups. Although this data gave us some insight as to which

constraints are perceived to be most significant by each racial/ethnic group, the following question on the questionnaire (# 6) directly asks respondents to rank 3 of their chosen constraints in terms of importance (1 being of highest importance). The most frequently chosen constraints by each racial/ethnic group (discussed in the last section) largely align with the most important constraints identified by each racial/ethnic group, yet the data for this question should be viewed as approximate due to its lower response rate (compared to a 100% response rate on the previous question).

The 3 constraints perceived (by each racial/ethnic group) to be most important in constraining racial/ethnic minority visitation of national parks are listed below (1 being of highest importance:

**Non Hispanic White:**

1. Financial Constraints (27.39%)
2. Education/Awareness/Knowledge (15.06%)
3. Upbringing/Childhood/Culture (15.06%)

Note: Numbers 2 and 3 are tied.

**African American:**

1. Education/Awareness/Knowledge (20%)
2. Financial Constraints (20%)
3. Lack of Access to Transportation (11.42%)

Note: Numbers 1 and 2 are tied.

**Hispanic:**

1. Lack of Access to Transportation (17.64%)
2. Financial Constraints (17.64%)

3. N/A

Note: Numbers 1 and 2 are tied and number 3 was a 4-way tie (5.88%) between Education, Marketing, Safety, and Interest.

### **Importance of Racial/Ethnic Minority Visitation of National Parks**

The next topic explored in the Essex County questionnaire (question # 7) has not appeared in literature on race/ethnicity in outdoor recreation. This question sought to determine respondent opinions on the issue of racial/ethnic minority participation in the national park system. This question was phrased as “Do you think lower racial minority visitation of national parks is a problem?”. Some respondents expressed confusion as to how to interpret this question, wherein I further explained the phenomenon of underrepresentation racial/ethnic minority groups in the national parks and its consistent appearance in decades of research. I would then rephrase the question as, “Do you think this trend is problematic?” or “is this trend worthy of academic consideration or is it simply just the ‘way it is’?”.

Although this topic of racial/ethnic minority participation certainly appears with regularity in outdoor recreation literature, I asked this question out of curiosity in the general public’s feelings or thoughts (or lack thereof) on this issue. Determining the public opinion(s) toward this issue is important because I believe that without the public perception of this pattern (lower racial minority visitation) as problematic/worthy of our attention, it will be hard to enact any change. I also hoped that the results of this question would shed light on how (and if) feelings toward this issue varied amongst racial/ethnic groups.

The Essex County study found that for the 3 racial/ethnic groups considered, the majority of each group’s respondents believed that ‘lower racial minority visitation of national parks’ was

not a problem (the exact figures can be found in the table below). Figures for all racial/ethnic groups can be found in **Table 7** in the **Appendix**.

**Percentage of Respondents who Agree/Disagree that Lower Racial Minority Visitation of National Parks is a Problem.**

Race/Ethnicity	Yes	No
Non Hispanic White	46.57%	53.43%
African American	44.28%	55.71%
Hispanic	35.29%	64.70%

I found the Essex County results for this question to be surprising, perplexing and perhaps even a bit disappointing. Reflecting on the formation of this question in the beginning of this research project, I remember hoping/expecting to find an overwhelming concern for this issue of racial disparity in the national park system. Instead, throughout the course of survey implementations and analyzing the data on this question, Essex County respondents were found to be quite ambivalent in declaring this phenomenon an ‘issue’ or ‘problematic’. This ambivalence was expressed by all racial/ethnic groups, yet in each case the slight majority of racial/ethnic groups were inclined to believe that lower minority visitation was not a problem. Hispanics were the group most likely to contend that lower racial minority visitation is not a problem, followed (in small margins) by African Americans and Non Hispanic Whites (least likely).

Throughout the course of survey implementation, this particular question stirred significantly more confusion, inquiries and reactions amongst respondents than the other questions. Many respondents (from all racial/ethnic groups) exclaimed that they had never thought about the phenomenon of lower racial/ethnic minority participation in national parks, and for this reason, it is therefore not a problem. A common reaction amongst white respondents

was that during their national park visits, it never occurred to them/concerned them that there was so few racial/ethnic minority visitors. Reflecting on their experiences, some of these respondents recalled that, indeed, they did not encounter many (if any) non-white visitors. Among respondents voicing similar reactions, there was an approximately equal split in the final determination of lower racial minority visitation as a problem (or not a problem).

### **Negative Experiences in National Parks**

The next section of the questionnaire concerns the quality of national park visits as experienced by individual respondents. Question number 8 begins exploring this topic by asking all park visitors to record whether or not they have had a negative experience in a national park (phrased as, “Have you ever had a negative experience in a national park?”). The primary basis for forming this question was to determine if there is discrepancy amongst racial/ethnic groups in recording negative park experiences. Recent literature and NPS studies have examined this topic by determining the percentage of park visitors who have national park experiences that include aspects such as, ‘unsafe’, ‘uncomfortable’, ‘unwelcoming’, ‘discriminatory’, or ‘not interesting’. Such studies have found that overall, racial/ethnic minority groups are more likely than whites to record such negative experiences within national parks (acts of discrimination, fear, uncomfortable etc.) (Floyd, 1999; Roberts & Rodriguez, 2007; Gramman, 1996; NPS, 2002; NPS, 2003).

Interestingly, the Essex County study found that although all racial/ethnic groups reported fairly low percentages of respondents recording negative experiences, Non Hispanic Whites were the group reporting the highest frequency of negative national park experiences. For the exact figures on Non Hispanic Whites, African Americans and Hispanics, see the table below; for data on all racial/ethnic groups see **Table 8** in the **Appendix**.

### Percentage of Park Visitors recording Negative Experiences at National Parks

Race/Ethnicity	Yes	No
Non Hispanic White	21.21%	78.78%
African American	13.04%	86.95%
Hispanic	20%	80%

In order to appropriately interpret these results, we must first discuss the implications of the following question (question number 9). This question is closely related to the previously discussed topic in that it asks respondents who have recorded having a negative national park experience to describe the driving forces behind that experience. This question is phrased as if you have had a negative experience at a national park, ‘did you experience any of the following: Fear, Safety Concerns (from natural hazards such as animal attacks or rugged terrain), Physical Discomfort (from heat, insects etc.), Psychological Discomfort (i.e. feeling of not belonging or being out of place), Discrimination, Not Enjoyable/Interesting.

One problem that surfaced while analyzing the results from questions 8 and 9 was that some respondents indicated that they had not encountered a negative national park experience but then noted that they had experienced one or more of the factors from question 9. This problem predominantly occurred amongst racial/ethnic minority respondents, leading to a relatively low frequency of minority groups reporting a negative national park experience but a higher relative frequency of minority groups reporting each ‘type’ of national park experience (question 9). Due to this problem, the results from question 9 were calculated based on the total park visitors in each racial/ethnic group rather than only park visitors reporting a negative national park experience. A definitive explanation for this trend could not be determined but the results for this question show, contrary to the findings from question 8, that racial/ethnic minority groups were more likely than whites to report each ‘type’ of negative national park

experience (see table below). For figures on all racial/ethnic groups refer to **Table 9** in the **Appendix**.

**Percentage of Park Visitors Encountering ‘Types’ of Negative National Park Experiences**

Type' of Negative Experience	Non Hispanic White	African American	Hispanic
Fear	3.03%	15.21%	13.33%
Safety Concerns	10.60%	13.04%	13.33%
Physical Discomfort	16.66%	23.91%	6.66%
Psychological Discomfort	3.03%	8.69%	13.33%
Discrimination	0%	15.21%	13%
Not Enjoyable/ Interesting	3.03%	17.39%	0%

The results from question 9 indicate the African American and Hispanic park visitors were more likely to encounter all types of negative national park experiences. It was also found that the greatest disparities between racial/ethnic minority groups and whites in reporting certain ‘types’ of negative national park experiences were observed for Fear, Discrimination, and Not Enjoyable/Interesting. These results largely corroborate the trends identified in previous literature wherein racial/ethnic minority groups are more likely to experience/perceive discrimination and fear when visiting national parks. An interesting result drawn from the Essex County findings (not identified in the studies mentioned in this section) is the significantly high percentage of African American visitors reporting national park experiences that were ‘Not Enjoyable/Interesting’. Although this may lead to the belief that the historical (now believed to be racist/inaccurate) myths suggesting that ‘minorities aren’t interested/don’t value nature’ hold some validity, it is likely that there are alternative reasons for this trend. One suggestion is that

the parks near Essex County may be making insufficient efforts to display information and events that are culturally relevant to African American visitors.

### **Importance of Nature and National Parks**

Throughout the history of research concerning minority groups in the outdoors, there have been feeble attempts to link lower racial/ethnic minority park visitation patterns with lessened values or interest in nature alleged to be inherent within minority groups (Gramman, 1996). The majority of such assertions were made several decades ago in the beginning stages of exploration in this topic (race/ethnicity in outdoor recreation) and have since been found to be largely inaccurate and racist; several studies have found that minority groups exhibit a high value for parks and natural resource issues (Roberts & Rodriquez, 2007; Roberts, 2008). The Essex County study examines this topic by asking respondents to rate their importance for nature/natural environments and national parks on a 1-10 scale (10 being of highest importance). The results for these two questions (numbers 10 and 11 on the questionnaire) can be found in the table below. (For results on all racial/ethnic groups please see **Table 10** in the **Appendix**)

#### **Average Importance (out of 10) for Nature/Natural Environments and National Parks**

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Nature/Natural Environments</b>	<b>National Parks</b>
Non Hispanic		
White	8.88	8.68
African American	8.42	7.67
Hispanic	9.2	8.67

In corroboration with findings published on Rocky Mountain National Park and Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the Essex County study found that racial/ethnic minority groups place a high importance on nature/natural environments (Roberts & Rodriquez, 2007; Roberts,

2008). The importance of nature/natural environments expressed by racial/ethnic minority groups in Essex County rivals and even surpasses (in the case of Hispanics) the level of importance reported by Non Hispanic whites. Although it was found that all racial/ethnic groups in Essex County expressed a relatively high importance for national parks, some interesting trends surfaced. First, it was found that there was more discrepancy amongst minority groups in valuing the importance of nature/natural environments versus national parks than exhibited by whites. Whites exhibited approximately equal and high values of importance for nature/natural environments, while both racial/ethnic minority groups placed higher values on nature/natural environments than national parks. This disparity in valuing the two settings expressed by minority groups is likely due to the persistent exclusive nature of national parks; thus despite a clear appreciation/importance for nature/natural environments, minorities are likely to think less highly of national parks.

Another interesting trend that surfaced was the lower level of importance for national parks expressed by African Americans (compared to both non Hispanic Whites and Hispanics). There is no definitive explanation for this trend, but one suggestion (identified in the previous section) is that the national parks surrounding Essex County are making insufficient efforts to elicit information and events that are culturally relevant to African American visitors. Another suggestion is that perhaps memories/perceptions/instances of violence, discrimination and exclusion in national parks are more prevalent or resounding amongst African Americans (compared to other minority groups) and this serves to impact their current value/importance for national parks. This notion of African Americans perceiving/experiencing a greater frequency of discriminatory acts in parks (also instances of fear) in comparison to other minority groups is a

trend identified in the Essex County study as well as in recent outdoor recreation literature (Gramman, 1996).

### **Education amongst Essex County Respondents**

This section of the Essex County questionnaire (question number 12) sought to determine the highest level of education achieved by a respondent. Level of education is a topic that is explored in almost all literature on race/ethnicity in national park visitation and it is very often found to play a major role in determining one's visitation of parks. NPS studies and independent literature have found that an individual's likelihood of visiting a national park increases with higher levels of education (NPS, 2009; Thompson, 2008). A recent study published by the NPS found that respondents who did not graduate high school had the lowest national park visitation rates; visitation rates increased with higher levels of education (i.e. high school grad, college grad) and the highest visitation rates were exhibited by respondents with post-graduate education (NPS, 2009).

The results from the Essex County study largely corroborated the trends discussed above; national park visitation rates (whether or not a respondent has visited a national park) generally increased with higher levels of education (see the table below). Respondents who had received masters/doctoral levels of education were the most likely to have visited a national park, while respondents who had only received a high school diploma were the least likely to have visited a national park (respondents with less than a high school education also exhibited a low percentage of park visitors).

### National Park Visitation Rate by Respondents of Varying Levels of Education

	Some High School or less	High School Diploma	Some College/ Technical School	Associate Degree	College Degree	Masters/ Doctoral Degree
<b>National Park Visitation Rate</b>	57.15%	50%	73.73%	83.33%	86.80%	89.19%

Now that we have established a clear correlation between level of education and park visitation, it is important to examine how level of education may have varied amongst Essex County’s racial/ethnic groups. It was found that Non Hispanic Whites exhibited the highest percentage of respondents with college degrees and post-graduate education, while Hispanic and African American respondents exhibited much higher percentages of education under the collegiate level (less than high school, high school diploma, some college). This disparity in the average levels of education amongst racial/ethnic groups may help explain the unequal representation of certain groups as park visitors (i.e. Essex County whites received higher levels of education than minority groups and are over represented as national park visitors).

The disparity in levels of education amongst racial/ethnic groups is of little surprise as disproportionate numbers of racial/ethnic minority group members in higher educational settings has been well documented for decades (Hirschman & Lee, 2005). The persistent racial/ethnic disparity in educational institutions can be attributed to the combined forces of a nonexistent equal opportunity structure and the marginalized nature of racial/ethnic minority groups in U.S. society (Hirschman & Lee, 2005). Understanding this component of education is important because, in accordance with this project, the attainment of education has been found to play a

necessary role in the development of one's interest (and continued involvement) in outdoor recreation (Thompson, 2008). Given the unbalanced racial/ethnic composition of educational institutions and the role of education in outdoor recreation, the Essex County study has determined education to be a strong predictor of national park visitation and a vital contributor to the racial disparity observed amongst park visitors.

## **Discussion**

Throughout the analysis of the Essex County survey results several trends emerged that both corroborated and defied my expectations at the start of this project as well as the findings of past literature. As anticipated at the conception of this project, the well-documented concept of racial/ethnic disparity in national park visitation is a phenomenon that reigns true amongst the residents of Essex County, New Jersey. Despite an overall misrepresentation of racial/ethnic groups as visitors to local national park units (whites being over represented and minority groups being under represented), the degree of racial/ethnic disparity amongst Essex County visitors was less severe than that of visitation trends recently reported by NPS studies and other outdoor recreation literature (NPS, 2002; NPS, 2009; Gramman, 1996; Floyd, 1999; Thompson, 2008). Perhaps an even more surprising result derived from the Essex County respondents was that a significantly higher percentage of residents were national park visitors (visited at least once), in comparison to total public visitation figures published in previous NPS studies (NPS, 2002). Both of these trends (as deviating from previous findings) can likely be attributed to the comparatively greater accessibility of Essex County's parks and the highly diverse nature of Essex County's population.

Although these preliminary results may seem to suggest that there has been progress in the alleviation of parks' traditional exclusivity, a closer examination of respondent recreation trends, attitudes and perceptions shows that Essex County is not exempt from many of the common barriers that contribute to a modern racial disparity in the national park system. In the past several decades, literature on racial/ethnic participation in the outdoors has often pointed to the marginalized nature of minority groups (the marginality hypothesis) and differing cultural values/interests amongst minority groups (the ethnicity hypothesis) as the predominant forces behind a racial/ethnic disparity in today's national park system (Floyd, 1999; Gramman, 1996). The Essex County study found that although factors of minority marginalization (access to transportation and financial constraints) and cultural differences certainly impact minority visitation patterns, these factors cannot be applied to explain the visitation patterns of all minority group members nor are they the most important barriers to general minority visitation of national parks. There was a tendency amongst white respondents to (inaccurately) simplify minority visitation patterns as a product of marginalization and differing cultural value systems; as documented in previous literature and observed in the Essex County study, race/ethnicity alone is not an accurate predictor of one's outdoor recreation participation and preferences (Roberts & Rodriquez, 2008).

Another misconception exhibited by white respondents was the perceived importance of upbringing/childhood/socialization as exerting a negative influence on racial/ethnic minority visitation. Although minority respondents generally agreed that socialization practices could shape an individual's future relationship with nature/outdoor recreation, this was not perceived to be among the important constraints to racial/ethnic minority national park visitation.

Throughout the Essex County study it became quite apparent that the historical context of national parks and the greater outdoors continues to shape current racial/ethnic perceptions and relationships with national parks. This historical context refers to the adoption of the outdoors/parks as places of ‘white privilege’ and the source of considerable discrimination, discomfort and exclusion amongst racial/ethnic minority groups. Through an examination of minority visitation trends, attitudes and perceptions it was found that members of racial/ethnic minority groups still perceive national parks to be places of ‘white belonging’, discrimination, discomfort and other exclusionary practices. Although much of this discernment can be attributed to the historical context of parks, Essex County’s minority respondents reported that actual experiences of discrimination and other acts of exclusion within national parks still exist. The combination of historical and current exclusionary park aspects were found to play a significant role in shaping minority visitation and park perception patterns; these patterns include locations of visitation (preference for historical parks close to urban areas), activity preferences (less ‘adventurous’ activities) and general attitudes toward national parks.

Despite the impact historical context and current exclusionary practices (within national parks) has on minority visitation, the Essex County study found that minority groups have a high value for both nature/natural environments and national parks. One aberration from this trend was a slightly lessened African American value (although overall, still quite high) for national parks. This deviation was attributed to the historical context of parks and current patterns of discrimination/exclusion as having a disproportionate effect on African American minority groups. Overall, historically popular notions of a lessened minority interest in the environment were proved to be inaccurate in this study (Faucher, 2009).

In addition to notions of perceived/experienced discrimination and exclusionary practices, Essex County minority respondents identified issues of transportation (lack of access and distance), education/awareness, marketing, and financial constraints as major constraints to national park visitation. Despite the clear economic aspect (stemming from the marginalization of minority groups) of some of these constraints, there was a prevalent connection established between the aforementioned constraints and a lacking overall effort to elicit minority visitation to national parks. Many minority respondents expressed that the lack of provision of (affordable) transportation and information/advertising on parks in minority communities (as well as the high fees associated with visitation) serve as important barriers and indicate that minority groups are not 'wanted' in the parks.

The prevalent identification of a 'lack of education/awareness/knowledge' as a major constraint to minority visitation indicates a significant lack of information on the existence/benefits of national parks in minority/urban communities. Although urban/minority educational curriculums and generally lower levels of education attainment amongst minority groups (education was found to be an accurate predictor of visitation) may be partially to blame, important alternative factors exist. Given that a lack of awareness on local parks was exhibited by all respondents (of all racial/ethnic backgrounds and levels of education, but more so amongst minority groups), it became evident that there is a generally lackluster NPS effort to disseminate information. This lack of available national park information is especially apparent in minority/urban communities. Similar and likely contributing to the lack of awareness is the failing effort to market/advertise outdoor recreation opportunities to minority groups and include minority groups in outdoor recreation media.

Further deterring minority visitation and contributing to the exclusivity of parks, many minority respondents expressed (both explicitly and implicitly) that there was lack of ‘culturally relevant’ activities, events and information provided by the national parks and its employees. This particular concern was predominantly voiced by African American Essex County respondents and has been identified as an important barrier to minority visitation in several studies (Roberts, 2007; Finney, 2006; Makopondo, 2006). Overall, it is clear that the NPS, at least from the perspective of minority groups, continues to cater to the ‘traditional park visitor’ and has not made appropriate changes to make parks equally inclusive to all racial/ethnic groups.

Although this study did not directly determine respondent class status and income level, it was found that of the several constraints presented to minority groups, many can be attributed to class status while others are more directly tied to race/ethnicity. Important constraints such as lack of access to transportation, lack of education/awareness and financial constraints, all of which impact minority visitation, can be attributed to the structural discrimination of society which has forced disproportionate percentages of minority groups in lower socioeconomic class status. Equally important constraints such as current and historical discrimination within the NPS, the outdoors, media and environmental agendas in general, are directly related with race/ethnicity. The discriminatory and racist sentiments associated with these constraints serve to impact only members of certain races/ethnicities (racial/ethnic minority groups), regardless of their class status.

In conclusion, the Essex County study has found that although traditional barriers to minority visitation remain relevant today (impacts of marginalization and to a lesser extent, cultural values), the actions of majority (white) group members, societal institutions and the NPS have not reflected the actionable steps necessary to combat this issue. I believe that, given the

clear interest/value in parks exhibited by minority groups, if the appropriate steps were taken to reduce the exclusivity of parks, minority groups would be better enabled to overcome the constraints of marginalization and an increased minority presence in parks would ensue.

## **Recommendations**

Upon analyzing the various visitation patterns, constraint theories, recreation preferences, environmental/park values and attitudes expressed by Essex County respondents, I was able to generate several recommendations as to how we (as a society) may be able to adopt a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable environmental ethic. As identified in past literature, previous attempts to alleviate racism in the environment and adopt an inclusionary environmental agenda have largely failed due to attempts at implementing such change coming from predominantly white constituencies (Hickcox, 2012). In order to unravel the deeply embedded racism of environmentalism and adopt an equally inclusive environmental atmosphere, minority groups must be better/equally represented in the construction of policy suggestions and initiatives. Attempts to solve racial issues in the environment will continue to fail if minority groups remain excluded from decision-making processes. In addition, this notion of equality in environmental agenda setting is necessary if a broader transformation of the white environmental ethic (misled/racist perceptions, beliefs, myths and stereotypes) is to occur. Such a transformation, including an appropriate and long overdue recognition of the historical/continued structural racism of society, is essential to restructuring the inclusivity of our nation's natural environments.

Although the aforementioned suggestions are important/essential steps towards eradicating the racism and exclusionary nature of modern environmentalism, such goals are

rather idealist and likely require a considerable amount of time. There are also several more specific and tangible steps that can be taken to adopt a more inclusive national park atmosphere and booster racial/ethnic minority participation. The first recommendation, which was consistently expressed by minority respondents, is for the NPS or local governments to provide affordable (or free) public transportation from cities and other urban communities to local national parks. A lack of access to transportation and financial constraints were both found to be prevalent barriers to minority participation in national parks and these problems could be greatly alleviated by the provision of affordable transportation (transportation costs are often a significant portion of one's total national park visit expenditures).

My second recommendation, one of many suggested directly for the NPS, would be to increase minority representation among NPS employees. Several times racial/ethnic minority respondents would express that there is a lack of diversity amongst park employees, and that seeing/interacting with minority employees would 'be cool' and enhance their overall national park experience, perceptions and future visitation. Many of these respondents also noted that if there was an NPS effort to advertise/recruit job opportunities in minority communities, there would be a considerable amount of interest.

Another recommendation that is largely directed at the NPS (similar to the last suggestion), is for the NPS to be more active in minority/urban communities. Racial/ethnic minority respondents were especially likely to point out that there was a general lack of available information on national parks in their communities (many respondents claimed not knowing the existence, location and benefit of local parks as well as some claiming they simply did not know what a national park was). Attempts to garner minority interest/attention could include actions as simple as a NPS presence at career fairs, schools or public places in general (disseminating

flyers etc.). The NPS effort to attract a more diverse crowd and disperse information would also be greatly aided by increased advertising/marketing towards minority communities (i.e. through commercials, billboards, newspaper/magazine ads etc.).

Similar to a more effective dissemination of information, it seems clear that the NPS needs to do a better job in providing more culturally relevant (to racial/ethnic minority groups) activities, events and information; the NPS has to stop catering to the 'traditional visitor' concept (middle-upper class whites). This concept is not new to race and recreation literature, as minority visitors have often expressed that their 'stories' are often not told and when they are, they are told inaccurately by white NPS employees. Many Essex County minority respondents also expressed that the provision (and notification) of activities and events relevant to racial/ethnic minority cultures would increase their interest in and visitation of local national parks.

A last recommendation to the NPS would be to increase employees/services within the park as well increased signage. Many respondents expressed that there was general lack of employees or visitor information centers within the parks as well as signage indicating that certain areas were national parks (contributing to a lack of awareness). Some respondents also suggested (also identified in past studies) that local national parks lacked signage for non-English speaking visitors as well as signage for visitors of all age groups or levels of education.

Many of the recommendations that have been suggested to the NPS can also be mirrored by social/educational institutions at the local or community level. This would include a greater effort by schools/educational curriculums and community organizations (i.e. church groups, afterschool/summer camp programs etc.) to publicize/disseminate national park information (benefits, existence and attractions) and further promote national park visitation by organizing trips and transportation.

Broader efforts to increase racial/ethnic minority representation in outdoor media/advertising and for white visitors to adopt behavior/perceptions that are less exclusive and discriminatory would certainly make the parks a more inclusive environment to minority groups. However, these recommendations are not easily implemented and would likely only follow a transformation of the current environmental ethic.

## **Conclusion**

This study has provided an analysis of the most prevalent barriers to racial/ethnic minority national park visitation in Essex County, New Jersey. In discussing the historical context of race in outdoor recreation and the various attempts of recent studies to analyze the cause(s) of racial/ethnic trends in national parks, I was able to determine how and why patterns of recreation behavior/perceptions/attitudes differ in a contemporary, urban and racially diverse setting (Essex County). Uncovering the environmental attitudes, constraints and inequalities experienced by Essex County's racial/ethnic minority groups allowed for the development of recommendations as to how a modern society can reverse patterns of historical/continued structural racism and appropriately accommodate an increasingly diverse American population. Although this study has provided valuable information and suggestions, further work must be done to determine the best way(s) to provide people of all racial/ethnic backgrounds an equitable and deserved opportunity to engage in our country's natural environments and historical/cultural phenomena.

# Appendix

## Consent Form:

### Exploring Racial Minority Participation in the National Park System

Principal Investigator: Richard Martoglio

### Participant Informed Consent Form

Please read the following material that explains this research study. Signing this form will indicate that you have been informed about the study and that you wish to participate.

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Richard Martoglio, an undergraduate student in University of Colorado at Boulder's Department of Environmental studies. This project is being conducted under the direction of instructor Dale Miller, Department of Environmental Studies, University of Colorado. Richard Martoglio can be reached at 201-704-3995. Dale Miller can be reached at 303-492-6629.

This research study is about ethnic minority participation, perceptions and experiences in the national park system. This study is focused within Essex County, New Jersey and aims to determine the contemporary constraints to ethnic minority visitation of nearby national park units. You are being asked to participate in this study because you live or work in Essex County, New Jersey. It is entirely your choice whether or not to participate in this study.

Participating will take about 2-10 minutes of your time. You will be asked questions about your opinions, experiences and perceptions of the national park system.

Risks: There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study.

Benefits: Taking part in this study will not result in any direct benefits to you.

Compensation: You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

You have the right to withdraw your consent or stop participating at any time. You have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason. Refusing to participate in this study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

We will make every effort to maintain the privacy of your data.

If you have any questions regarding your participation in this research, you should ask the investigator before signing this form. If you should have questions or concerns during or after your participation, please contact Richard Martoglio at 201-704-3995.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant, any concerns regarding this project or any dissatisfaction with any aspect of this study, you may report them (confidentially, if you wish) to the Executive Secretary, Human Research Committee, 26 UCB, Regent Administrative Center 308, University of Colorado at Boulder, Boulder, CO 80309-0026, 303-735-3702.

Authorization: I have read this paper about the study or it was read to me. I know the possible risks and benefits. I know that being in this study is voluntary. I choose to be in this study. I know that I can withdraw at any time. I have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 1 page.

Name of Participant (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Questionnaire:**  
**University of Colorado at Boulder**  
**Racial Minority Participation in the U.S. National Park System**

1. Have you ever visited a national park? (Check one)  No  Yes

2. If so, about how often do you visit a (any) national park? (Check one)  
 Once every 5 years or less  Once every two years  Once a year  1-3 times a year  
 4 + times a year

3. Have you visited any of the following national parks? (Check all that apply):  
 Paterson Great Falls  Morristown National Historical Park  
 Gateway National Recreation Area (Sandy Hook or Brooklyn/Queens locations)  
 Delaware Water Gap  Thomas Edison National Historical Park  
 Pinelands National Reserve (also known as the Pine Barrens)  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. If so, what activities do you do when you visit a national park? (Check all that apply):  
 Camp  Hike  Picnic  Relax  Socialize with family/friends  
 Mountain bike  Fish  View Wildlife  Kayak/Canoe  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. The National Park Service states that, in general, racial minority groups do not frequently visit parks. In your opinion, what might keep racial minorities from visiting national parks?  
(Check any that apply):  
 Discrimination by other visitors  Discrimination by park employees)  Financial constraints  
 Lack of interest/value in nature  
 Lack of education/awareness/knowledge  Lack of access to transportation  
 Culture of the National Park System  Upbringing/childhood/culture  
 Safety issues  Lack of marketing/advertising towards minority groups  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which of the above factors are most important in limiting visitation? (1 being most important)  
1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you think lower racial minority visitation of national parks is a problem?  
 Yes  No

8. Have you ever had a negative experience in a national park?  
 Yes  No

*Please see other side* 

9. If so, did you experience any of the following (Check any that apply):

- Fear
- Safety concerns (from natural hazards such as animal attacks or rugged terrain)
- Physical discomfort (heat, insects etc.)
- Psychological discomfort (i.e. feeling of not belonging or being out of place)
- Discrimination                       Not enjoyable/interesting

Other \_\_\_\_\_

If you wish, elaborate on any/all of the above experiences you identified: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. How important are nature and natural environments to you? Please rate on a scale of 1-10 (1= not important at all, 10=highly important):

\_\_\_\_\_

11. How important to you are national parks? Please rate on a scale of 1-10 (1=not important at all, 10=highly important):

\_\_\_\_\_

12. How would you describe your highest level of education?

- Some high school or less     High school diploma                       Some college/technical school     BA/BS (college) degree     Associate degree     Master's or Doctoral degree

13. What is your race? (please pick the most appropriate category or indicate *Other*):

- Caucasian or White     American Indian or Native Alaskan     Two or more races     African American or Black     Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Asian                       Other race \_\_\_\_\_

14. Ethnicity (please check one or indicate *Other*):

- Hispanic, Latino, or Chicano (family's country or countries of origin: \_\_\_\_\_)
- Non-Hispanic
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

In your opinion, was there anything left out of this questionnaire? (please describe below): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*This questionnaire is completely anonymous. You will not be identified or contacted based on your race, ethnicity, or income as reported in this questionnaire. **Thank you for your time!***

**Table 1:**

**Essex County Respondents:  
National Park Visitation Rates**

Respondents	Rate	Sample N
Total	75.82%	182
NH White	90.41%	73
White	90.90%	77
Black	65.71%	70
Hispanic (any race)	88.23%	17
Asian	57.14%	7
American Indian/Native Alaskan	100%	2
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	100%	1
Two or More races	40%	10
Other	50%	2

**Table 2:**

**Percentage of racial/ethnic groups that visited a national park in past two years:** Comparison of Essex County study (2012) and NPS Comprehensive Survey (2008)

Respondents	Essex County	U.S. (NPS 2008)	Difference
NH White	52.42%	53%	-0.58
Hispanic (any race)	70.50%	32%	38.5
Black	42.80%	28%	14.8
Asian	42.85%	53%	-10.15
American Indian/Native Alaskan	100%	37%	63
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%	N/A	

**Table 3:**

**Percent Distributions across Race/Ethnicity, All Respondents vs. Visitors, by year:**  
Comparing 2012 Essex County Study and 2009 NPS Survey

Race/Ethnicity	2011-2012 All	2011-12 Visitors	Diff.	NPS 2008-2009 All	NPS 2008-09 Visitors	Diff.2
Non Hispanic						
White	40.10%	43.33%	3.23	70%	78%	8
Black	38.46%	33.30%	-5.16	12%	7%	-5
Hispanic	9.34%	13.30%	3.96	13%	9%	-4
Asian	3.84%	3.33%	-0.51	3%	3%	0
American Indian/Native Alaskan	1.09%	2.20%	1.11	2%	1%	-1
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.54%	0	-0.54	N/A	N/A	
Two or More races	5.49%	3.33%	-2.16	N/A	N/A	
other	1.09%	1.10%	0.01	N/A	N/A	
Weighted N	182	90		2582	1205	

**Table 4:**

**Racial/Ethnic Visitation of National Parks near Essex County, NJ.**

Column1	Paterson	Gateway	Delaware	Pinelands	Morristown	Edison	Other
Non Hispanic							
White	53.54%	63.63%	72.72%	34.84%	28.78%	27.27%	18.18%
African American	32.60%	45.65%	45.65%	4.34%	17.39%	30.43%	8.69%
Hispanic	26.66%	73.33%	40.00%	6.66%	13.33%	13.33%	13.33%
Asian	25.00%		25.00%		50.00%	25.00%	25.00%
American Indian/Native Alaskan	50.00%		100%				
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	100.00%		100.00%	100.00%		100.00%	
Two or More races	100.00%	50%	50.00%	75%	50%	50%	
Other	50%						
Distance from county center (in miles)	10.5	29	55	56	25	1.5	

**Table 5**

**National Park Recreation Preferences by Racial/Ethnic Groups**

Column1	Camp	Hike	Picnic	Relax	Socialize	Bike	Fish	Wildlife	Kayak
Non Hispanic White	27.27%	66.66%	53.03%	69.69%	63.63%	4.54%	13.63%	37.87%	18.18%
White	25.71%	67.14%	52.85%	70.00%	60.00%	5.71%	12.85%	37.14%	18.57%
African American	17.39%	17.39%	45.65%	47.82%	58.69%	6.52%	15.21%	15.21%	4.34%
Hispanic	20.00%	40.00%	53.33%	53.33%	46.66%	6.66%	6.66%	26.66%	6.66%
Asian	25.00%	100.00%	50.00%	75.00%	50.00%	0.00%			
American Indian/Native Alaskan		100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%				
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander					100.00%				
Two or More races	50.00%	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	50.00%	50.00%	50.00%	50.00%
Other			100.00%		100.00%				

**Table 6****Perceived Constraints to Racial/Ethnic Minority Visitation of National Parks**

<b>Constraints</b>	<b>Non Hispanic White</b>	<b>African American</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>
Discrimination by Visitors	13.69%	17.14%	17.64%
Discrimination by Employees	6.84%	8.57%	0.00%
Financial Constraints	52.05%	38.57%	66.66%
Interest/Value in nature	32.87%	34.28%	29.41%
Education/Awareness/Knowledge	50.68%	47.14%	47.05%
Access to Transportation	42.46%	37.14%	52.94%
Culture of NPS	15.06%	21.42%	17.64%
Upbringing/Childhood/Culture	56.16%	30.00%	23.52%
Safety Issues	4.10%	12.85%	11.76%
Marketing/Advertising	45.20%	42.85%	29.41%
Other	1.36%	0.00%	0.00%

**Table 7****Percentage of Respondents Who Agree/Disagree that Lower Racial Minority Visitation of National Parks is a Problem**

Race/Ethnicity	Yes	No
Non Hispanic		
White	46.57%	53.42%
White	46.75%	51.94%
African American	44.28%	55.71%
Hispanic	35.29%	64.70%
Asian	71.42%	28.57%
American Indian/Native Alaskan		50%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	100%	0%
Two or More races	50%	50%
Other	100%	

**Table 8****Percentage of Park Visitors recording Negative National Park Experiences**

Race/Ethnicity	Yes	No
Non Hispanic		
White	21.21%	78.78%
White	21.42%	78.57%
African American	13.04%	86.95%
Hispanic	20%	80%
Asian	25%	75%
American Indian/Native Alaskan	100%	0%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	100%	0%
Two or More races	100%	0%
Other	100%	0%

**Table 9****Percentage of Park Visitors Encountering ‘Types’ of Negative National Park Experiences**

Race/Ethnicity	Fear	Safety	Physical	Psychological	Discrimination	Not Enjoyable/ Interesting
Non Hispanic White	3.03%	10.60%	16.66%	3.03%	0%	3.03%
White	4.28%	11.42%	17.14%	4.28%	1.42%	2.85%
African American	15.21%	13.04%	23.91%	8.69%	15.21%	17.39%
Hispanic	13.33%	13.33%	6.66%	13.33%	13.33%	0%
Asian			25%			
American Indian/Native Alaskan		50%	50%	50%		
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander						
Two or More races			25%			
Other		100%		100%		

**Table 10****Average Importance (out of 10) for Nature/Natural Environments and National Parks**

Race/Ethnicity	Nature/Natural Environments	National Parks
Non Hispanic White	8.876	8.681
White	8.975	8.33
African American	8.419	7.666
Hispanic	9.2	8.666
Asian	9.2	7.8
American Indian/Native Alaskan	9	7.5
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	8	8
Two or More races	8.75	7.875
Other	7.5	6

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