

Exclusion in the Great Outdoors: Masculinity, Misogyny, Whiteness, and Racism in the  
Environmental Movement and at Philmont Scout Ranch

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General Honors

Defended on April 4th, 2018

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who helped me, directly or indirectly, through this process called “writing and honors thesis.” First and foremost, I would like to thank those who agreed to serve on my committee: Professors Jennifer Fluri and Kelly Hurley. I am eternally grateful for your input and evaluation to make my thesis the best Geography and Literature blend it could be, as well as inspiring me to grow as a writer, a student, and a thinker. Thanks to Dr. Paul Strom for agreeing to be on my committee alongside my professors and Dr. Hickcox.

I would also like to thank Dr. Rolf Norgaard for his feedback and assistance in his class, as well as my group members Erma, Hope, and Cally. I appreciate all of the kind words of encouragement, necessary words of criticism, and apt frustrations at my subject matter. You all constantly reminded me that this thesis wasn't just making a big fuss about nothing.

The biggest thanks on this whole page goes to Dr. Abby Hickcox for being the most involved, thoughtful, committed, and all-around exceptional advisor I could have asked for. You have impacted so many students, in life-changing ways, and I am so grateful that I happened to be one of them.

Of course I ought to thank my parents, and those who have become my parents, or assisted my parents over the years: Mom, Dad, Tim and Davida. Mom, Dad, your support means a bit more, since you knew me when my greatest achievement was sticking Jell-O to the ceiling.

I owe a big thanks to my surgeon Dr. McCarty and his team for making my injury less of a crisis than it could have been. In that vein, I would like to thank the makers of Ibuprofen and Acetaminophen, as well as my right knee for continuing to behave how a knee should.

To the friends that have helped me carry things, open doors, and drive me to campus, Isaiah, Ezra, and Laura, I owe you big time. If you ever tear your ACL, let me be the first you call. To Lillian, thanks for being the most supportive roommate I could ask for, and I'm sorry for the turmeric stain on the carpet. To Sam, your unwavering support from across an ocean meant more to me than I could ever express.

I'd also like to thank my boss, Dylan, and my peer advising team. You make work fun and fulfilling. Thanks to Emily for enduring my stress about this project, even when you're a captive audience at the front desk.

Of course, I'd love to thank all my interviewees. This would not be possible without you all, and it was a joy to work with each and every one of you. I need to thank my first ranger, Mylas, from 2011. I'm sure you've not thought of 620-E3 since, but if it wasn't for your charisma, I may not have decided I wanted to be a ranger all those years ago. To the Boy Scouts of America, thank you for your impact in my life. Let's all learn to do better together.

I owe so much to the Philwomen who have supported me in my career, especially Sam, Rachel, Maggie, Kathryn, Anna, Savren, Kelly, and Katie. Philmont would not have been half as magical without you.

Lastly, I want to thank any future Philmont ladies. Keep making space for yourselves, and support each other. We are all so proud of you.

## Abstract

This thesis aims to understand patterns of whiteness, racism, masculinity, and misogyny in outdoor culture through the specific example of Philmont Scout Ranch. These patterns are linked to nationalism in the roots of environmentalism, as well as the Boy Scouts of America. To investigate these themes in both environmentalism as a whole and Philmont specifically, I researched existing literature on environmental exclusion, modern racism, nationalism, and environmental literature. I also interviewed twelve staff members at Philmont to gain a more direct understanding of these patterns and their implications. Specific themes of Boy Scout ideals, environmental ethics, rugged individualism, sexism, and whitewashed history emerged consistently in my interviews, painting a bigger picture of exclusion in the environmental movement and the culture surrounding the movement. Philmont's exclusions are symptomatic of greater trends of exclusion in the environmental movement that create an ideal of white masculinity in the outdoors.

## Introduction

Philmont Scout Ranch is the largest youth camp in the world at 219 square miles in Cimarron, New Mexico, in the Sangre De Cristo range of the Rocky Mountains. Every year, approximately 22,000 Boy Scouts and Venture Scouts pass through Philmont on backpacking treks that vary in length from seven days and fifty miles to twenty-one days and two hundred miles. The ranch will hit its eighty year mark in the summer of 2018, and well over one million scouts will have backpacked at Philmont. Philmont has often been described as the Disneyland of scouting and backpacking. The ranch has been formative to many individuals' understanding, appreciation, and participation in the outdoors. The program focuses on developing personal growth, youth leadership skills, outdoor education, wilderness ethics, physical prowess, and historical awareness of the area.

Philmont offers extraordinary experiences in the outdoors to scouts, in part through interaction with experienced Philmont staff. Each scout who comes to Philmont interacts with many people in staff positions. Every crew is assigned a ranger that teaches Philmont's policies and instills the importance of leadership and wilderness ethics, as well as hard skills like campsite setup and hanging of bear bags. In the backcountry, there are over thirty staffed camps, where Philmont staff members interpret histories like logging, mining, trapping, homesteading, and railroading. Other backcountry camps teach outdoor sports like mountain biking, climbing, and shotgun shooting. The remaining backcountry programs teach wilderness skills like orienteering, wilderness medicine, and team building and communication.

Through all of these programs and instruction, scouts are given a hands-on, community oriented experience backpacking in nature. The landscape itself is striking, with peaks and valleys, canyons and rivers, mesas and plains that scouts can hike through and appreciate for multiple days in the backcountry. For the majority of scouts, Philmont is their first introduction to the sport of backpacking. It is often heralded as a safe environment for participants to begin to understand the outdoors and the natural environment.

Yet, as a part of the Boy Scouts of America, Philmont has some retrogressive policies, practices, and norms that highlight the uglier side of environmentalism. The movement was founded in a time when the natural environment was heralded as an escape from, and then a solution to, the problems of modernity. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, America began to urbanize, and cities became more crowded. Consequently, racial and gendered activities, norms, and expectations shifted, especially for middle class white Americans. In this context of urbanized modernization, boys also spent more time in the home with mothers and nannies, and much of white America feared the spread of racial diversity. In this political climate, the Boy Scouts of America was instituted.

In this thesis I argue that environmentalism and the Boy Scouts of America sought to preserve an idea of America that remained rugged, masculine, and white, with the help of the great outdoors. Both movements remain popular today. Environmentalism is now considered a progressive movement, yet its current demographics demonstrate otherwise. Masculinity and whiteness are still predominant themes in the culture of outdoor enthusiasts, and the consequences of this reality are exclusion for anyone who does not fit into this ideal. Philmont

has proven to be a strong example of the issues that continue to plague environmentalism and outdoor culture today.

Using an interdisciplinary and intersectional approach, this thesis aims to identify the root of environmentalism's exclusion, its impacts, and how these exclusions are present at Philmont Scout Ranch specifically. To begin to identify the root of these issues, I examined prominent environmental literature using the themes of environmentalism and exclusion, as well as theories of race, gender, and nationalism. I interviewed twelve contemporary staff members in Philmont's Ranger Department to link the literature to the current demographic of outdoor enthusiasts. Themes of whiteness and racism, masculinity and misogyny, and an implicit nationalism emerge over and over again in both the existing literature and in my research.

## Literature Review

The existing environmental literature is thorough, abundant, and wide-ranging. For my purposes, I researched literature that critiques the movement's exclusion to contribute to a broader understanding of my thesis. Critical Race Theorists like Laura Pulido were a vital source in examining the ways environmental exclusion operates in contemporary US culture. Giovanna Di Chiro's analysis of environmental justice fills the gaps that the mainstream environmental movement leaves, and defines the traditional movement by showing what it does not do: support people of color, women, and other politically underrepresented groups in the framework of environmental issues. From here, I included the works of theorists, like Jake Kosek, who have critiqued the environmental movement's exclusions, as well as an example of a traditional

environmentalist, Roderick Frazier Nash, doing everything these theorists highlight as problematic as an example.

Following this discussion, the literature review discusses the ways in which the environmental movement relies on masculinity to define itself as a superior mode of living and belief system. This focus on masculinity only leaves room for misogyny and sexism to further limit the space that women can occupy in outdoor culture and environmentalism. An example of the outdoor recreation's misogyny is also included in this section in the form of the 1971 edition of the *Sierra Club Wilderness Handbook*. The effects of these toxic masculinities and misogynies are profound, and have led to dangerous situations for women as well as men who participate in outdoor sports.

After reviewing literature that highlights problems in outdoor recreation and environmentalism, I analyze works by four of the most prominent American environmental writers: Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and Edward Abbey. These authors, in chronological order, shaped the way American environmentalists understand the movement as well as the natural landscape around them. Therefore, the ideologies, beliefs, and biases these writers present in their works are often included in the environmental rhetoric that exists today. All four authors include themes of white supremacy, sexism, and rugged individualism that illustrate how they believe readers should understand, interact with, and define our relationship to the American landscape.

To provide a background for Philmont Scout Ranch as a case study of contemporary environmentalism, a short history of the Boy Scouts of America is included in this literature review. The Boy Scouts of America have defined how American youth interact with landscape

and the environment for the past century. This organization, with its origins in the same era as many national parks, was created by the early environmental nationalists like Theodore Roosevelt. Boy Scouts are given a morally-focused code of conduct that outlines how to participate in nature correctly. The Boy Scouts of America, therefore, represent many integral themes of environmentalism and outdoor recreation.

A theoretical discussion of nationalism also informed this analysis. The heart of the issue of environmental exclusion is that it defines America in terms of its landscape and poses certain citizens as that landscape's established protectors. Understanding how nationalism is constructed and reinforced adds to the greater understanding of the ideology of environmentalism.

This literature review informs many of the conversations and themes that arose in my research. The goal of my thesis is to provide a more complete picture of the way outdoor enthusiasts have constructed ideas of nature and hidden the existing exclusions. This would not be possible without a discussion of theories of race, gender, and nationalism, as well as a thorough analysis of prominent environmental thought.

### Modern Racism and Environmental Justice

To understand the ways in which the environmental movement is exclusionary, one must understand the contemporary politics of oppression and white supremacy. At the turn of the millenium, Pulido (1996) made a case for acknowledging white privilege as an important variable in modern racism. White privilege became a popular and accurate analysis of modern racism because, unlike previously common understandings of racism, it does not require evidence of racial animus to be detected as a repercussion of systematic racism. In "Geographies of Race and Ethnicity" Pulido (2015) revisits her earlier analysis of white privilege and reminds

readers that white supremacy must still be examined, as well. She cites the growth of structural privilege in the US beginning with the dismantling of formal, state-sponsored racial supremacy. As the Civil Rights movement pushed forth policy to reduce the state's ability to actively disadvantage people of color in formal ways, structures of power like education, business, and politics still excluded racial minorities in ways that reinforce one another.

White privilege is linked to and furthered by neoliberalism and neoliberalism's claim that we are in a "post-racial" era, which simply is not true. Neoliberalism, in its laissez-faire approach to business and politics, creates a climate where the government cannot be held accountable for modern racism, as it is a product of economic processes instead that are identified as natural happenings in a free system (Pulido, 2015). In other words, if the government is not enforcing segregation, yet it continues to happen as a result of capitalist, and more specifically neoliberal, systems that allow for little government or social regulation, the problem seems untouchable. In this scenario, racism is seen as not existing or as an unavoidable side-effect of economic function. This claim is supported by events like having a black president, as people assume that a reality in which the US president is black cannot be the same reality that has disproportionate incarcerations and poverty rates for black Americans.

However, neoliberalism only allows for the furthering of racism to support the current wealth distribution and get rid of social safety nets (Pulido, 2015). Too much focus on white privilege deters from seeing white supremacy as it still exists, because it takes the pressure off of the empowered group to remedy inequality. The difference between the two is that supremacy involves active awareness, and a belief in racial superiority.

In order to criticize what the traditional environmental movement is missing due to its

racism and sexism, we must acknowledge the environmental *and* civil rights based movement, environmental justice. Environmental justice delivers a necessary counterargument to the socially exclusive mainstream environmental movement. The environmental justice movement highlights issues of environment that affect people of color as a result of systematic and systemic racism and othering (Di Chiro, 1996). It heavily critiques the traditional environmental movement because nineteenth- and early twentieth-century environmentalists ardently and constantly dismissed people of color, ignored the movement's roots in colonialism, held onto a discourse of white racial purity, and blamed poor people of color for overpopulation and urban pollution. Environmental Justice also brings a new definition of "environment" to the table that expands the viewpoint and focus of the traditional movement. The environment is defined as "where we live, work, and play," eliminating the separation earlier environmentalists established between natural spaces and urban spaces, and turning the focus back on people (Di Chiro, 1996).

The early environmental justice movement focused on proving the connection between racism and disproportionate environmental hazards through case studies. For example, marked as one of the founding events of the movement, the United Church of Christ released a report on data gathered to prove the connection between uneven impacts of hazardous waste and the locations of communities of color in 1987 (United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, 1987). From this point, the movement tackled instances of environmental racism case by case, fighting at the grassroots level. Then, in 1996, Laura Pulido critiqued the environmental justice movement for its lack of acknowledgment of the systemic aspects of racism still so entrenched in American societal, political, and economic processes. While these aspects of racism were implied in the literature and actions of the movement, there was a lack of an attempt

to raise awareness about the broader issues that tied all of the local movements together (Pulido, 1996).

Pulido highlighted the three dominant contradictions in modern racial discourse, even among environmental justice activists and scholars: 1. Racism is reduced to overt and deliberate actions; 2. Racism is denied to be an ideology; and 3. Racism is viewed as a fixed, unitary phenomenon that can be isolated and removed from systems (Pulido, 1996, p. 146-147). The establishment of these truths in environmental justice forces one to see these individual cases as what they really are: part of a much larger, much more entrenched problem of racial inequality.

Since the rise of the movement into the public vision, there have been two main criticisms of the environmental justice movement that target the idea of racism as a factor: market dynamics as causation of inequality and lifestyle choices as causation of inequality (Pulido, 1996). The first is also described as the “chicken or the egg” argument, because it asks which came first in an area, the residents or the hazard. It blames apparently benign economic forces for the exploitation and degradation of neighborhoods and argues that disadvantaged peoples “naturally” move to these cheaper areas. Pulido describes this criticism as a suggestion that the specific distribution of environmental hazards is caused by poverty alone (Pulido, 1996, p.146-47). When asking, “What was there first, the community or the hazard?” the question is essentially asking, “Does racism still exist?” The answer is yes, institutionalized racism creates poverty, and capitalism takes advantage of that poverty. Therefore, race is still a factor in environmental hazards, mostly because people of color are seen as less likely to be able to prevent hazardous economic conditions and policies from invading and impacting their

communities, not only because of their poverty, but also because of their race and the continuing presence of racism today (Pulido, 1996).

Di Chiro (1996) critiques the traditional environmental movement for its narrow focus and for ignoring the role of the exploitation of impoverished communities in the greater narrative of environmental degradation. The traditional movement uses a neo-Malthusian perspective on resources, a “mono-causal peril” associated with overpopulation (99). This ignores the effect of affluence on pollution and use of resources, a disparity that is vital to the foundation of environmental justice. While the overuse of resources affects everyone, those that cause the majority of resource scarcity are wealthy elites and those that face the brunt of climate change are poorer racial or ethnic minorities. The traditional environmental movement’s lack of acknowledgement of these disparities is the reason environmental justice removes itself from the mainstream movement (Di Chiro, 1996). Yet, traditional environmentalism does have a role, albeit limited, in the formation of the environmental justice movement. Early on in the modern environmental movement, in the 1970s, it showed a promising and inclusive start, citing social issues and urban spaces as environmental issues and drawing its methods from the civil rights movement. However, this focus shifted to preservation and conservation of natural lands and away from people. With that shift also came exclusion based on levels of affluence and social status, and consequently, racism (Di Chiro, 1996). This exclusionary shift is a reference to the movement’s original roots in white racial purity, white masculinist nationalism, and creating wilderness in response to the threat of immigration.

#### The Mainstream Environmental Movement and Racism

The founders of the outdoor movement, politically, socially, and literarily, had

undercurrents of white supremacy in their work and in their personal beliefs. Much environmental literature stemmed from the transcendental, naturalist, anti-modern movements, which had strong, direct roots in retrogressive politics of the Doctrine of Manifest Destiny. John Muir and Edward Abbey are two examples of this, and these two authors are important to criticize because they continue to be exalted in western environmentalism and outdoor culture today.

Jake Kosek's (2004) "Purity and Pollution" outlines a history of racial purity, othering, and whiteness that the environmental movement is founded in and cannot escape from; Muir and Abbey's admirers in the modern environmental movement reflect this lack of separation of the movement from its roots. For example, Muir's saying "the mountains are calling and I must go" is found on t-shirts, bumper stickers, jewelry, and anything else that people can use to show their affinity for hiking. John Muir consistently wrote about his frustrations with people of color for failing to appreciate the majesty of wilderness and nature (Kosek, 2004). These racially biased assumptions justify manifest destiny, as they place the responsibility of protecting nature on the only group who seems to respect nature: the white man.

The assumptions also ignore histories of white colonialism that destroyed landscapes held sacred to Native Americans. Muir was a leader in the push to remove indigenous peoples from their homes and lands to establish a socially constructed "wilderness." Early environmentalists evicted Native Americans from Yosemite, Yellowstone, and Glacier National Parks as well as many others, claiming their role as naturalist whites made them better stewards of the land than these groups (Kosek 2004, Finney 2014). Environmentalism has a "heart of whiteness" that runs "counter to modernity and politics" yet is a product of both (Kosek, 2004, p. 127). Its founders,

spread out from the 1870s to the 1970s, reflect this contradiction, creating a white domination movement in the woods.

These racist definitions of purity and idea of America as a white, pure, and male nation were produced and reproduced by policy and ideology of presidents and politicians like Theodore Roosevelt and Calvin Coolidge (Kosek, 2004). Roosevelt considered the continued immigration of nonwhite ethnicities as “racial suicide” for America, as “America must remain American” and therefore white (Kosek, 2004, p. 130). There emerged an idea of the well-being and “blood” or vitality of the individual linked to an understanding of the nation as a whole, with “metaphors of blood, vitality, and race” (Kosek, 2004, p. 131) in a post-WWI America. This fixation on bloodlines in nationalism put the American ego in crisis when confronted with the issue of nonwhite immigration and population growth. The rise of eugenics in discussions during this era emphasizing racial purity is reinforced by Roosevelt’s anti-birth control policy specifically for white people (Kosek, 2004, p. 130). There was a fear that America may not sustain its white majority, and that this would be a tragic turning point for the country. Supported by a constructed history of American whiteness, the ideology of manifest destiny also erases the real history of the making of America by poor migrant laborers of color and replaces it with that of free white men (Kosek, 2004, p. 131). This, in turn, erases the reality of how white groups of Americans actually impacted the national landscape. Many of the country’s monuments and railroads were built by non-white immigrants or slaves, yet white men claimed ownership of these American symbols of progress.

Throughout the 20th century, environmentalists continued to mask their exclusions under a guise of liberalism and progressiveness. An example of this is *The Rights of Nature: a History*

*of Environmental Ethics* by Roderick Frazier Nash, which creates a problematic parallel between the occurrence of black slavery in the southern US with the economic exploitation of animals and plants. He argues that environmentalism and abolitionism went hand in hand during the latter movement, and that both were combatting an early nationalistic ideology of domination that prevented an understanding of man as a part of the natural community: “In this geographical context, progress seemed synonymous with growth, development, and the conquest of nature. The idea of living ethically and harmoniously with nature was incompatible with nineteenth-century American priorities” (Nash, 1989, p. 35). Both types of organizations were devoted to righting the “wrongs” of early American capitalist culture. Furthermore, environmentalists put their plans on hold for the sake of abolition, according to Nash: “It would have been incongruous for Congress to pass legislation forbidding cruelty to cattle while millions of human beings existed as unprotected livestock” (Nash, 1989, p. 35). However, Nash does explain that the unity of these two movements ended at abolition, as late 19th and early 20th century environmentalists continued to believe in white supremacy. With this recognition, Nash should see that this racism has not disappeared, and fact, this surviving racist tradition is what makes Nash’s argument unsettling. It is impossible to separate environmentalists’ anti-slavery attitude from their inherent racist exclusions (then and now), making the comparison between oppressed peoples and cattle unflattering and derogatory.

Nash’s argument is deeply flawed for two reasons: 1) Nash cannot separate this philosophical comparison from his position as a privileged white man who cannot understand the modern impacts and repercussions of slavery, and 2) it assumes a post-racial society in its willingness to discuss the persecution of racial minorities in America as a finished product that

we can look on today objectively. Nash compares these two modes of exploitation, slavery and animal husbandry, claiming that early US policies ignored the immorality of both. He describes this society as “ruggedly individualistic and enormously ambitious, early nineteenth-century Americans pursued the main chance with little patience for the controls or restraints provided by ethics or institutions” (Nash, 1989, p. 201). This use of the idea of rugged individualism definitely aligns itself with the conservative and privileged connotations the term usually carries, yet Nash ignores that the concept has been adopted by environmentalists themselves. He aligns environmentalists with the right side of history, fighting slavery and the destruction of the landscape, but he ignores the way in which environmentalism has turned against social justice and has adopted nationalism and rugged individualism.

Environmentalists viewed slavery as the same evil that wiped out populations of buffalo. Though buffalo and people of color were not considered equal to the white man, “that was no reason to deny them their natural rights” (Nash, 1989, p. 205). Therefore, environmentalism “helped some white abolitionists out of the quandary of their own strong racial biases. Although there were exceptions, the prevalent abolitionist attitude held that ... blacks could never attain intellectual and social parity with whites” (Nash, 1989, p. 205). This is Nash’s motivation for his comparison of the two movements: as the whites were willing to stand for the freedom of people they deemed inferior and be the voice for this group, humans should stand for the natural world. His rallying for animal rights continues to rely on white paternalism and the devaluation of people of color.

Historic oppressions of people of color have paved the way for a new, modern form of racism that requires no explicit actors. This is the realm of racism in which environmentalism

exists. Through the devaluing of people of color in outdoor spaces, neo-Malthusian finger-pointing for environmental degradation, and the call to view the struggle for animal rights at the same level as the civil rights movement, environmentalism has not created a self-aware and inclusive space for anyone but white people. However, as all these forms of racism are implicit, or historic, the movement is able to masquerade itself as progressive and inclusive. Yet, the impacts of its exclusion remain, and there is still very little established space for nonwhite people in the outdoors.

#### Environmentalism's Toxic Masculinity

While these constructions of a racialized white nation were being created in Roosevelt's era, America was also attempting to solidify its self-image as an impenetrable, masculine nation rather than an inchoate, feminine nation, with strong prowess and virality. Maria Mies & Vandana Shiva's (1993) "Masculinization of the Motherland" in their collection *Ecofeminism* discusses the patterns that follow a racialized nation and in turn create a masculinized nation, both in the purpose of redefining a state to be militarily impenetrable. The masculinization of nationalism shifts a feminized gendering of the nation, in need of military defense, to a masculine nation that takes military control in the global arena. Mies and Shiva note this change in rhetoric as a nationalistic move: "The country as motherland has been replaced by a masculinized nation state, which exists only to serve... a militarized notion of nationalism" (1993, p. 109).

These masculine ideals of nationalism rooted in military prowess are a notable aspect of Roosevelt era politics, with foundation of institutions like the Boy Scouts of America and Roosevelt's Great White Naval Fleet. These were many of the USA's turn-of-the-century efforts

to be taken seriously as a military power. The “elimination of all associations of strength with the feminine and with diversity” is vital to the line of reasoning that snakes its way around a post-industrial US and “a politics of exclusion and violence is thus built in the name of nationalism” in order to construct the image of a undefeated nation that is not weakened by diplomacy (Mies & Shiva, 1993, p. 111). This masculinization reintroduces a theme that is congruent to all discussions of nationalism: the “[reconstruction] of the past” that is used “to legitimize [nationalism’s] ascendancy” (Mies & Shiva, 1993, p. 111). A rewriting of history to highlight themes of both whiteness and masculinity in American policy, landscape, and culture is vital to these nationalistic process of masculinization.

These ideals are also apparent in portrayals of nature. In “White Man’s Dilemma: His Search for What He Has Destroyed,” Mies and Shiva (1993) argue that the very understanding of nature in the modern sense is constructed around purely masculinist, colonial ideals. Much of the rhetoric that makes nature worthwhile to naturalists is reminiscent of a masculine colonization of nature: “This desire for nature is not directed to the nature that surrounds us... It is rather fixated on the nature which has been defined as colony, backward, exotic, distant and dangerous” (Mies & Shiva, 1993, p. 133). Wilderness, therefore, has continued to be shrouded in this conquering context, despite environmentalists’ and outdoor enthusiasts’ claim that it has since developed into a more symbiotic, respectful relationship. This use of “symbolic constructions” accounts for both the gendering of nature as “the frail, sentimental woman” and those who participate in it as “rational man” (Mies & Shiva, 1993, p. 135). Not only is this colonial context inseparable from its inherent racialization and othering, it also retains its gendered and masculine dominance connotations.

While analyzing these patterns in a post-colonial framework, these colonial implications prove only that this view of nature is inherently retrospective, reliving an era of domination and genocide masquerading as adventure. Mies and Shiva argue that for men in the outdoors, “this search for adventure is often combined with the desire to experience themselves again as ‘real men.’ In patriarchal civilization, this means to experience themselves as the great hero who challenges wild nature, pushing the ‘frontier’ ever further” (1993, p. 141). Adventures in nature therefore are an act of reliving the inflated sense of self-importance that is associated with colonizers, while rewriting the very violent and unglamorous reality of the past.

The environmental movement in fact serves to rewrite this history further by reversing the role of the colonizer, the white man, to be one of protecting the land: “Protection of the environment, landscape planning and so on serve as cosmetics to conceal the identity of those responsible for the destruction in the first place, while the victims of this destruction are themselves identified as perpetrators, the guilty” (Mies & Shiva, 1993, p.153). This is the harm and trauma that neo-Malthusian environmentalists perpetrate by claiming complete ownership of the role of protection, and accusing those subjugated by colonialism as the enactors of natural violence, often because these peoples were the ones being forced to carry out the work of industrialism, and often they have been pushed into the innermost neighborhoods of big cities or marginal or degraded environments. Their disassociation from nature, though the result of white supremacy, slavery, and subjugation, is highlighted as apathy and an act of destruction in itself.

Sarah Jaquette Ray’s *The Ecological Other* takes this construction of nature and its relationship with subjugation a step further by analyzing the ways in which the idea of “disgust” plays into environmentalism and outdoor recreation, and specifically how these cultures view the

nonnormative body. Ray's focus on disgust is justified, as she claims that rhetorics of disgust are vital to "fortifying whiteness" and establishing an othering of women that "materializes and thereby diminishes femininity" (2013, p. 1). Environmentalism defines "which kinds of bodies and bodily relations to the environment are ecologically 'good,' as well as which kinds of bodies are ecologically 'other'" (Ray, 2013, p. 1). These "others" are perceived, through racist and exclusionary hegemonies, as "threats to nature" and environmentalists regulate their participation through "cultural disgust" (Ray, 2013, p. 1). People with disabilities are targeted by this disgust in this narrative, as "the disabled body is the quintessential symbol of humanity's alienation from nature" (Ray, 2013, p. 6). Environmentalism justifies this ableist disgust with the newly defined goal of realigning humankind with the earth, and doing so by condemning those who cannot be on trails. The exclusion that people with disabilities face is only further complicated by the intersection of "other kinds of ecological-othering, including racial, sexual, class, and gendered othering within the mainstream environmental movement" (Ray, 2013, p. 6). This pattern of binarizing what is deemed "unacceptable" and "acceptable" in the outdoors serves as a guide for the nationalistic self of self that is perceived in the American landscape.

By establishing which bodies are not allowed to partake in wilderness spaces, the acceptable bodies remain, creating an American ideal: "The physically fit, self-sufficient man" (Ray, 2013, p. 15). Environmentalism's roots in selective retrospectivity, described above, makes it appealing to many people who promote progress and change. According to Ray, the movement benefited people in a manner reminiscent of a dominant colonial time. For example, Roosevelt "feared the loss of white, Protestant dominance and wanted to prepare Americans for the competition ahead," by addressing "their social anxieties" (2013, p. 14).

The mainstream environmental movement is further incapable of addressing the social justice aspect of environmental issues because of nature's inherent link to nationalism (Ray, 2013, p. 19). Environmentalists and nationalists alike see the wilderness as a proving ground for determining who can best represent what it means to be American. This process is deeply tied to notions of masculinity, racial superiority, and ableism that contribute to the cycle of exclusion that determines who is considered a true American and who can participate in the process of enjoying nature. These stipulations are reinforced over and over again in texts produced by environmental organizations and nature lovers alike.

#### Misogyny in Outdoor Culture

An example of texts that reinforce a hegemonic outdoor ideal is the Sierra Club's publications. The Sierra Club has historically pushed for a rugged individualism that applies to able-bodied masculine ideals. Women's bodies are not seen as primary actors in the outdoors, and their assumed differences are highlighted and reinforced in the 1971 edition of *The Sierra Club Wilderness Handbook*. *The Sierra Club Wilderness Handbook* (Bower et al., 1971) is a perfect example of how women in the outdoors have been viewed and treated in the not so distant past of environmentalism as primarily there for the purpose of enriching men's experience, and not for the sake of having their own experiences. Riddled with misogynistic language and analogizing women to "ball-and-chains" (Bower et al., 1971, p. 81), the handbook exalts women—presumably white women—for their elegance, hygiene, and obsession with their appearance, yet also condemns these stereotypical traits as ones that do not belong in the outdoors.

The chapter on women describes women's biggest shortcoming in the outdoors, aside from being unwilling to leave comforts behind, as their inability to carry as much weight as men.

“All but the most extraordinarily husky of women” can carry more than 25 pounds (Bower et al., 1971, p. 81). Not only is this utterly ridiculous and untrue, but the consequences of women carrying more weight, according to the handbook, is the chance that it may “diminish the buoyancy and joyousness of her gait” and she will not want to come back to the outdoors (Bower et al., 1971, p. 81). This analysis of women’s abilities in the outdoors suggests that women would only undertake these challenges if persuaded by outdoorsy men, and that their largest contribution to backpacking expeditions is to be cheerful, happy, and pleasurable to those they accompany. It is unlikely the handbook would fear that its male readers would lose the “joyousness” of their gaits, because the men are in the outdoors to challenge themselves, as opposed to their female companions.

The chapter “Women” goes on to support stereotypes of women being high maintenance, suggesting there should be “a list of what not to take” instead of a packing list, as women are apparently always bound to over-pack and be unwilling to relinquish material goods (Bower et al., 1971, p. 82). The one cosmetic item the handbook suggests is embracing the look of mild sunburn for “the rose-petal type” of women in the outdoors, again playing to stereotypes that women cannot function without cosmetics, even in the outdoors (Bower et al., 1971, p. 82). This focus on beauty, vanity, delicacy, and entitlement reflects the assumed whiteness and privilege of the handbook, as well as being continually degrading to women.

The backhanded complimentary nature of this chapter is symptomatic of a flattering, yet still controlling view of women in society that only addresses white women. This specific rhetoric allows for a level of exceptional exclusion to white women, while continuing to imply that the outdoors are not really spaces where they should be included. Whiteness becomes

integral to the “normalcy” of femininity, and while this further alienates women of color, it also continually demeans all that is feminine. White women are exalted for their beauty and grace compared to women of color, yet no women are taken seriously in the great outdoors. Women are meant to bring joy to their male companions, be coddled, and be happy, while maintaining their delicate and pure whiteness. This handbook has little room for white women, and no room for women of color. The limited role women have as uncomplaining, uncompetitive pleasure objects for male companions delineated 50 years ago has direct, very dangerous consequences for women who break out of that role in outdoor culture today.

While we have reviewed the more benign or subtle aspects of sexism in the outdoors, there have also been very violent and detrimental consequences for women who make it past the discouraging language and out into the field itself. The article “Out Here, No One Can Hear You Scream” by Katheryn Joyce (2016) outlines the effects of the established history of masculinist outdoor culture on women who work in national park agencies today. Joyce specifically articulates the experiences with sexual harassment that female raft guides in the Grand Canyon face. Experiences like these alienate women professionals from their work and the outdoor industry as a whole. The male-dominated, aggressively masculinist culture of outdoor recreation has created a dangerous atmosphere for women who try to make their way in that world. Navigating the natural landscape now includes navigating through landmines of misogyny, violence, and dismissal, adding layers of challenge to the already difficult undertaking of being a woman in an isolating and dangerous career track. Perpetuating this exclusive and dangerous undercurrent in the National Parks Service discourages women from participating in these

cultures, feeding the cycle of misogyny and exclusion and failing to punish or discourage this behaviour.

The nation's environmental protection and outdoor recreation agencies have been "bound up with a particular image of masculinity" since their inception (Joyce, 2016, n.p.). Park ranger uniforms have a pseudo-military look to them, tied into their narrative of defense of American soil. Masculinity was an important part of this image in the park service's early years, and the rangers were viewed as "rugged, solitary figures" (Joyce, 2016, n.p.). When environmentalism took a more liberal tone later in the 20th century, naturalists adopted the image of being "tree-huggers," which in turn reproduced and strengthened the need for a masculine image. This fear of being emasculated led to a dismissal of female rangers and conservationists (Joyce, 2016, n.p.). Women threatened the men's desire to be seen as "the embodiment of Kit Carson, Daniel Boone, the Texas Rangers, and General Pershing" (Joyce, 2016, n.p.). The "ranger corps' quasi-military culture" caused it to be filled by veterans in the 1930s and 1940s. It was not until 1978 that ranger women were given the same uniforms as men, as opposed to the highly sexualized, stewardess-like uniforms they had worn up to this point (Joyce, 2016, n.p.). This masculinist atmosphere of environmentalism continues to be produced and reproduced in these and other outlets of outdoor culture.

The history of sexual perception of women in the outdoor industry has only led to a current perception of women as inseparable from this sexualization. River raft culture had a "bit of a party vibe" with alcohol and hookups on trips. Yet, this pattern created an atmosphere where "it seemed short-lived river affairs were almost expected of female employees" (Joyce, 2016, n.p.). Women would often warn each other about these expectations and advise against sleeping

in the boat with boatmen. So desired and sought after were women that “boatmen would lobby supervisors to send women from completely unrelated park divisions—an attractive new hire at the entry booth, for instance—on trips,” the “different divisions” aspect important because new women would be less aware of and prepared for these men’s advances (Joyce, 2016, n.p.).

This culture of desiring unknowing young women to go on these raft trips described by Joyce highlights the lack of seriousness taken about what women in conservation and outdoor recreation do. It harkens back to the 1971 Sierra Club Handbook in its expectations for women to be silent, smiling, graceful, and sexy companions for men in the outdoors. This has led to high levels of sexual assault and harassment that women experience, often in situations that are already dangerous, and made more so by the sexual violence perpetrated by supervisors (Joyce, 2016, n.p.). Women have had to make risky decisions to avoid unwanted advances, like not checking in with superiors to let them know where they are, contemplating running away from guides in vast expanses of deserts, and having to follow the advice of men who do not have their best interests or even safety in mind. This culture of misogyny and terror for women will only continue to validate the already unbalanced nature of environmentalism, yet women are constantly making spaces for themselves and challenging this culture in any way they can.

## American Environmentalist Writers

In the outdoor recreation industry and culture, there are four names that are referenced over and over again: Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and Edward Abbey. These men are heavily quoted and inexorably linked to the enjoyment and protection of wilderness. The writing they produced has been credited with pushing forward policy to protect

wild spaces and wilderness, and they have produced and reproduced a love of these wild spaces in generations gone by, and generations to come. Their respective works are widely read and deeply influential in the realm of both environmentalism and American literature as a whole. However, alongside these benefits, these authors bring with them their biases and their ideologies that can be counterproductive and harmful to entire parts of the American population that attempt to participate in the culture of celebrating wilderness and the recreational enjoyment of nature. Ideologies of rugged individualism, masculinity, misogyny, and white supremacy continue to permeate outdoor cultures and societies.

#### Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* and "The Maine Woods"

Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) was the earliest writer of the four, and he broke away from the writing of the older Ralph Waldo Emerson through his articulation of a "distinctively American idea of wilderness" (Oelschlaeger, 1991, p. 133). His writing is inherently philosophical and trail blazes the path to see humans as a part of nature, and intrinsically linked to it. The most quoted words by Thoreau are "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived" in the novel *Walden* (Ronald, 1987, p. 19). This statement has been adopted as a philosophy for those who enjoy outdoor recreation. The main idea or theme in this quote is that wilderness is an essential part of "true" living, and that living far from nature might not be "living" at all. This idea harkens back to a deep fear of modernity, and all the that comes with it. Naturalists like Thoreau were attempting to escape threatening and 'unnatural' processes like non-white immigration to cities, and the

feminization of boys and men through office jobs and lack of hard labor. While these themes are especially pronounced in Thoreau's work, they are reflected in later works by the other three authors examined here as well.

In *The Maine Woods*, published ten years after *Walden*, Thoreau's relationship with nature changes as he sees it for the first time as a threatening and potentially dangerous force rather than a needed component to life own's life fully. This shift is significant because it creates a new understanding of what will later fit into the theme of rugged individualism. Thoreau, for the first time, conquers nature for the danger of it instead of the enjoyment of it. While Thoreau's activities in the wilderness change direction, his incessant gendering of nature does not. Both the femininity of nature and the masculinity and ruggedness of those that partake in nature are reinforced. He climbs the highest mountain in Maine in an effort to challenge himself in nature, instead of just living in it, which was a departure from his experiences living along Walden Pond. In his chapter "Ktaddn" the readers witness various aspects of Thoreau's philosophy of nature intersecting and changing with this newfound shift in attitude. His personification of female Nature creates a dialogue to describe his feelings about his situation:

She does not smile on him as in the plains. She seems to say sternly, Why came ye here before your time. This ground is not prepared for you. Is it not enough that I smile in the valleys?... I cannot pity nor fondle thee here, but forever relentlessly drive thee hence to where I am kind... Shouldst thou freeze or starve, or shudder thy life away, here is no shrine, not altar, nor access to my ear.

(Thoreau, 1864, p. 28)

Thoreau characterizes nature as an admonishing woman, outlining the boundaries that mankind should not cross to Thoreau. Thoreau translates this imagined conversation to be an invitation of domination, of challenging these boundaries. She outlines the dangers of pursuing her in these volatile and dangerous places, yet this only furthers the gendered comparison of simultaneously ignoring women's desires and boundaries and dominating these spaces anyway. Female nature is silenced and trespassed upon for the sake of danger and masculine virality.

This fear he experiences reverts back to earlier Victorian ideas of nature as dangerous, unhappy, and uncivilized. However, this new perspective integrates into his naturalist philosophy well enough when he assumes the masculinist and modernist philosophy of rugged individualism and exceptionalism when encountering challenging aspects of nature. The term "rugged individualism" was first coined in a speech by President Hoover (1928) and it originally referenced a solution to government welfare which suggested that people should be able to help and sustain themselves without the aid of social services. The term began to be used and applied to the push for outdoor recreation and education in America as a response to urbanization and a dependence on society which follows the Industrial Revolution (Hoover, 1928). This ruggedness becomes ever-present in wilderness writings, usually in stories of harsh or challenging encounters deep into the woods and far away from society, or even near death-experiences. It is very closely related to masculinity and ideas of proving oneself in the outdoors, as this is one of the main social encouragements to buy into the concept of rugged individualism. To do nature "right," one must be miserable, out of their comfort zone, and exhausted physically, enduring terrible weather and dangerous situations.

Writers in this genre, especially Thoreau, Muir, Leopold, and Abbey, will emphasize the supposed courageousness of their endeavors by describing themselves as divergent from the norm. Masculinity is accessed through overcoming fear and dominating feminine nature. There is an example of this in “Ktaddn” that not only highlights Thoreau’s shifting philosophy of ruggedness, but also its exceptionalism, in this case its applicability seemingly to only white men: “Only daring and insolent men, perchance, go there. Simple races, as savages, do not climb mountains, - their tops are sacred and mysterious tracts never visited by them” (Thoreau, 1864, p. 29). Thoreau, unlike his British naturalist counterparts, embraces the idea of labeling himself as “daring and insolent” while simultaneously attributing cowardice and superstition to the indigenous people who do not participate in Thoreau’s idea of the proper use of nature. These colonial sentiments are even more disturbing in the context of Thoreau’s life. Not only was Thoreau erasing the history and belonging of Native Americans in outdoor spaces, but he was a part of a greater force erasing their belonging in the whole of the United States, using their supposed cowardice as a justification for dispossessing them and disrupting and destroying their cultures.

Thoreau’s expectation that he benefit from the exceptionalism of the white male explorer is visible in a scene where Thoreau and his hiking companions stumble upon a footprint in the sand. He writes, “At one place, we were startled by seeing, on a little sandy shelf by the side of the stream. The fresh print of a man’s foot, and for a moment realized how Robinson Crusoe felt in a similar case; but at last we remembered that we had struck this stream on our way up, though we could not have told where, and one had descended into the ravine for a drink” (Thoreau, 1864, p. 32). The reference to *Robinson Crusoe* expresses that the men feel fear that others like

them could have ventured into the same patch of earth. As it turns out, the men themselves had made the print, revealing that they were alone after all. The fear that they felt was rooted in the desire to be alone for the sake of being the explorers, and to feel as though they alone had been to this place, no one preceding them.

This desire is not only unrealistic, but also feeds into the exceptionalist attitudes of many environmental writers. In this colonial logic, only one group can be the first in an area, so if Thoreau believes that this is a vital part of experiencing nature, this privilege is only allotted to very few. If others have claimed the rugged individualism of exploration first, Thoreau's own credibility as an explorer fades. This is not only a constant theme in Thoreau's work, but this sort of exceptionalism is also rampant throughout later wilderness writing. Being the "first" or at least being alone when you dominate nature is considered vital to doing nature exploration "right." For Thoreau, appreciating nature involves appreciating the isolation it offers, yet there is also an obvious fantasy of conquering in this isolationist narrative. With this mentality, outdoor sportsmen cannot feel as though they have truly conquered something if there are reminders or signs of others around them who have so obviously done so before.

The chapter ends with Thoreau's ponderings of his experiences on the mountain, with the hyper-masculine prose in retrospect. He ponders his adventure, with a new understanding that "Nature was here something savage and awful, though beautiful" (Thoreau, 1864, p. 33). The image of the sublime, the unbelievable beauty or might that inspires great awe, in regards to the danger of nature would continue to be a theme in American wilderness literature from this point on. The sublime is now used to define nature, and this concept is tangled up in the idea of nature being "savage and awful." This discourse is also applied to those who live in nature and to

indigenous people who cannot participate as actors in the concurring rhetoric of nature because they are instead considered to be a part of it.

Thoreau highlights the shift in thought that his writing brings to the table of environmental literature: appreciating nature and its dangerousness instead of wanting to dominate and tame it:

It was the fresh and natural surface of the planet Earth, as it was made forever and ever, to be the dwelling of man, we say, so Nature made it, and man may use it if he can. Man was not to be associated with it... There was clearly felt the presence of a force not bound to be kind to man... to be inhabited by men nearer of kin to the rocks and to the wild animals than we. (Thoreau, 1864, p. 34)

Instead of fearing nature, as his predecessors did, Thoreau begins to embrace the idea that white men, like himself, were still separate from nature, but therefore can appreciate it. Again, the othering of Native Americans appears as a deeply entrenched aspect or theme in environmental literature, usually as a way to paint the white men who explore nature as revolutionary, unlike the indigenous people who are seen as living in it, as a part of it. Thoreau's primary themes of masculinist rugged individualism and white exceptionalism analyzed here will run through future writings in this genre, making the environmental movement, outdoor culture, and the literature that links the two inseparable from this early established history.

#### John Muir's Policy Advocacy and Writing

John Muir (1838-1914) was a heavily politically active author associated with the American environmental movement. He spearheaded movements to protect national parks and set aside wild lands for the sake of preservation. Through these efforts, he became close with

other figureheads of the environmental movement like Thoreau, Theodore Roosevelt, and Gifford Pinchot. John Muir contributed a theme of personal responsibility to environmental literature that united environmentalists as a political group. He personally pushed forth policy to protect wilderness and heavily contributed to the founding of many early national parks.

On September 30, 1890, the Yosemite Act passed by the US Congress protected Yosemite National Park, pioneered by associate editor of *Century* Robert Underwood Johnson and John Muir in an article that circulated with the proposition. On June 4, 1892, the Sierra Club was formed by twenty-seven men, making Muir their immediate president. The club's original focus was creating policy and awareness that protected the lands in and around the Sierra Nevada mountain range (Nash, 2014, p. 132-33). Muir then became involved in the spearheading efforts to preserve forests, and through this involvement, he met Gifford Pinchot. Pinchot acted as a moderator between lumber companies and conservationists, slowing down the rapid deforestation and development of American lands (Nash, 2014, p. 134). Muir's position on the issue of forestry shifted, however, when he realized the movement was nevertheless focused on civilization and development, when his loyalties would more ardently lie with the preservation of wilderness (Nash, 2014, p. 135). This led to an end of the men's friendship, and the forest that was set aside was later deemed to be used for the sake of development through Pinchot's efforts and lobbying (Nash, 2014, p. 138). From this point forward, Muir was characterized more as a hard-and-fast preservation advocate, who made little allowance for conservatism or sustainable use over time.

Muir's friendship with Roosevelt formed after meeting in 1903, when Muir took Roosevelt camping (Nash, 2014, p. 138). Roosevelt then supported Muir's efforts to protect

wilderness and designated the Grand Canyon a national monument (Nash, 2014, p. 139).

Roosevelt supported Muir's campaigns for their value in reinstating a national wilderness frontier, as he believed that "under the hard conditions of life in the wilderness" those that colonized America "lost all remembrance of Europe in dress, in customs, and in mode of life" (Roosevelt, 1924, p. 101-102). The disappearance of the frontier "alarmed Roosevelt chiefly because of its anticipated effect on national virility and greatness" (Nash, 2014, p. 149).

Roosevelt believed that the protection and veneration of wilderness encouraged "that vigorous manliness for the lack of which in a nation, as in an individual, the possession of no other qualities can possibly atone" (Roosevelt, 1924, p. 101-102). Not only did Roosevelt consider manliness an irreplaceable trait, vital to American identity, but he also viewed the work that Muir was doing as central to preserving this trait.

Muir lived up to this ideal. "Compared to Thoreau, who cringed at an excess of wildness and idealized the half-cultivated, Muir was wild indeed" (Nash, 2014, p. 127). He reflected the masculine focus of exploring nature, the challenge and risk of facing the elements and ignoring modern conveniences. Anne Ronald, the editor of *Words for the Wild: a Trailside Reader* (1987), writes of Muir: "I assume that almost anyone who reads *Words for the Wild* will be familiar with John Muir's writing and reputation... his name is legend, his achievements renowned, his heritage revered... before him, we saw a land to be tested and explored; after him, we saw a land to be respected and embraced" (p. 99). This situates him well in the context we are exploring, as a founder and vital proponent of preservation in wilderness writing.

Muir's written work reflects the increased emphasis on exaltation of wilderness, solitude, and personal challenge in nature. In a letter from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Muir, Emerson

described “the solitude of the wilderness” as “a sublime mistress, but an intolerable wife” (Nash, 2014, p. 126-27). Their correspondence compares the concept of landscape to women in a way that demonstrates his belief that women are only tolerable as sexual objects, and are otherwise worth disregarding. Muir sets himself apart from the earlier naturalists like Emerson and Thoreau, however, and “did not share such reservations... his unadulterated joy in wild country frequently conveyed the impression that man might dispense with civilization entirely and, roaming the mountains in close contact with God, be none the worse for the loss” (Nash, 2014, p. 126-27). For the first time, not only was nature fun to visit, it was being heralded as the superior context for people, over civilization. Muir became an icon who fully embraced the idea of wilderness, its ups and downs, its harshness as well as its beauty and serenity.

Muir began the tradition of a unified environmentalist culture by founding the Sierra Club. He also created a sense of environmentalist exceptionalism in his writing, by highlighting his viewpoint as enlightened and out of the scope of the mainstream. In *My First Summer in the Sierras*, he describes the sublimity of the world around him, and ponders anyone’s ability to ignore it: “It would seem impossible that any one, however instructed with care, could escape the Godful influence of these sacred ferns forests. Yet this very day I saw a shepherd pass through one of the finest of them without betraying more feeling than his sheep. ‘What do you think of these grand ferns?’ I asked. ‘Oh, they’re only damned big brakes,’ he replied” (Muir, 1911, p. 27). In this passage, Muir uses the shepherd to demonstrate Muir’s exceptionalism as someone who understands nature in the way that everyday people do not. This theme continues in his writing, like the famous quote attributed to Muir: “Society speaks and all men listen. Mountains

speak and wise men listen.” Muir created a superiority of people who support and love wilderness, further making this group exclusive and harder to participate in.

Muir saw man as separate from nature, yet responsible for it. This distinction was used to create ideologies of racial separation that allowed these writers to see white men as those who use nature; women and people of color are too inseparable from it to be able to see nature as an objective concept (Nash, 2005). Only white men were portrayed as / believed to be evolved and civilized enough to objectively see and understand nature, and therefore, these spaces were metaphorically roped off for their enjoyment alone. These elitist tendencies appear in Muir’s writings, usually in the form of white supremacy.

In the chapter “People by the Way,” in *The Wilderness World of John Muir*, Muir (1954) discusses the types of people he encounters along his walk across the country at the tail end of the Civil War. In this chapter, he describes the people of color he meets with heavily derogatory terms, yet regarded the former slave owners he met as tragic heroes of the South. He acknowledged their hospitality and simultaneously described “idle n\*grees” as “prowling about everywhere,” and a source of fear and distress (Muir, 1954, p. 90). His elitism and supremacy was not exclusively anti-black however, and “both in Wisconsin and California [Muir] was disappointed in the Indians [he] met. Only partly did they represent the free wildness” he sought in wild places (Muir, 1954, p. 116). Muir only valued Native Americans for their stereotypes as people close to nature, but chose to ignore that the poverty he viewed as their downfall was in fact a consequence of imperialism, colonialism, and racial subjugation.

Muir continues to adhere to these supremacist mentalities in his more famous work, *My First Summer in the Sierras*. His dehumanization of Native Americans continues: “The Indian

kept in the background, saying never a word, as if he belonged to another species” (Muir, 1911, p. 4). He separates American indigenous people from humanity using stereotypes and rhetorics of fear and savagery. Yet, Muir also continually describes their lack of impact on the landscape, in an essentialist, though admiring tone:

How many centuries Indians have roamed these woods nobody knows, probably a great many, extending far beyond the time that Columbus touched our shores, and it seems strange that heavier marks have not been made. Indians walk softly and hurt the landscape hardly more than birds and the squirrels... how different are most of those of the white man... in a few feverish years. (1911, p. 45)

Pages after describing Native Americans as “another species,” he exalts them for being unlike white colonists in their use of the land. With both of these hand in hand, Muir wants to believe that Native Americans are so successful at preserving the ‘wilderness’ that they must not be fully human.

This idea is complicated when Muir describes a Native American woman who walks into his camp: “Her dress was calico rags, far from clean. In every way she seemed sadly unlike Nature’s neat well-dressed animals, though living like them on the bounty of wilderness. Strange that mankind alone is dirty. Had she been clad in fur, or cloth woven of grass or shreddy bark... she might then have seemed a rightful part of the wilderness; like a good wolf at least, or bear” (1911, p. 47). Here, Muir is disappointed with the woman for not being convincing flora or fauna and instead human. He wants her to fit into this fetishitic image of Native Americans as part of the landscape, and her “dirtiness” is what encourages Muir to believe that Native Americans should not be in the landscape after all.

This trend of racism and simultaneous appropriation of culture of native people remains in environmental writing, through Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* which was written almost a century after the majority of Muir's writing and policymaking. Because of Muir's positive impacts on policy and preservation, many excuse his prejudice and sweep this under the rug. Yet, without addressing and critiquing the themes of masculinity and white supremacy that exist in his work, they are allowed to remain in contemporary environmental thoughts and practices.

#### Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*

Aldo Leopold's (1887-1948) most widely read collection is *A Sand County Almanac* which was published after he died, in 1949. Leopold is famous for complicating the idea of preservation by introducing practicality to the naturalist sentiment that came before. Out of the four authors, he is considered more personally connected with the land through his livelihood, as he bought land in Wisconsin to live, work, and study on for decades. The other writers mostly explore areas for briefer periods of time, and do not engage in human-land relationships such as farming like Leopold does himself. He marked a change in the mindset of environmentalism because he saw humans as a part of ecosystems, of the natural world, while others before him like Thoreau and Muir saw people as distinctive from the flora and fauna they studied (Oelschlaeger, 1991, p. 206). In fact, "Many call Aldo Leopold the father of the profession of wildlife management in America; perhaps he should be called the father of ecological ethics as well" (Ronald, 1987, p. 169). He was also one of the earliest environmental literary philosophers to shift from condemning all hunting to encourage the view of humans as necessary checks to control grazing populations like deer, once all of the predators had been extinguished from an area.

Therefore, Leopold was one of the first authors to recognize and address the reality that pure preservation would not always be the most helpful for sustaining ecosystems and wild spaces. He worked heartily with the idea of land as community which is “the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethic” (Leopold, 1949, p. 207). He blames the “Abrahamic concept of land” for the using up of resources and lack of consideration for the consequences of progress and reduction of species. Leopold’s explains this Abrahamic concept of land: “We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect” (Leopold, 1949, p. xviii). Unlike Leopold, the thinking of past writers Thoreau and Muir sees man as distinctly separate from natural ecosystems. This mentality minimized the exclusivity of the movement, yet trends of elitism and masculinity remained.

Leopold introduced many more new and practical ideas to the environmental movement, yet he still adhered to the basic principles of the earlier texts: a condemnation of progress and expansion. Leopold argues that modern society and a demand for comfort is the main antagonist in the story of environmental degradation: “Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question whether a still higher ‘standard of living’ is worth its cost in things natural, wild, and free” (Leopold, 1949, p. xvii). Leopold (1949) critiques further industrialization and the culture of convenience that many environmentalists accuse America of having. This theme of shirking convenience and seeking wild things for the sake of challenge as well as clarity permeates wilderness writing across the centuries.

*A Sand County Almanac* also refers explicitly to both Thoreau and Muir and the work that the environmental and recreation movements have done, through organizations like the Sierra Club. He situates his own work and philosophy within the established ideas of Thoreau, speculating that his ideas of the necessity of nature are “behind Thoreau’s dictum: In wildness is the salvation of the world. Perhaps this is the hidden meaning of the howl of the wolf, long known among mountains, but seldom perceived among men” (Leopold, 1949, p. 141). He bases himself off of Thoreau’s philosophy, simultaneously critiquing modernism’s blindness towards and alienation from nature and encouraging readers to seek salvation from modernism through exploration.

He has a more personal connection with Muir as the elder writer “offered to buy from [Muir’s] brother, who then owned the home farm thirty miles east of my oak, a sanctuary for the wildflowers that had gladdened his youth. His brother declined to part with the land, but he could not suppress the idea: 1865 still stands in Wisconsin history as the birthyear of mercy for things natural, wild, and free” (Leopold, 1949, p. 17). Leopold’s connection to his land creates a connection to Muir, and it is clear that Leopold holds Muir in high reverence based on his work.

Similarly, he references the work that Muir did to found the Sierra Club and influence organizations like it, like the Wilderness Society. These organizations retained some of the bad habits that their founder reinforced, so when other writers reference them, these references cannot be separated from these exclusions. The Sierra Club will be more thoroughly investigated later in this paper. Yet, despite these shortcomings, Leopold remarks on the efforts of these clubs “for the one purpose of saving wilderness remnants in America” (Leopold, 1949, p. 278). For Leopold, the distinction between environmentalists and outdoor sportsmen becomes blurred

beyond recognition, as the two subcategories form into one as their histories and goals become the same. This new, combined group of individuals, who work both as political activists and enjoyers of nature constitute a strong force of morality and hope to Leopold. He addresses his admiration for these enthusiasts: “Barring love and war, few enterprises are undertaken with such abandon, or by such diverse individuals, or with so paradoxical a mixture of appetite and altruism as that group of avocations known as outdoor recreation” (Leopold, 1949, p. 280). This “group of avocations,” he argues, are more passionate than most political activists because of the recreation aspect of their work. This admiration feeds into a cycle of Leopold and other prominent authors being inseparable from the movement of those in outdoor recreation.

Leopold sees American nationalism and American landscape as interconnected, furthering the idea that exploration and wildness are inherent to the American identity. He argues, “First there is value in any experience that reminds us of our distinctive national origins and evolution, i.e. that stimulates awareness of history. Such awareness is nationalism in its best sense” (Leopold, 1949, p. 211). In this regard, nationalism is viewed as a positive force, if it is doing work to remind its members of their past challenges and to claim its violent and difficult history as their own. Teddy Roosevelt, an outdoor recreational advocate and symbol of masculinity in the outdoors, was another individual that Leopold highly admired who was prominent in the inception of this newfound admiration for the outdoors. Leopold argues that “Theodore Roosevelt was a great sportsman, not because he hung up many trophies, but because he expressed this intangible American tradition in words any schoolboy could understand” (1949, p. 214). In this statement, Leopold supports both the idea of a competitive mastery of nature, and its link to American identity.

The “American tradition” of hunting is one rooted deeply in masculinity and rugged individualism. Leopold even makes reference to the solely American identity of enjoying hard work, arguing that Europeans do not enjoy hunting and fishing in the same, outdoor-oriented way as Americans (1949, p. 271). This idea is further expressed when Leopold introduces the Boy Scouts in the novel: “For example: a boy scout has tanned a coonskin cap, and goes Daniel-Booneing in the willow thicket below the tracks. He is reenacting American history. He is, to that extent, culturally prepared to face the dark and bloody realities of the present” (Leopold, 1949, p. 211). Again, we are reminded of environmentalists’ tendency to rewrite American colonial history in a way that highlights themes of courage, vitality, and mastery of nature. These nationalistic themes shape the American identity in a way that makes it inseparable from masculinity and colonialism, and Leopold’s reference to the Boy Scouts is symptomatic of how intrinsic these attitudes are in the Scouts themselves, and what people think of the organization.

American history, and the American national identity which Roosevelt was so apt at expressing, is rooted in masculine ideas of exploration and violence. Trophy-hunting, an idea Leopold defines as seeking out evidence of explorations, is another aspect of the kind of masculinity Roosevelt and outdoor recreation promote and produce. Leopold warns his readers away, however, from taking nature away from itself, and proposes that picture taking is the proper alternative. Yet, these inherent urges to collect should not be ignored as “the trophy-hunter is the caveman reborn. Trophy-hunting is the prerogative of youth, racial or individual, and nothing to apologize for” (Leopold, 1949, p. 294). Leopold suggests that this practice is in fact instinct and a part of human nature. This idea of trophy-hunting is rooted in

masculinist ideas of virility and domination over weaker entities. The entrenchment masculinity threads itself throughout *A Sand County Almanac*, reflecting this Roosevelt-esque narrative of virility and rugged strength. As established through Thoreau and Muir, Leopold also promotes his ideal of ruggedness as in response to the modernized, urban norm. He claims this outdoor individualism through a conversation of biases and hobbies: “Our biases are indeed a sensitive index to our affections, our tastes, our loyalties, our generousities, and our manner of wasting weekends. Be that as it may, I am content to waste mine, in November, with axe in hand” (Leopold, 1949, p. 77). Leopold sets himself, and his following, apart from the assumed modernized masses. This exceptionalism creates an “in-crowd” for outdoor enthusiasts.

The exclusivity of this following is reinforced with Leopold’s discussion of the growing accessibility of mountains. He reminisces a previous “better” time, when “by elimination, the county-sized plateau known as ‘on top’ was the exclusive domain of the mounted man: mounted cowman, mounted sheepman, mounted forest officer, mounted trapper, and those unclassified mounted men of unknown origin and uncertain destination always found on the frontiers” (Leopold, 1949, p. 130). The picture Leopold paints is one of rugged and hard-working men, the exception from the norm of rapidly modernizing Americans. These modern citizens are working in factories and offices, separated from the traditional outdoorsmanship that defined the American frontier and American identity. Leopold’s rhetoric calls for a return to this tradition, and therefore, this American identity.

Leopold’s constructed masculinity incorporates the trait of bravery as vital to understanding the outdoor lifestyle and being successful in those realms. This bravery and ruggedness involves putting oneself in continually dangerous, and often life-threatening

situations. Leopold argues, “It must be poor life that achieves freedom from fear,” supporting the idea that danger and risk are vital to the lifestyle he encourages (Leopold, 1949, p. 134). Leopold encourages his readers to seek and explore, yet hold scared the “still large expanses of virgin country” left in Canada and Alaska “where nameless men by nameless rivers wander and in strange valleys die strange deaths alone” (Leopold, 1949, p. 268). To be one of these nameless men, venerating isolation, ruggedness, and the risk and reality of death outside of the comfort of society, is the ideal for folks like Leopold, Muir and Thoreau, and as we will investigate later, Abbey.

Leopold’s discussion of women in the wild spaces has two main themes: that they are objects of love and courtship, not actors, and that they prefer convenience and ease over the ruggedness of nature. Establishing what women are not is vital to establishing what outdoorsmen are, by contrast. Similarly, Leopold often contrasts his love of certain trees, mornings, and each day on his land with an assumed woman who despised them. For example, upon finding an old washboard on his property, Leopold began imagining how much its owner, “she who used this washboard,” would have “wished for a cessation of all Mondays and soon” (Leopold, 1949, p. 61). His love of challenge and work in nature must be established as an exception to the norm through the use of made-up disgruntled women. Again, this theme is encountered when Leopold claims his love of cottonwood trees: “But the farmer’s wife (and hence the farmer) despises all cottonwoods because in June the female tree clogs the screens with cotton. The modern dogma is comfort at any cost” (Leopold, 1949, p. 76). Supposedly, no farmer’s wife has told Leopold she hates cottonwood trees, yet he pulls no punches in reinforcing his thesis that modern comfort is the detriment to nature as well as society and that women are especially harbingers of this. These

subtle examples of his misogyny reinforce the attitude that outdoor spaces are not open to women, and that women cannot understand the value of forgoing modernity.

*A Sand County Almanac* also incorporates subtle (more subtle than Leopold's predecessors) patterns of white supremacy, which generally revolve around the dehumanization of people or color, as well as orientalist mysticism surrounding native peoples. There is a dominating trend in American environmentalism that argues that man should worry less about fellow man and more about the natural world, and this often is directed at those people whom Americans understand the least, the most easily othered. Leopold documents this nasty habit well: "The erasure of a human subspecies is largely painless - to us - if we know little enough about it. A dead Chinaman is of little import to us whose awareness of things Chinese is bounded by the occasional dish of chow mein. We grieve only for what we know" (1949, p. 52). Leopold is more self-aware in his prejudices, yet does not challenge them. The above quote is in reference to the disappearance of a species of plant that once dominated the northern US, and by comparing this event to the extinguishing of human life, and using a racial slur in the process, shows the pervasive othering of white environmentalists.

He makes this error again, later in the novel: "We spoke harshly of the Spaniards who, in their zeal for gold and converts, had needlessly extinguished the native Indians. It did not occur to us that we, too, were the captains of an invasion too sure of its own righteousness" (Leopold, 1949, p. 145). While Leopold argues that the American genocide was in fact morally wrong, he still compares it to the degradation of natural resources, effectively removing the humanity from those war crimes. This statement not only puts Native Americans on the same level as the landscape, but effectively makes the two indistinguishable. This mysticism and othering of

Native Americans plays into what little Leopold understands of anthropology, which in turn bleeds into his writing. He uses the term “primitive peoples” to romanticize the Native Americans, arguing that they were so in touch with the natural landscape that “buffalo largely determined his architecture, dress, language, arts, and religion” (Leopold, 1949, p. 211). This breeds a new era of environmental writing that sees a bastardized image of Native Americans as inherent to understanding the outdoors, instead of an obstacle in accessing wild spaces, as Muir thought. While this change is arguably a positive one, it still relies on assumptions of white superiority in understand the natural world and its importance, as it relies on seeing people of color as inseparable from their respective landscapes.

#### Edward Abbey’s *Desert Solitaire*

Edward Abbey (1927-1989) is famous for his novels *Desert Solitaire* and *Monkey Wrench Gang*, written during his season at Arches National Park in Utah. Notorious for not caring about being sensitive to people’s identities, racism and misogyny often intertwine themselves in the threads of his beliefs and opinions. For example, he has been quoted saying, “I certainly do not wish to live in a society dominated by blacks or Mexicans, or Orientals. Look at Africa, Mexico and Asia,” tying into environmentalism’s themes of white nationalism and ideologies of stewardship and manifest destiny (Kosek, 2004, p. 142). Throughout his narrative, he rejects modernity, yet supports the construction of the “white man’s burden” that was built from it. He rejects society and separates himself from it, yet his supremacy supports a nationalism that invades, uproots, and dehumanizes cultures because of their “lack” of society. Reminiscent of early 20th century right-wing, political discourse, Abbey argued, “It might be wise for us, as American citizens, to consider calling a halt to the mass influx of even more

millions of hungry, ignorant, unskilled and culturally-morally- genetically impoverished people...” (Kosek, 2004, p. 142). This anti-immigration doctrine is the foundation of environmentalism as it was born out of a desire for racial “purity” (ibid.).

*Desert Solitaire* readily lends itself to thorough analysis of Abbey’s favored masculinity and narcissism that reinforces the environmental movement’s exclusion. At the commencement of the novel, he claims ownership of Utah: “In the center of the world, God’s navel, Abbey’s country, the red wasteland” (Abbey, 1968, p. 4). He warns us of his tendencies to offend in the introduction as well: “I quite agree that much of the book will seem coarse, rude, bad-tempered, violently prejudiced, unconstructive - even frankly antisocial in its point of view... there is a way of being wrong which is also sometimes necessarily right” (1968, p. x-xi). He argues, though, that his bad habits of exclusion and supremacy are “necessarily right,” validating this thesis’s argument that these attitudes are inseparable from outdoor culture and environmental rhetoric as it stands today. The rugged masculinity established as necessary in the origins of American environmentalism is a philosophy Abbey heavily subscribes to. He claims:

I am here ... to confront, immediately and directly if it’s possible, the bare bones of existence, the elemental and fundamental, the bedrock which sustains us... To meet God or Medusa face to face, even if it means risking everything human in myself. I dream of a hard and brutal mysticism in which the naked self merges with a non-human world and yet somehow survives still intact, individual, separate. (Abbey, 1968, p. 7)

Abbey believes that incredible physical challenge and isolation are the defining and redeeming traits of himself and those he admires, fellow outdoorsmen. This mentality is not only incredibly

dangerous, but it creates a heavily filter, excluding anyone who does not adhere to these extremes. This reflects in Abbey's preoccupation with life-threatening events. Again, death and danger remain central to this rhetoric of proving oneself in the outdoor arena. After a near death experience where Abby gets marooned on a cliff face, he writes, "It was one of the happiest nights of my life" (Abbey, 1968, p. 258). He relishes in being "twenty miles or more from the nearest fellow human" during his stay in Arches National Park, reframing his misanthropy as a side-effect of a deep love of nature (Abbey, 1968, p. 16).

He states multiple times throughout the novel that he would rather die falling off a horse or being stranded in the desert than die in a hospital from old age (Abbey, 1968, p. 103). This belief holds true even after assisting in a search and carry for the body of an old man who perishes near Moab while lost on a hike: "He had good luck - I envy him the manner of his going: to die alone, on rock under sun at the brink of the unknown, like a wolf, like a great bird, seems to me very good fortune indeed" (Abbey, 1968, p. 267). He romanticizes this tragedy in an effort to shock his readers into seeing him as unique and set apart from the masses, who would be horrified by this story. This shock factor establishes a new norm in environmental writing that only excuses Abbey from his toxic masculinity and white supremacy in his unapologetic nature. This idealized death narrative also reveals an intense sense of pride in refusing to be weakened by age and comfort, but instead struck down by nature which would be a worthy death for a rugged, masculine figure.

Throughout the novel, misogyny is well-paired with Abbey's rugged masculinity and individualism, reinforcing the idea that the spaces and parks he inhabits and writes in are not spaces for women. When rafting in Glenn Canyon, he muses about modernity's pitfalls,

repetitions, and conveniences. This thought process is fully reflected upon women, who symbolize and represent dull modernity and convenience. He writes, “What incredible shit we put up with most of our lives... same old wife every night,” removing the humanity in women, as well as any potential agency for them to participate in these spaces (Abbey, 1968, p. 193).

This occurs again only a few pages later when he muses the possibility of living on the river the rest of his life. “True there are no women here (a blessing in disguise?)” he wonders, reminding his reader that women are only meant for [men’s] pleasure, and apart from that are burdens and distractions (Abbey, 1968, p. 199). Both through rugged masculinity and constant reminders of a woman’s true place, Abbey thoroughly reinforces his belief that women do not belong in wild spaces. *Desert Solitaire* is widely read by those that love being outside, but his prejudices and exclusions are rarely discussed, or even acknowledged, even though they are blatant. Without this critique, themes of misogyny and racism will remain undercurrents and even core concepts in the environmental movement and in the societies of people who explore national parks and participate in outdoor recreation.

Despite Abbey’s seemingly unmatched misogyny in the novel, he still manages to produce racist musings that should (but unfortunately do not) shock the contemporary environmentalists that comprise *Desert Solitaire*’s audience. At first, these beliefs emerge in the context of people that Abbey encounters and works with. He discusses his fellow cowboy, NAME, and describes how the man’s Spanish identity leads him to be mistaken for Latino. This launches Abbey into a rant about his friend’s situation: “He responds to prejudice by cultivating a prejudice of his own against those whom he feels are even lower in the American hierarchy than he is: against the Indians, the Mexicans, the N\*groes. He knows where the bottom is”

(1968, p. 106-07). While this may seem to be a discussion of the racial landscape of the time, Abbey's inclusion of this anecdote demonstrates more support for the status quo than a dismissal of it. He is comfortable in his position as separate from this hierarchy, even though he is not in fact separate.

Edward Abbey devotes an entire chapter to his unsolicited opinion of Native Americans, setting this demographic aside as one he felt most obligated to comment on in an environmental novel. This inclusion reveals how thematic Native Americans are to the foundation of environmental culture and recreation. He begins this commentary by speculating over the meanings of petroglyphs in southern Utah, incorporating heavy orientalism and mysticism: "Demonic shapes, they might have meant protection and benevolence to their creators and a threat to strangers" (Abbey, 1968, p. 127). He directly others the Native people by speculating the meaning of petroglyphs in a way that paints them as sinister and backward.

While this assumed speculation and generalization may seem relatively benign, it entails an entitlement which allows Abbey to make much more damaging propositions about Native Americans later in the chapter. He uses his platform as a well-read author and actor in the environmental movement to further abuse Native Americans and put forth violent ideas that are borderline genocidal. Abbey begins this argument by making neo-Malthusian claims about the origin of poverty in reservations: "To be poor is bad enough; to be poor and multiplying is worse," which he later proposes could be solved by forced sterilization and compulsory birth control (1968, p. 129, 135). Despite his apparently genocidal leanings, the author ignores the history of oppression and continues to postulate that population growth is "the chief cause" of the "Navajos' troubles" (Abbey, 1968, p. 131).

The chapter continually swerves back and forth across the line between being outright racist and critiquing the effects of racism, usually keeping one foot on each side. He absolves himself from being a part of the racist system by addressing it without taking a stance. Abbey describes Native Americans, whom he consistently refers to as “Navajos” as “the N\*groes of the Southwest—red black men” (1968, p. 127). He is careful to avoid describing this comparison in terms of a racialized analysis of merit or an objective analysis of oppression, leaving us to want to assume he means the latter and give him the benefit of the doubt. His word choice, however, reveals the true intent behind this statement: his use of the racial slur shows his racist supremacy. Abbey’s racism is further muddied when he argues that the survival of the Native Americans is challenged not so much by Americans’ active efforts to assimilate and erase Native peoples’ history, but instead by a “poorly developed acquisitive instinct,” meaning that they cannot adjust to the mindset of capitalism (1968, p. 134). While still being inherently racist and riddled with supremacy, Abbey’s intention in this statement is two-fold, as it is an active critique of capitalism as well as reinforcing his perception of what he deems the inferiority of people of color.

Towards the end of the novel, Abbey shows a brief instance of self-awareness. This comes in a moment when he is in the Grand Canyon, near Havasu falls and meeting members of the Havasupai Tribe. He claims to prefer being alone in the presence of this different culture: “I’m not sure that I care for the idea of strangers examining my daily habits and folkways, studying my language, inspecting my costume, questioning me about my religion, classifying my artifacts, investigating my sexual rites and evaluating my chances for cultural survival” (Abbey, 1968, p. 248). Though posed as a joke, this ironic moment seems to be lost on Abbey,

who does not recognize his racism as that, and who views himself as a progressive figure in capitalist America, making his earlier opinions all the more treacherous. In this joke, the folly of white liberalism is brought to light. White liberals and specifically environmentalists, are often so deeply unconscious of the fact that they perpetuate privilege and oppression that they pontificate about solutions to problems they have never experienced and actually exacerbate themselves. Though Abbey sees himself as a progressive, he is not fully aware of the ways in which environmentalism's roots in white supremacy remain constant, and how much these roots inform his beliefs.

Edward Abbey reinforces themes of rugged individualism, misogyny, and white supremacy in his most popular work *Desert Solitaire*. This novel is widely read by environmentalists and outdoor enthusiasts today, alongside the works of Thoreau, Muir, and Leopold, which are also rife with discussions of masculinity, whiteness, and doing nature "right." Though all four men are regarded as historical figures of progression, their works are dangerously retrospective and exclusionary at best.

## The Boy Scouts of America

As Philmont Scout Ranch is my chosen case study with which to understand environmentalism and outdoor culture, a discussion of the Boy Scouts of America is necessary. The Boy Scouts of America were formed in the era when Muir and Roosevelt began constructing wilderness and landscape as a part of America's self-identity and identity to the rest of the world. The organization is very nationalistic. It also focuses heavily on character development, outlining

what character traits boys should embody to become ideal American men. Suddenly, through the Boy Scouts, this ideal became inseparable from environmentalism and the idea of wilderness.

The history of the Boy Scouts of America exhibits the earlier traditions of a nostalgic and retrospective foundation to the youth movement. Though the organization first debuted in the United Kingdom, once it picked up in the United States, it took on a specifically American colonial tone. Sir Robert S.S. Baden-Powell founded the organization in England in 1907, while Ernest Thompson Seton was conducting a similar movement in the United States in 1902, called the Woodcraft Indians (Murray, 1937). Seton wanted a program that would appropriate the traditions of Native Americans and an assumed eastern-United States essentialism of nature-based skills that have been ascribed to indigenous peoples. The two men met, and along with the influences of American Daniel C. Beard who had founded the Sons of Daniel Boone, the organization was officially taken up in America in 1910 (Murray, 1937). The movement spread like wildfire, and more so than its English counterpart, retained a heavy focus in outdoor sport and living. The Boy Scout handbook was rumored to have sold seven million copies in its first thirty years, “second only to the Bible” (Nash, 1962, 148).

The inception of the Boy Scouts of America was a reaction to the perceived effects of modernism and urbanization on masculinity. In middle to upper class families, many men were no longer making a living through physical work, but instead through management and investment, and “the dependency, sedentariness, and even security of these middle-class positions clashed with the active mastery, independence, self-reliance, competitiveness, creativity, and risk-taking central to the traditional male ideal” (Hantover, 1978, p. 187). As male, white, and middle class work spaces moved from fields, forests, and railbeds to offices,

men faced anxieties that they were losing the arenas in which they have historically had “opportunities for masculine validation” and that adolescent boys “faced barriers to the very development of masculinity” (Hantover, 1978, p. 185). These forces and progressions were seen as a threatening force to masculinity, and therefore the Boy Scouts were created to “[provide] an environment in which boys could become ‘red blooded’ virile men” and “an opportunity to counteract the perceived feminizing forces of their lives and to act according to the traditional masculine script” (Hantover, 1978, p. 184).

The organization, in this pursuit, was from its conception a retrospective one and intended to recover social space supposedly lost to progress for boys and men to play-act imagined earlier, pre-industrial roles. Boy Scouts were just one example of a “chivalric motif” that began emerging in youth organizations intending to reinforce dissolving gender relations (Hantover, 1978, p. 186). The Boy Scouts of America (hereafter referred to as the BSA) formed a universe in which boys and their fathers could enact masculine acts and ideals of survival and natural domination, as well as explore the role of being the cultivator of the natural world alongside the social world, while being able to step back into their middle class, privileged lives at the end of an outing.

The theme of gender role related anxiety continues through the early 20th century as mother-son relationships increased due to middle-class urbanization. This was perceived as a threat to masculinity, as was having female teachers in the classroom. These role models and influences “weaken a boy’s body and direct his mind along the ‘psychic lines’ of his female instructors” (Hantover, 1978, p. 186). The BSA proposed one potential solution to this critique of boys spending too much time around women and being emasculated. Again, the diminishing of

manual labor in the middle class at the turn of the century through modernization produced an increased idea about “adolescence” as a developmental stage, since children were not needing to be put to work and instead could live out their childhoods to greater lengths than was previously possible (Hantover, 1978, p. 187). From the perspective of one concerned with the lack of masculine rites of passage in a longer and more secure childhood, the BSA served as a strong compromise: boys would be able to learn and play, but in the more structured and militaristic realm of challenge and outdoorsmanship. BSA filled this gap created by the wealth and ease of the modern middle class, and as “manliness was no longer considered the inevitable product of daily life... Scouting advertised itself as an environmental surrogate for the farm and frontier” (Hantover, 1978, p. 189).

The turn of the century marked the end of a colonial and pioneer era, when risking one’s life to establish homesteads, to forge infrastructure, and dominate both the land and those that previously occupied it was a part of daily life, or at least it seemed that way in the stories and legends. In fact, legend is vital to this nationalistic, tradition making process. American nationalism looks at its history through rose-colored lenses, picking and choosing the aspects of the past that reflect its values, highlighting the valiant cowboys, discarding the cholera. Daniel Carter Beard, one of the predominant founders of the BSA, argued for BSA’s place in American civilization by evoking these same nostalgias: “The Wilderness is gone, the Buckskin Man is gone, the painted Indian has hit the trail over the Great Divide, the hardships and privations of pioneer life which did so much to develop sterling manhood are now but a legend in history, and we must depend upon the Boy Scout Movement to produce the MEN of the future” (Daniel Carter Beard in *Boy Scouts of America*, 1914 p. 109, cited in Hantover, 1978). The organization

was therefore the culmination of retrospective anxieties and desires to maintain masculine dominance in everyday society, as well as America as a whole. By crafting what boys should be doing, in order to further control and assert how American men should behave in society, the BSA establishes a norm of what is masculine and good, separate from what is feminine and unacceptable.

Through the BSA's various requirements and expectations for its members, like the Scout Oath and Law, Code and Motto, as well as the requirements for rank advancement, it established guidelines for boys to understand what it means to be a man (The Boy Scouts of America, 1990).

The Scout Oath and Law are as follows:

On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country, to obey the Scout Law, to help other people at all times, to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight. A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.

(The Boy Scouts of America, 1990, p. xx)

The Boy Scout motto is "Be prepared" and the slogan is "Do a good turn daily." When the BSA was formed from the scouts in Great Britain, "American Scouting added the tenth law: 'A Scout is Brave,'" further establishing a certain American brand of masculinity (Hantover, 1978, p. 190). Using a strict and well-established moral code of conduct for the Scouts, the BSA fills its role of producing young men to replenish the perceived emasculated American society at the turn of the 20th century.

## Nationalism

When researching the Boy Scouts, there is an obvious link between environmentalism and nationalism that relies on viewing the natural landscape as inseparable from America's self-image, and characterizing those who participate in the culture of celebrating this landscape as the ideal Americans. Both the Boy Scouts, as well as the existing literature on environmentalism highlight themes of individualism, masculinity, and whiteness which have become defining ideas of American culture. Therefore, nationalism theorists who define what a nation is are especially relevant to understanding this constructed discourse of landscape, environment, and nation. Ernest Renan and Benedict Anderson help to set the framework of what theories of nationalism could apply to this case, arguing that nations are "imagined" or constructed entities and have no basis in physical, demographic, linguistic, or geographic realities. In the nineteenth century, Renan worked to identify the root of nationalism, which he decides is not found in race, language, religion, or environment, but instead in an ideology constructed around existing military or government states. He argues that nations exist as long as citizens decide they do:

Man is a slave neither of his race, his language, his religion, the course of his rivers, nor the direction of his mountain ranges. A great aggregation of men, in sane mind and warm heart, created a moral conscience that calls itself a nation. As long as this moral conscience proofs [*sic*] its strength by sacrifices that require the subordination of the individual to the communal good, it is legitimate and has the right to exist. (Renan, 1882, p. 11)

Renan concludes that though many nations identify their nationhood with the physical landscape on which it stands, the nation exists apart from those physical barriers. Nationality is fully constructed and supported by the ideology of its existence, and the sacrifice of one's individual self to the greater nation. Being a member of a nation means being identified as one of a large group which creates solidarity, and perhaps security. The consequence of nationhood is that it requires the sacrifice of individuality and its values. This departed from the belief that nations were rooted in common themes like ethnicity and geography, and post-Renan this shift to understanding nation as construction has held and become dominant. This theory was also temporally relevant to a globalizing landscape that was ever-changing national borders in the colonial context. Colonialism itself is dependent on a belief in inherent nations that exist based on race, ethnicity or religion, yet the process of colonialism inevitably disproves this idea. Empires begin to fall and the only aspect of nations that remain after the era of colonialism are self-defining and agreed upon, often in newly diversified racial and religious contexts. These new nations are even less able to claim that they are united under anything apart from constructed understandings of nationhood.

In a similar line of argument, Anderson defines the attributes of a nation and defines the limits of what a nation can be in terms of it being "imagined." The main theme of Anderson's definition is that communities are imagined, meaning that they are not based in already existing defining traits or attributes, but instead in constructed traits that are agreed upon by a part of the group. This idea follows Renan's theory, filling the void that Renan creates when he defined what a nation isn't with Anderson's guidelines. Anderson presents, "in an anthropological spirit," this definition of the nation: "it is an imagined political community - and imagined as

both inherently limited and sovereign” (1983, p. 15). He claims that a nation is considered imagined because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 1983, p. 15). This distance between members of a nation is vital to proving that a nation isn’t inherent, but constructed, as members claim affinity and loyalty to millions they will never know, and who may have very different ideals and values than themselves.

This imagined community is limited “because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (Anderson, 1983, p. 16). A nation cannot take up the entirety of a region or the world, as, within the logic of nations, there are others like it that prevent the borders from being limitless. Similarly, the existence of other nations is vital for a nation to define itself in terms of what it is not. A nation is not the nation to the east of its borders, so therefore it must be its own. In terms of the United States, this necessity for limitation extended itself to the western coast through the process of manifest destiny, the belief that US expansion across the continent was inevitable in the process of colonialism. An imagined idea of ownership of the continent from east to west is very much rooted in the idea that a nation will stretch to fill a void that it presumes exists, not allowing for the consideration that Native Americans could fit the requirements of a nation.

A nation must be imagined as sovereign because “nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state” (Anderson, 1983, p. 16). Nations imagine themselves to be independent, especially in the post-imperial age, and

therefore separable from all other nations, even if they exist in coalitions with other nations. To Americans in the early 20th century, this idea was especially rooted in their specific brand of patriotism, with slogans like “land of the free, home of the brave” to reinforce the rejection of British imperial control. Sovereignty is central to the American national ideology, still affecting many national politics in a way that is unique to the US in the Global North arena. This aspect of American nationalism was instigated during the Revolutionary War and revisited heavily during the post-Industrial Roosevelt era. This took the form of controlling and protecting spaces that are inherent to the national sense of freedom, like the landscape of the American west itself.

Lastly, Anderson argues that nations are imagined as communities “because, regardless of actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willing to die for such limited imaginings” (1983, p. 16). This harkens back to Renan’s argument that sacrifices must be an expected part of belonging to the community, based on what Anderson describes as “fraternity” or “comradeship.” Anderson further links the idea of individual sacrifice to nationalism by suggesting that death is intrinsically linked to nationalism. He argues that in order to understand nationalism “it may be useful to begin a consideration of the cultural roots of nationalism with death, as the last of a whole gamut of fatalities” (Anderson, 1983, p. 18). Death, though not necessarily through warfare, is a necessary part of nationalism and how it is constructed by and for its members.

The natural disaster theorist Daniel Deudney argues a similar connection between the two concepts. Nationalism as an appeal to action is meant to evoke strong emotions and loyalties to

fix the problems a nation faces, yet nationalism is dependant on conflict (Deudney, 1990, p. 468). Nationalism's agenda is inherently rooted in violence and death, as the sacrifices of other members validate the nation. This violence threads itself throughout America's early history and is still represented in western genres, which define the American character heavily. The BSA, though a youth organization, is militarily structured and its formation reflects this emphasis on violence, sacrifice, and death through survival-focused trainings. This focus on violence and death contributes heavily to the masculinization of outdoor culture, the BSA, and America as a whole.

Anderson's *Imagined Communities* also postulates reasoning behind why racism and othering is often intermingled with nationalist movements: nationalism, in its self-defining spectacle, is rooted deeply "in fear and hatred of the Other" (1983, p. 129). In order for individuals to personally define what a nation is, they must define what it is not. Therefore, othering is essential to the process of solidifying a national identity. While national identity is intended to be assumed and naturalized, "in everything 'natural' there is always something unchosen. In this way, nation-ness is assimilated to skin-colour, gender, parentage, and birth-era - all those things one can not help" (Anderson, 1983, p. 131). In the era of the inception of the Boy Scouts of America, much ideological work was being done to establish America as white, male, Protestant, and middle class. The BSA's origins reflect the establishment of the US as an inherently masculine sphere, held up by a history of dangerous frontier exploration and colonial domination over those not white and not masculine enough to stand against the American force. The Boy Scouts filled the role of actively preventing America from becoming feminized and stunted in its virility by modernization and urbanization. The BSA relied on an imagined

America that was rooted in its revised and romanticized history, and in turn actively produced this America through its instruction of young men.

## Methods

Between June of 2016 and March of 2018, I interviewed twelve individuals who served at least two years in the Ranger Department at Philmont Scout Ranch. The people I interviewed have served on Philmont staff as recently as 2016 at a minimal. I wanted to get a sense of the ranch as it is now, not as it has been, so that I could get a better picture of ranch culture in 2017 and not in the 20th century. Philmont is staffed overwhelmingly by young people, and for this reason, the status quo and norms are everchanging, no matter how slowly. Below, I analyze historical themes of environmentalism already discussed in the current cultural setting of the ranch. Eleven out of the twelve I interviewed have been in ranger leadership positions at Philmont. I chose to interview leadership because members of ranger leadership are in positions where they are encouraged to reflect on changes in the ranch and aspects of the ranger position they think can be improved. Similarly, male staff that I interviewed are more likely to have heard of discrimination and other gendered issues second hand through those they train, if they are less inclined to experience them themselves. I interviewed twelve people, and there are approximately thirty members of ranger leadership any given year, and 300 rangers. Philmont staff, including ranger leadership, consists of about 25% women, and I interviewed six women and six men, over-representing women in my research to better focus on issues of gender inequality, misogyny, and marginalization. I chose to interview an even number of women and men, as gender is an important aspect of my thesis and I aimed to have a wider perspective on

the issue than if I had not been as intentional about this balance. I only interviewed one person of color, as they are only two nonwhite members of ranger leadership, and this unfortunately represents the racial demographics of the rest of the department and Philmont as a whole well.

My interviews were semi-structured and investigated themes of identity, character, symbology, history, and culture at Philmont. I interviewed staff both in person at Philmont Scout Ranch and elsewhere in the off-season via video call and two email interviews. Human subject research approval was secured through the University of Colorado's Institutional Review Board. Participation was voluntary and verbal consent was obtained before starting the questioning process. All interviewees were told that they could withdraw from the interviewing process at any time, even retrospectively, if they chose to no longer participate in my thesis research. I also asked all participants whether or not they wanted to remain anonymous or be given pseudonyms, but no participants deemed this necessary. I have decided to use only participants' first names, as these have all been unique, and my data has been encoded accordingly in my files. The recorded interviews ranged from 25 minutes to two hours. All of the rangers I interviewed are either in formal undergraduate education, or have already completed it. These individuals also represent a wide range in political beliefs, though the majority of them are more liberal than the general Philmont staff population.

## Results

I analyzed my interview data using the following themes: BSA aims and ideals, wilderness ethics, whiteness or lack of diversity, masculinity, rugged individualism and competitiveness within masculinity, and nationalism. In this section, I also analyze the Philmont

Ranger Fieldbook (2015), the officially sanctioned guide to for rangers in the backcountry, given to each ranger during their training trek. The fieldbook provides philosophical and practical structure and context to the job of ranger.

Through analyzing my interviews and investigating the themes that are most relevant to my thesis, I was able to construct a fairly agreed-upon picture of Philmont's culture concerning race and gender. Nearly everyone I interviewed commented on the sexism and whiteness at Philmont, and everyone commented on rugged individualism in some form, as well as feeling a strong link to environmentalism and environmental ethics in a larger sense. In multiple aspects of everyday practices at Philmont, staff interpretations produce whitewashing and masculinization of history for the participants. These conversations, alongside their discussion of the Boy Scouts of America, revealed a deeper theme of nationalism that is inherently linked to masculinity and whiteness in the landscape of the west.

#### Philmont Ranger Fieldbook

The purpose of the ranger fieldbook is to prepare rangers for anything the position could possibly throw at them, from trouble with problematic crews and crew leadership that does not know how to fill their positions, to each Philmont procedure and policy laid out step-by-step. The fieldbook is intended to supply rangers with the evidence that what they teach is law according to Philmont and that disregarding this could lead to a troop-wide ban from Philmont. No individual crew wants to be the reason why their entire troop is not welcome back to Philmont. In case crews doubt them or seem hesitant to fulfill the requirements for Philmont's bear procedures or Leave No Trace practice, the ranger can show them Philmont's policy in writing. Similarly, rangers are encouraged to seek answers in the fieldbook to questions they do

not know or refresh on training they are not confident in without embarrassment, as this will only reinforce their authority to the crew, instead of diminishing it. Therefore, this source is a substantial representation of Philmont's policies and official position on the topics it covers.

There are even sections of the ranger fieldbook specific to sexual harassment, and yet, as some of my interviewees have discussed, this could be more in-depth and include potential consequences.

The Philmont Ranger Fieldbook has a section dedicated to wilderness-themed quotes that can be used in Wilderness Pledge (WP) talks (Philmont, 2015, p. 140-149). WP talks are part of ranger training with crews, when the Philmont Wilderness Pledge and the seven principles of Leave No Trace are discussed. These talks have an especially interpersonal element to them compared to the majority of ranger training, which is more skill-focused. For this reason, rangers are pressured to make their WP talks as memorable as possible and many often use quotes to do this. Among these quotes is the following by Theodore Roosevelt:

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly... who at first, if he fails while daring, greatly knows his place shall never be with those timid and cold souls who know neither victory nor defeat. (Philmont, 2015, p. 142)

This quote very clearly brings out themes of masculinity and rugged individualism the former Roosevelt was known for. Valiance, as well as the focus on "dust and sweat and blood" highlight the specifically physical nature of the passage. Physical challenge and the specific ruggedness of it become here inseparable from themes of courage. This quote

is included in the fieldbook for the purpose of being used to encourage the preservation of wilderness. In this way, it appeals to the rangers and participants who value wilderness as an arena for physical challenge and to fulfill this idea of rugged individualism. While this quote does imply a tolerance for failure, it still creates an idea of what it means to do nature “right.” Roosevelt argues that one should try and try again, as long as one puts in their full physical capacity and pushes those boundaries to their limits. By saying this, Roosevelt is saying that the issue is not with being defeated, but instead with failing to try in the most aggressive sense.

The fieldbook has three Edward Abbey quotes, linking Philmont to the author in an official representation of the ranch and the ranger department. The first Abbey quote is one that is especially connected to Philmont and appears in a song written by a Philmont staff band, the Tobasco Donkeys, called “I Don’t Mind.” This song has become a staple in many Philmont staff circles. Abbey writes:

One last paragraph of advice: Do not burn yourselves out. Be as I am - a reluctant enthusiast, a part time crusader, a half-hearted fanatic. Save the other half of yourselves and your lives for pleasure and adventure. It is not enough to fight for the land; it is even more important to enjoy it while you still can, while it’s still there. So get out there and hunt and fish and mess around with your friends, bag peaks, run the rivers, breathe deep of that yet sweet and lucid air, sit quietly for a while and contemplate the precious stillness, that lovely mysterious and awesome space. Enjoy yourselves, keep your brain in your head and your head attached to your body, the body active and alive, and I promise you this one sweet victory

over our enemies, over those desk bound people with their hearts in a safe-deposit box and their eyes hypnotized by desk calculators. I promise you this: You will outlive the bastards. (Philmont, 2015, p. 146)

So many aspects of this quote encapsulate Philmont-brand environmentalism, as well as the strong link between environmentalists and outdoor enthusiasts. The main message of the piece is that those who fight for the land and push environmental policy do so because they love using the land. However, Abbey's rhetoric, like so much of his thoughts and opinions addressed above, rely on defining the "other," or the enemy of environmentalists, using terms of mental, emotional, and very specifically, physical superiority. Abbey cannot separate his love for the outdoors from his exclusive attitude towards those who do not fit his idea of a person worthy of participating in nature. His radicalism is officially sanctioned by Philmont by including this quote in the ranger fieldbook, by playing the Tobasco Donkey's song at campfire shows on ranch. One of my interviewees, Joe, commented on this song: "The one final paragraph of advice by Ed Abbey really just encapsulates how I view the outdoors. Like you need to protect the outdoors of course, but you gotta have those adventures and mess around in the woods and be goons" (Joe, 2017). Joe comments on the more innocent nature of the quote, the part that could be easy for anyone who loves being outside to appreciate. The quote begs environmentalists to part, if only momentarily, from taking their causes too seriously to remember why they matter in the first place: pure love of the woods. Yet, it ends with a reinforcement of the idea that environmentalism becomes an aspect of the ego, and is constructed only in response to a perceived "other." This quote is included in its entirety in both the fieldbook and "I Don't Mind,"

leaving the two aspects of it inseparable. In this context, we are not able to appreciate the playful call to action without acknowledging the othering at the end.

The second Abbey quote in the fieldbook is, “We need wilderness because we are wild animals. Every man needs a place where he can go to go crazy in peace. Every Boy Scout troop deserves a forest to get lost, miserable, and starving in” (Philmont, 2015, p. 147). This quote has themes of rugged individualism as well as a position on who “deserves” and “needs” wilderness in a gendered and exclusive way. Abbey romanticizes struggle, constructing nature as a necessary proving grounds for men and boys. The words “lost, miserable, and starving” highlight this implicit need to be out of one’s comfort zone and to be scared. This fear feeds into the modernist ideas of masculinity and challenge, implying that boys and men must remove themselves from the comfortable, private, and feminized sphere of the home, of their offices, to really understand what it means to be men.

The Philmont Ranger Fieldbook’s (2015) wilderness quotes also include the following by Walt Whitman, which addresses themes of nationalism as they are fundamentally linked to wilderness ethics. “Without enough wilderness America will change. Democracy, with its myriad personalities and increasing sophistication, must be fibred and vitalized by the regular contact with outdoor growths - animals, trees, sun warmth, and free skies - or it will dwindle and pale” (Philmont, 2015, p.148). Whitman ties landscape to American identity and the future of democracy. Wilderness is determined to be inherent to American culture, and part of what makes America unique to Whitman. This quote also perpetuates the idea that wilderness is a solution to the threat of modernism in American culture. Vitality of the American spirit is supported by the use of the landscape to limit the potential for it to “dwindle and pale.” Whitman’s words echo

back to the way nationalism became linked to landscape and environmentalism in the 20th century, and Philmont's inclusion of this quote in a section of the fieldbook dedicated to possible points during a wilderness pledge talk supports Philmont's official stance on this nationalistic sentiment.

### Boy Scout Aims and Ideals

An important theme in my research as well as the formation of outdoor culture in America has been the Boy Scouts of America, and how the values of this organization are fundamentally linked to environmentalism, outdoor recreation, masculinity, and nationalism. As Philmont is a Boy Scout high adventure camp, all of Philmont's policies, rules, and regulations, as well as the general culture of Philmont, are BSA approved and sanctioned. For this reason, the BSA and its ideals and values presented a major theme in the research. The ways that the Boy Scouts entered into my conversations with staff members revolved around two major themes: How the Scout Oath and Law shapes the way staff as well as participants view other people and personalities at Philmont as "good" or "bad" and how the BSA's traditionalism and conservatism impacts scouts' and staffers' abilities to be seen as worthy of participating in Philmont.

The Scout Oath and Law, as discussed earlier, includes codes of living that construct themes of what it means for a scout to be "good." This oath translates to values that fit a mold of leadership, but also masculinity. One of my interviewees connected stereotypically masculine traits to the values held by staff: "I believe that independence, integrity, determination, and a passion for the outdoors are traits that are found at Philmont. All of these are common amongst the people at the Ranch" (Spencer, 2017). Another put a finer point on it: "The Scout Oath and

Law are the officially sanctioned personality traits” (Mary, 2016). These traits create a culture of exceptional leaders, and yet that culture is homogeneously ambitious and determined.

This ambitiousness means that the culture can be competitive as well. “I enjoy working with people who have those different ideas and be competitive and a little aggressive in the workplace. You learn how to teach new ways and that’s the benefit of competition. Your initiative rises the tide and a rising tide raises all ships, so everybody succeeds” (Will, 2017). However, this competition creates a feeling of imposter syndrome in many, especially female staff (Maggie, 2017; Sam, 2017; Rachel, 2017; Katie, 2016)<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, this constant and ambitious comparison to other staff members creates a fairly singular idea of what a staff member, and especially a ranger, should be like. Katie, as well as five others, commented on how rangers who are not as enthusiastic in their behavior in training often do not get the same recognition as those who are aggressively enthusiastic: “There’s a feeling that we have to be energetic and ‘on’ all the time and I had to break away from feeling like I was supposed to fill this mold” (Katie, 2016; also: Mary, 2016; Mike, 2018; Joe, 2017; Lillian, 2018; Rachel, 2017).

Rachel (2017) claimed that enthusiasm fits into a greater idea of control: “The ability to command space is valued” and that these identity themes translate to very masculine-based binaries and ideals. Sometimes, the high-energy culture comes at the cost of other important traits: “Instead of being kind and smart, the guys out-charm and out-enthuse each other” (Lillian, 2018). This lowers the value of others’ work if it does not fit the mold of enthusiasm. While much of the Scout Oath perpetuates generally optimistic behaviour, it still creates a hegemonic ideal that both the Boy Scouts and Philmont are obliged to follow.

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<sup>1</sup> All interviewees are listed in Appendix

This ideal is based in a nationalism instituted first in the era of Theodore Roosevelt. Boy Scouts were envisioned to be the solution to the feminization of the modern, post-industrial era. Though American culture has changed dramatically in the last 100 years, this masculine anxiety remained and so did themes of masculinity in the Boy Scouts.

Not only does this retrospective ideology of gender remain, but so do many of the more socially conservative and antiquated aspects of Philmont. These conservative ideals are strongly bound to ideas of “Americanness.” For instance, religion is heavily encouraged in the Boy Scouts, which is historically and remains strongly Christian organization. This has expanded to a tolerance of major religions, but not of atheism or agnosticism. “If you’re not religious... that’s not valued” (Sam, 2017). This harkens back to the Scout Oath and Law as well. The oath’s phrases that “A Scout is Reverent” and “On my honor I will do my duty to God and my country” reinforce this link between American nationalism and religion that the BSA subscribes to. This link to religion also reinforces much of the BSA’s other forms of conservatism. “The Boy Scouts of America have been a little slow on the uptake in updating their policies and therefore also their overall message they’re sending to people... not exactly the most open-minded group, and some people are a little more drawn to that because they didn’t want to include these groups in their kids’ activities” (Rachel, 2017). This is especially true of the LDS church, which has contributed large percentages of the BSA’s funding. The Boy Scouts of America only recently (2015) opened their doors to some LGBT participants, and as of last year, are just now allowing girls to enroll in the Boy Scouts at the Cub Scout level (Lee, 2017).

These changes, though welcome, have created major repercussions for the Boy Scouts, as many of the members that Rachel referred to have pulled their children out of the organization

and their donations alongside them. The BSA's reticence to progress has dramatically limited the demographics of people who could participate in scouting in the past. This narrowed range of participants is a trend that threads itself throughout my interviews and greatly impacts the cultural landscape of Philmont. As the BSA and Philmont are serving as a case study for outdoor culture as a whole, due to their similar roots and values, it is no surprise that these themes of exclusionary masculinity and nationalism apply to the rest of environmentalist and outdoor enthusiasts. As Sam puts it, to participate in these groups, "It's important to make sure you're 'Scout appropriate'" (2017).

### Wilderness Ethics

My interviews also revealed the theme of environmental ethics and the culture of people who participate in outdoor sports. The topics that usually came up when discussing how Philmont fits into this rhetoric of the outdoors were a superior sense of place and culture, ideas of wilderness that apply to these ideas of superiority, and discussions of the authors such as Muir analyzed above.

All of the people I interviewed spoke to the quality and character of the people at Philmont. The culture breeds incredibly close-knit communities and opportunities to learn from other individuals. Many feel that the culture encourages them to better themselves, based on the inspiration of the people one encounters in the backcountry. Mary claims that Philmont provides her with "opportunities to learn from people who are, I think, better at being human beings than I am" (Mary, 2016). This overt reverence to the people of Philmont as "better" is incredibly common and shared amongst most staff members. Mike describes the intensity of this admiration: "In that moment, surrounded by some of the greatest people I had met over my years

at Philmont, I thought about all of the joy that Philmont had brought me and how lucky I was to be there” (2018).

While it is definitely the sign of a strong community for so many people to discuss how much the people mean to them, and the impact of every individual, this also constructs a concept of outdoorsy people as better than the average in ways that are not directly impacted by their hobbies. “At first I couldn’t believe that a place like Philmont existed. Everything about it seemed so unreal or mystical. Both the people at the ranch and the land itself seemed like something from a story or a movie” (Spencer, 2017). Spencer’s comment reveals the constructed nature of the Philmont personality, and how detached it seems from the everyday social encounter. Staff members are pressured to play roles that often depart greatly from the kinds of behaviors and character traits they exhibit elsewhere.

This superior sense of culture also applies to a more obvious superior sense of place, which is based on constructed notions of landscape, like the mountains. Two individuals commented that Philmont was an escape for them from their home states. The west is seen as an escape from less “worthy” places: “Part of the reason I kept returning to Philmont was because I really enjoyed getting away from Kentucky for an extended period of time” (Spencer, 2017). This specific verbiage - “getting away” or “getting out” - is repeated in another interview: “Getting out of Texas was a huge plus” (Mary, 2016). Outdoor enthusiasts and others use this constructed notion of topography that makes mountainous areas immediately superior to anything else. Mountains are seen as a mode of understanding value over eastern landscapes such as the plains and the midwest. The ability of a place to produce spectacular views places it above less photogenic landscapes.

Lastly, the staff members commented heavily on how much Philmont has formed their views of nature and wilderness, as well as introducing them to authors like Muir, Abbey, and Leopold. Sam says that her “love of the environment has been shaped by Philmont, especially the Wilderness Pledge” (Sam, 2017). Her favorite WP talk quote is, “The mountains are calling and I must go” by John Muir (Sam, 2017). She resonates with these ideas because of Philmont, despite living in New Mexico her whole life and growing up going hiking with her family. She claims this is because of her position allowing her to be on the trail for an extended period of time, on her own terms instead of her family’s.

Others also cite John Muir for Wilderness Pledge talk: “‘Society speaks and all men listen, the mountains speak and wise men listen’ by John Muir is a quote that I share during my WPs. It takes a certain kind of person, a special kind of person to advocate for the land, to become its interpreter” (Jake, 2017). Jake aligns himself with Muir and justifies this with this claim that he and Philmont people accordingly represent a “special kind of person” who can understand wilderness and appreciate it accordingly.

The other writers came up throughout my interviews as well. “Philmont gave me a passion for the wilderness and has also done a lot to introduce me to various works of literature. Writers like Thoreau, Edward Abbey, and Pirsig are all authors I had discovered while at Philmont. All of these writers have helped me articulate and develop my personal opinions to this day” (Spencer, 2017). Philmont has been the introduction to environmentalism for many of the people I interviewed. This means that much of staffers’ understanding of environmentalism has been accumulated through interactions with other staffers. Authors like Abbey, Leopold, Thoreau, and Muir are often passed around, in the form of simple quotes, or sometimes as large

scale as novels. Their names are known by those in the department, at the very least. This is what links Philmont to the larger culture of outdoor enthusiasts and environmentalists.

More than mentioning them by name, like Spencer does, many rangers directly quote these four authors. For example, Katie uses an Edward Abbey quote in her WP talks: “Wilderness is not a luxury but a necessity of the human spirit” (Katie, 2016). Katie critiques much of Abbey’s other opinions and beliefs revolving around women in the outdoors and immigrants. However, Abbey’s writing is inseparable from the narrative of environmentalism and remains entrenched in many discussions of land ethics. Even the participants that Katie directly influences learn early on in their outdoor education that Abbey is an important and quotable figure in the culture of environmentalism. Edward Abbey is prolific enough that those who criticize him continue to reference his work and writing.

Aldo Leopold is another name often overheard on ranch. To one of my interviewees, Leopold and the other writers have Jake referenced a specific chapter in Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac*, “about sawing through the great oak tree, which I think is so evocative. It recounts history in this narrative of sawing through the years. They’re sawing through those literal layers of history, and I think we kind of do that with Philmont’s history” (2017). Again, Jake connects this environmental writer to Philmont’s practices and policies. He also recognizes Philmont’s place in the timing of the shift in understanding the environmental thinking: “The reverence and fear of wilderness changed over time. With Thoreau and Muir, wilderness changed from a term that implied darkness and fear, into one that represents the sublime and this romantic landscape ideal” (Jake, 2017). Philmont’s history represents a shift from the view of New Mexican history as “wild and dangerous” to being used as a playground for Boy Scouts in

the span of a couple decades. An example of this shift is the view of Wilson Mesa, an area of the ranch that is considered especially beautiful. Jake describes Wilson Mesa, “We view it as this pristine wilderness, you can see all the wonderful skylines in the distance, when in reality, that landscape is highly manmade, highly constructed, not in the sense of design, but in the sense of the touch of men. We clear-cut it and that’s why there’s these beautiful meadows” (2017).

Philmont subscribes to this constructed ideal of nature that provides the views of “wilderness” and mountains without it being truly untouched. Like the writings of Muir and Abbey, Philmont staff exalt areas of the ranch that are heavily shaped by human forces as wilderness, especially when those areas are particularly photogenic. Therefore, the idea of wilderness in its true form does not actually influence the value of an area. Instead, its perceived role as wilderness and value is influenced by the views it offers, and how those views reinforce America’s beauty.

### Masculinity and its Impacts

While interviewing rangers, the dominant theme that emerged while asking about the values of Philmont was the aspect of physical challenge. Rachel introduces a term for the physical challenge aspect of Philmont, as well as the theme of pushing yourself emotionally during physical challenge: type two fun. She offers the following definition: “When a situation is extremely challenging, and you may feel like exhausted or even a little bit scared, like if there’s a lightning storm around, but despite all of those challenges, you’re really enjoying yourself, and not just despite but sometimes because of those challenges you’re really enjoying yourself” (Rachel, 2017). Type two fun at Philmont is easier than many places, as the infrastructure and communication at the ranch creates a safer atmosphere than many other backcountry areas. In this way, one can push their physical limits beyond what they would while hiking on their own

elsewhere. This phenomena is called type two fun to distinguish it from type one fun, which is just simply fun with no added misery, and type three fun which is not fun at all until one is out of the situation and thinking about it in hindsight. Many rangers take advantage of this safety net and participate in “some pretty long hikes, and some pretty dumb hikes” that they might not do if there were not backcountry camps and scouts within two miles of any direction (Mary, 2016). Philmont acts as more of a testing ground to do risky and dangerous physical challenges because the rangers know they can get away with more with a lower risk.

With many staff members pushing their physical limits, a culture of competition in the physical realm emerges, alongside the earlier discussed professional realm. This often ties back to those themes of rugged individualism that arose in environmental literature. Philmont’s interpretive history only contributes to this theme, as staff members interpret the lives of people gone by who lived hard, dangerous lives in the mountain, which staff often glorify. These histories, though singularly represented, help to complete a picture of rugged individualism that every staff member must reckon with. Maggie describes her own understanding of the issue:

With rugged individualism at Philmont, and in general... they’ll commodify and gender nature itself, like conquering the land. Philmont is in the Southwest and there’s a huge history of rugged individualism and manifest destiny, and the types of histories we’ve chosen to highlight, we talk about the cowboys and the trappers and the loggers and the miners and the railroad workers and we like glorify them as these really cool dudes who wanted to see the world and conquer this isolated land, which ignores American Indians who were living on the land. (Maggie, 2017)

My interviewees admitted that, at times, this rugged individualism is shaped by factors external to themselves, like trying to shape the way others view them. At other times, the physical challenge becomes a space for personal growth. “I enjoy being able to say that I did things... but I think it’s more the things I get out of the physical challenge, the experiences, that I go back for” (Maggie, 2017). Jake reiterated this idea: “Philmont is kind of a testing ground. I think for me the important thing was to prove to myself that I could do it. If I could finish Philmont, if I could go an extra mile up that mountain after getting us lost three times already, that I could do anything” (2017). The confidence achieved from pushing one’s natural limits is a valuable resource to handle other, unrelated challenges in life, like interviewing for a job, or writing an honors thesis.

This theme of rugged individualism disguised as personal growth is heavily associated with the mountainous, western landscape. “The West forces both man and woman to bring out the rugged individualism within themselves... like in the Westerns, you see men and women fending for themselves” (Will, 2017). Again, Philmont’s historic programs come back into focus with this glorification of the West, and this link to rugged individualism, even though the representations that highlight these themes are not fully accurate. The logging camps have been one of the more masculinist representations the camp produces, “We tell these narratives down at Pueblano of the great logging men that chopped down these trees, and the mountain men that trapped, when in reality if you didn’t have the families, these operations would not exist. The archeological evidence at Wilson Mesa and Ring Town tells us these histories that are much more domestic than we are willing to let on, entire atmospheres that we entirely neglect” (Jake, 2017). The romanticized rugged and masculinist history Philmont projects is not, therefore, accurate in the slightest.

This denial of history in favor of the constructed themes of masculinity has very real consequences for the ranch. Some of it takes more benign forms like competition in non-serious challenges, yet: “There’s a little bit of an issue with machismo and toxic masculinity with some of the ranger challenges. People can get way too competitive with them” (Joe, 2017). The ranger challenges have been outlined by past generations of rangers and are still practiced today, the most common being the ranger marathon, which entails hiking from the north-most camp (Dan Beard) to the south-most camp (Carson Meadows) in one day, carrying at least 35 pounds. The distance is approximately 47 miles, depending on which route is chosen. There are rules set in place to make this less dangerous and to mitigate the consequences felt by participants. Rangers must have at least two others with them on the trail when hiking the marathon, they must have a day off after the marathon so that they are not exhausted and injured for a crew, and they must carry a tent and sleeping gear, as well as a bear bag and rope, in case they have to stop before the end of the challenge. It is also heavily encouraged to write Dan Beard and Carson Meadows ahead of time so they know the person is planning on participating in the challenge, and to avoid telling crews what the person is doing if they encounter them along the way. There are more challenges as well, like Black Death, which consists of hiking four peaks of Tooth Ridge, or Super Black Death, which adds two more peaks to the beginning. There are a handful of other ranger challenges, most much more goofy, like the Mark Anderson challenge, which is the ranger marathon with a Class A scout uniform on.

Ranger challenges are intended to revive a sense of challenge and difficulty for staff at Philmont who have adjusted to hiking constantly and want to push themselves further. These challenges can be breeding grounds for unnecessarily competitive behavior, as Joe said. Yet this

egotism is a more benign form of the consequences of Philmont's residual focus on masculinity and virality in the outdoors. When machismo is valued, inherently or overtly, expectations for staff members to represent this ideal arise. My interviewees discussed how much enthusiasm and loudness of personality is valued as a ranger, but this fits a greater image of an ideal ranger that is fit, enthusiastic, masculine, and BSA approved. This heavily affects many female rangers' experiences. Sam argues that "[Being a woman] makes crews a little bit less likely to trust you out here" (2017). Rachel has a more thorough example of this prejudice that one of the rangers she oversaw experienced one summer:

I think that sometimes guys are taken more seriously both by our coworkers and by participants... I was a supervisor for a female ranger who offered to be shadowed by other staff members who weren't rangers and wanted to learn what it was like to be a ranger, and she had one crew where every time she would instruct the crew on what to do, and at this point she had a lot of experience, she had already instructed about 10 crews and when she would give instructions to this crew, they would always turn to the male staff member, who had no experience as a ranger, to confirm with him that he agreed with what she was saying before they would do it. They just want to turn to a man and get a man's opinion before they act on her instruction. (Rachel, 2017)

Rachel's ranger experienced a subtle undermining of her experience, skill, and position, in what was clearly a subconscious enacting of bias by the crew. This bias makes it difficult to do the job of the ranger, as participants do not take female rangers' instructions as seriously. Some of my interviewees encountered crews who did not take

their discipline seriously, like Sam: “Oh look there goes the female ranger getting pissed again” or Maggie: “I got a review from a crew that I was ‘really naggy’ or that I ‘enforced things naggingly’” (2017). Female authority is devalued at Philmont by some crews, and some staff, often creating a dangerous situation for the crew that will not take their ranger’s advice and for the ranger who may not feel safe with a crew that disrespects her authority.

However, some discrimination women at Philmont encounter is much more direct. Sam and Maggie’s ranger trainer in 2015 is an example of someone who actively diminished space for women at Philmont: “The one comment I’ve always remembered is when we were talking about how large Philmont is, 200 square miles of hiking, and he said that for Maggie and I there are 200 square miles of kitchen” (Sam, 2017). Though afterwards, their RT claimed that this was supposed to be a joke, it still reinforced the rhetoric of exclusion that Philmont women grow accustomed to. Coming from a place of power, Maggie and Sam’s supervisor made it clear to them at the beginning of their contracts that he would not see the work they did to be the same as their male counterparts, and that some part of him believed that they did not belong on the ranch.

Lillian also hit a wall of exclusion when discussing Philmont’s future with the Chief Ranger: “When I said I think we should reach out to girls and underprivileged scouts, like invite venture crews and advertise ourselves to scouts in non-wealthy areas, even Cimarron! I told him that I think we should make more of an effort to include anyone besides white males. He said that this wasn’t the place for that” (Lillian, 2018). When those in positions of authority in the department consistently remind female

rangers of their position as “other” to the organization, their work becomes undervalued and potential positive change is stopped dead in its tracks.

Those who do not see women as equals in the field often also paint women as objects for the benefit of the male staff members’ enjoyment. “We’ve all suffered forms of sexual harassment, especially when working with adult males who often undervalue our work and judge us more harshly” (Maggie, 2017). Maggie connects sexual harassment at Philmont to the greater issue of misogyny on the ranch, and the use of sexual harassment to reinforce this undervaluing and to make women feel small and vulnerable.

Following the same pattern as the mistrust of female staffers, some forms of sexual harassment seem more subconscious. Rachel encountered issues with other staff members assuming her to be focussed on sex and romance more than her job: “There were always rumors that I was dating someone as a supervisor... one ranger told me that the guys at Pueblano said they thought we were dating because I was talking to him... it was immediately viewed as sexual, not capable of being seen as a friendship or professional” (2017). Rachel’s behavior is seen as more conspicuous and misread constantly, and any authority or professionalism she has is ignored, and swept under the rug.

There is also direct sexual harassment on the ranch and in the department as well, specifically stemming from two members of upper leadership, Kyle and Spencer, a different Spencer than the one I interviewed. Joe recounts one aspect of their offences: “Any time they get a new group of rangers in they immediately play ‘smash or pass’

with them,” smash or pass being the practice of deciding which female staff members the rangers would hook up with given the opportunity, and which they would not (2017). This of course creates a microculture in the ranger department of rangers who are immediately sexualizing all of the female rangers. As supervisors, Kyle and Spencer are also creating a compromising situation for the female rangers in the department who by actively and verbally describing them sexually. Kyle and Spencer work with Academy Rangers, rangers who are hired only for approximately three weeks as a part of training in the military academies. Kyle and Spencer are their sole supervisors, so their damaging behavior sets the bar for how to act for these rangers and this standard is often unchallenged in the Academy Rangers’ time at Philmont.

Half of a page of the Ranger Fieldbook is dedicated to the specific harassment female rangers may face from crews, and how to address it. In the context of harassment from staff, the fieldbook gives the following advice: “If someone is ever disrespectful to you, another staff member, or a crew, inform Ranger Leadership immediately. Safety is our #1 priority at Philmont and emotional safety/security is a huge aspect of that. No one deserves to be mistreated and we will support you. All matters are handled in a fair, discreet, and appropriate manner” (Philmont, 2015, p. 82). It is not hard to notice what is lacking in this statement: how Philmont plans to actually address the issue. The statement “we will support you” is encouraging, yet vague and allows for a lot of gray areas. Similarly, “matters are handled in a fair, discreet, and appropriate manner” implies a definite possibility of matters being swept under the rug, in favor of being “discreet” and one must ask who determines what “appropriate” means.

This language is endemic of some of the themes of Philmont's handling of controversial matters. The level of support one gets is very much determined by who they happen to bring their concerns to. As one interviewee shared, "People who question authority struggle at the Ranch. If you have legitimate reasons to have issue with something at the Ranch, often times you're still met with apathy or a 'No.' You don't make friends questioning authority and that can hurt your chances to be hired back at the Ranch" (Mike, 2018). This is something experienced by those who complain about harassment and general unfair treatment when leadership are the people being accused.

In so many ways, Philmont can feel like a lawless landscape for those not in the dominant group, despite all of its rules, regulations and standards. When speaking up about these issues, one is often made to feel abrasive and uncooperative. I asked Rachel if she ever considered not pursuing the discussion anymore and she replied, "If I was easier, they would like me more, and I wouldn't be such a stain on Philmont... but it would always be impacting me whether or not I wanted to admit it" (2017). Women can actively ignore the problem at Philmont, and some do, but they are all still impacted by the culture of the ranch.

Women are often brought to reckon these two aspects of their identities to negotiate the landscape of inequality at Philmont. Katie recounts the number of times she has heard "She's not a girl she's a ranger" and said that this led her to adopt the mentality that her "identity as a woman was not compatible with being out here... I had to drop that to be someone else" (2016). Internalized misogyny stemming from this enforced incompatibility of femininity and rugged individualism has historically prevented many female staffers from forming strong bonds and rejecting sexism together. Maggie says that "even the women will try to embody these traits [of

rugged individualism and masculinity], like ‘I’m even more masculine or rugged than the guys and I should be valued for that’ and isolate other women like ‘Oh I’m not like them, I’m a real outdoors person, I’m not like other girls’” (2017). It takes very active resistance to the sexism at Philmont to reject the internalized misogyny and be accepting of other women at Philmont who represent different degrees of femininity.

Women are also definitely not the only victims of toxic masculinity on the ranch. Mike shared his experiences with me:

My femininity and body image did hinder me. Working for the Boy Scouts doesn’t really allow for much under the average level of masculinity. I do not really prescribe to the general idea of masculinity. That made making connections with certain types of people hard which in turn led to some rather uncomfortable situations in the woods. I was thought of as lesser for not being a “man.” I mean people who are less secure in their personality wouldn’t be able to handle the judgement. It’s rather toxic. I also have a really bad body image and have for many years. That really made it hard to enjoy the beauty around me because I felt inadequate when looking at my peers. I didn’t do certain things because I didn’t want to be the one who held people back. I wouldn’t pay attention to the nature around me on a hard hike because I was so in my head, telling myself about how I suck because I can’t do this easily. (Mike, 2018)

Mike struggles with Philmont’s strictly enforced gender norms on multiple scales, from personality and behavior to the very physical sense of one’s own body. In a culture that promotes being tough and physically capable, not only is the learning curve for hiking steep, but this toxic

masculinity prevents staffers and participants alike from speaking up when they felt unsafe mentally or physically. This is the bottom-line issue sums up the damage of Philmont's fixation on masculinity. People are at risk of being unsafe in the backcountry because of discrimination, harassment, and shame. Michael is more optimistic than many about the ranger department, and he believes that Philmont doesn't "always value change, and it can be like an old boy's club, but the ranger department does have more of a culture of growth and improvement" (2017). The more actively staffers speak up about their frustrations with the culture of exclusion, the more they are able to rewrite the rules and change the status quo. However, those that value this change and push for it must be allowed and encouraged to participate.

#### Philmont's Whiteness and Historically-Driven Nationalism

Philmont's racial demographics are endemic of the rampant whitewashing of environmentalism and outdoor culture. The "whiteness" of Philmont represents a national ideal that was instituted at the conception of the Boy Scouts of America. Philmont has a definite race problem. Philmont has very few nonwhite staffers or participants. Rachel describes Philmont as "a white man's paradise" (2017). Whether this is due to financial barriers or otherwise, the reality of the lack of diverse demographics at Philmont is linked to the BSA's nationalistic origins, and the inception of the environmental movement as a response to immigration and urbanization. Returning to the earlier discussion of modern racism and its masking of the perpetrators of racial inequality, much of the lack of diversity of Philmont and the BSA stems from an apathetic lack of effort to fix ramifications of earlier exclusions. "If people are ignoring and denying racism and sexism, of course you aren't going to feel like you belong there" (Maggie, 2017). Philmont's attitude toward race is one that sweeps the issue under the rug.

However, the racial homogeneity of the ranch can make scouts of color feel very out of place at the ranch, as though everyone else is keenly aware of their difference. The staff has not always handled crews that are not majority white before either. Joe describes this disconnect, “With regards to race, Philmont is one of the whitest places on earth. It’s really bad. This year, there was a crew from Chicago where most of the participants were black and [the photo department] made sure to photograph them very disproportionately” (Joe, 2017). Scouts of color are often over-documented like this to make Philmont look more diverse in photos and other marketing, without actually addressing this lack of diversity. Instead of doing outreach to bring more scouts of color to the ranch, Philmont instead over-represents the few who visit to create a more diverse self-image to the world.

Since the BSA has nationalistic origins, rooted in a time when white America feared losing its dominance, many of those who participate in the organization have exclusionary views of race. Rachel stated earlier that the Boy Scouts are “not exactly the most open-minded group, and some people are a little more drawn to that because they didn’t want to include these groups in their kids’ activities” (Rachel, 2017). In other words, there is room for racial intolerance in the Boy Scouts, and many participants come from homes and other cultures that reinforce white supremacy. At Philmont, this takes the form of scouts making jokes about people of color, because they find themselves in a space that allows for this. Lillian describes feeling like Philmont is basically “just like 14 year old racists running around” (Lillian, 2018). Philmont’s lack of diversity allows for racial biases to thrive. “If you don’t have any exposure to people who aren’t white and aren’t male, Philmont won’t really challenge you in that at all... One could begin to form conclusions that the best people are white men, or just white people in general.

Philmont can definitely foster a lack of awareness beyond the white middle class experience” (Mary, 2016). Philmont presents a nationalistic ideal of what young Americans should look and act like. Harkening back to Rachel’s comment, Philmont is a “white man’s paradise” and for white men on the ranch, this creates a sample of how the rest of the US could be.

Though Philmont prides itself on being mentally, physically, and spiritually challenging, it is not always ideologically challenging for staff and participants who view the Boy Scouts, outdoor culture, and even America as a whole, as a space meant for white people. Spencer voiced his frustration with racial discrimination at Philmont, “I honestly wish that factors like these were not obstacles in people’s enjoyment of the outdoors. The wilderness does not care for any of these things so I don’t really understand why society or the culture around the outdoors does” (Spencer, 2017). His comment gets at the heart of the idea: our perceived notions of who belongs in the outdoors and who does not is entirely constructed. This harkens back to the environmentalists of years gone by who created a discourse around nature that advocates for a redefining of the American ideal as viral, independent and rugged white men, separate from the polluted urban centers and domestic spheres that nonwhite Americans inhabit. The Boy Scouts follow an era of men who could afford to play “cowboys,” while their oppressed counterparts were at times literally constructing the landscape they used as a playground.

Philmont’s historical interpretation of the landscape and its history also reflects a very Eurocentric and colonial ideology. There are two camps on the Ranch that teach scouts about the Native Americans that lived in North Ponil Canyon as well as all over the area that is now Philmont, specifically the Ancestral Puebloans, the Puebloans and the Jicarilla Apache. Jake discusses the lack of sensitivity in the naming of camp in the North Ponil: “We still call ‘Indian

Writings,' 'Indian Writings.' Yes, we changed it from 'Scribblins' - thank god we did that - but we still call it 'Indian Writings.' We have Comanche Peak and Apache, but none of these terms speak to the actual history of the place" (Jake, 2017).

Philmont, as well as the Boy Scouts, has always appropriated the history of Native American peoples living on the ranch in ways that dramatize the Southwest and New Mexico, without being necessarily accurate. "The noble savage kind of thing is the only way native Americans are really mentioned... A fetishization of tradition" (Sam, 2017). Philmont highlights a singular story of the lifestyle of Native Americans, but glosses over the colonization and genocide that fills in the blanks of why there are not still indigenous people in those mountains. Philmont discusses Native American history, but "not in a way that acknowledges the massacre and the slaughter that happened to get Philmont where it is now" (Sam, 2017). In a sense, the backcountry historical programs ignore the colonial reality of Philmont and America in general.

Lillian agrees with this assessment of our interpretive programs: "The history is kinda fucked. I just don't think that we're portraying it well. Like at opening campfire, we're portraying the same history as the textbooks all do. It's hypocritical" (2018). She references the opening campfire which is an aspect of the crew experience that introduces crews to the history before hitting the trail. It features characters at points in Philmont's history. Up until 2016, opening campfire had staff members playing an ancestral Puebloan women in a fake tan dress which Lillian described as "skimpy" (Lillian, 2018). Around 75% of the time, this character, Acuma, was played by a white woman. This portrayal gendered, sexualized, and white-washed Native American history at Philmont, as well as making light of the very violent colonial history of the ranch. "Interpretation is the ultimate goal of preservation, of studying history, but when

that interpretation is misguided or lacking or not fully researched, we neglect and ignore layers of the historical reality” (Jake, 2017). Jake’s comment applies to Philmont, as many aspects of the history of Northern New Mexico are glorified in a way that highlights the lives of colonists as brave and worthy.

Philmont’s interpretation of history also specifically glorifies a certain story of those who lived and live in the mountains. Sparsh discuss this image that has been constructed: “New Mexico just seems to have a way of attracting hardy and amazing people to it” (2017). The stories of miners and loggers and trappers and railroad men shape the way the scouts view their own experiences on the ranch. The drama and tragedy of their stories adds a haunting layer of purpose to the roles of the staff who are portraying those histories as well. The scouts and staff are made to feel as though part of something bigger in the backcountry, a part of the greater American narrative of the west. This feeling, combined with the beautiful landscape, creates a picture for many participants and staff of Philmont as an inherent part of the American West. Will describes his first impression of Philmont this way: “I immediately fell in love with the backdrop of the American West. That really triggered my mind to think ‘Wow, this is what the American West is’” (2017). Philmont’s culture feeds into this nationalistic association of landscape with American greatness, due to its foundation in the BSA. “In the Boy Scouts in general there’s a lot of patriotism, calling for a love of country, a love of God, God bless America kind of thing” (Sam, 2017). Philmont is also referred to as “God’s Country” in the Philmont hymn, and many past staffers describe it as heaven on earth, making this area of the world especially unique and valuable, partially because it is American.

## Discussion Summary

Philmont insists on a narrative that heralds the lives of those who worked, fought, and struggled in the mountains in a way that creates a parallel between these histories and the scouts' experiences backpacking and the work of the staff to emulate these histories. In themes of masculinity, rugged individualism, sexism, whiteness, nationalism, linked to ideologies of environmentalism and the Boy Scouts of America, interviewing Philmont staff rendered a broader image of the ways in which all of these ideas are intertwined and connected. Many of these recurring problematic images occur in official Philmont literature and practices like the Ranger Fieldbook and Opening Campfire, and many occur in the more individualistic, unofficial culture as well, demonstrating that these ideas are inherent to Philmont at all scales

So often the line between history and reality blurs for staff and participants, and to an extent, this is one of the goals of the program. The magic of Philmont is getting sucked into the landscape and its history. However, when this history is incomplete and biased, the experience of scouts and their understanding of the outdoors also becomes incomplete and biased. Philmont's homogeneity leaves little room for the officially sanctioned view of nature to be challenged, and the results of this narrow-mindedness can be dangerous and damaging. Philmont's current culture prevents some participants and staff members from reaching their full potential in leadership, outdoor competency, and teaching ability. With a more complete, inclusive, and aware culture, Philmont can reach a higher potential and impact more and more scouts from different backgrounds, strengthening and challenging anyone involved.

## Conclusion

Philmont Scout Ranch has produced a unique, but also relevant case study to the examination of environmentalism as a culture. Through my research and interviews at the ranch, it became more and more clear that Philmont and the BSA fit well into the existing literature and critiques of environmentalism and outdoor culture. Philmont, through its roots in the BSA, has strong ties to a nationalistic sense of masculinity and colonial dominance through patterns of rugged individualism and the whitewashing of history. Through existing analyses of environmentalism and its origins, informed by a literary discussion of landmark environmental writers, Philmont acts as a contemporary example of environmentalism's exclusion and supremacy. The policies and mentalities of Roosevelt-era America, as well as figures like Muir, remain threaded throughout modern day environmental thought, leaving little room for those outside of the ideal: white, middle class men. Those who do not fit this norm make space for themselves in environmentalism, through movements like environmental justice.

Environmentalism's roots in white supremacy and misogyny have not been extracted, but instead are usually hidden or buried. The movement labels itself as progressive, inclusive, and counter to mainstream, modern American culture. However, the deeper one digs into the practices and literature of the movement, the more hegemonic and nationalistic it becomes. The landscape remains a representation of a "true" ideal of America, and only those demographics who fit the American mold are allowed to participate in and enjoy the culture surrounding it.

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## Appendix: List of Interviewees, Chronological

Katie, five years on staff; June 25th, 2016.

Mary, six years on staff; December 30th, 2016.

Samantha, three years on staff; June 8th, 2017.

Michael, three years on staff; June 22nd, 2017.

Will, three years on staff; August 18th, 2017.

Rachel, three years on staff; September 7th, 2017.

Maggie, three years on staff; September 10th, 2017.

Jake, three years on staff; September 15th, 2017.

Joe, four years on staff; September 22nd, 2017.

Spencer, four years on staff; October 5th, 2017.

Lillian, two years on staff; March 9th, 2018.

Mike, five years on staff; March 13th, 2018.