The Ideal Tourist: Power, Identity, and Environmental Privilege in Tourism Marketing

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA BY

Joy Marie Hamilton

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Squires

October 2021

Acknowledgements

People say it's the journey, not the destination, that matters. For me, the journey to write this dissertation was full of wonderfully supportive, intelligent, and positive people whom I am so grateful to have in my life. Thank you to my committee for supporting me throughout this process, especially during the ups and downs of the pandemic. My amazing advisor Dr. Squires elevated the rigor of this project and guided me in becoming a confident scholar. Thank you, Dr. Vavrus, for your consistent positive support from the earliest stages of my research. Thank you, Dr. Philippon, for helping me ground the project in environmental humanities scholarship and for showing me what a thriving scholarly community looks like. Thank you, Dr. Greene, for your departmental leadership and for securing funding for my research. Dr. Werry's work inspired me to do this project, and I am appreciative of her sharing with me how to study something as complicated as tourism. My critical media studies cohort have been the best colleagues you could ask for. Caroline, Megan, and Jules, thank you for going to writing retreats in the rural Midwest with me and for talking through the challenges and successes of getting a PhD over long text chains and office chats. Diane Odash was kind enough to lend me her public speaking expertise and took countless hours to read through various versions of the project. I am so grateful to you for helping me maintain passion and intellectual curiosity. And finally, my friends and family: thank you for your support and encouragement during my time in graduate school. Thank you, Jane Stern, for being my constant champion. I want to give a special acknowledgement to my sister, Dr. North, who inspired me to go to the University of Minnesota and has mentored me every step of the way, starting on day one with bus passes, up until the night before my oral exam.

Dedication

To Justin. Thank you for showing me a life well lived even if it was a life cut short.

Abstract

Many states in the U.S. are competing to attract wealthy travelers through magazines, commercials, and elaborate branding campaigns. To keep pace, governments increasingly employ corporate advertising methods that target ideal consumers. Using Colorado as a case study, "Ideal Tourist: Power, Identity, and Environmental Privilege in Tourism Marketing," uncovers the content and circulation of tourism media and the public-private partnerships that drive taxpayer-supported tourism promotion and research. Although tourism offices view their work as apolitical, this project reveals that tourism media reinforce other systems of inclusion and exclusion and thus exercise political power in assigning worthiness to identity groups in relation to who can travel where and under what circumstances.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1:

Tourism Rush

"The gold is a true Colorado treasure and represents the state's past, present and future."

—John Hickenlooper, Colorado Governor (2011–2019)

At one mile above sea level, blinding sunlight reflects off a 270-foot dome. Encased in one of civilization's most prized resources, the gold-sheathed state capitol building in Denver, Colorado, is a representation and embodiment of state wealth, material resource,[1] and power as it towers above both head-tilting tourists on the steps below and the growing homeless population behind them in Civic Center Park. Inspired by the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C., the gold leaf casing on the dome commemorates the Colorado Gold Rush—a process that socially, politically, physically, and environmentally dispossessed the Arapaho, Apache, Comanche, Shoshone, Cheyenne, Pueblo, Southern Ute, Ute Mountain Ute, Kiowa, and Navajo tribes, while stockpiling the coffers of the state and those lucky few individuals with a combination of luck, grit, and privilege.

In the 1800s, mining was Colorado's biggest economic driver, but since World War II, the state has steadily increased its investment in tourism, indicating its relevancy to Colorado's economic landscape. Tourism is symbolically the new golden dome in Colorado. While former Governor John Hickenlooper says, "The gold is a true Colorado

[1] The construction of the capitol building depleted the supply of Colorado Rose Onyx, a type of marble. However, it is not the only building where this resource was used in the state.

treasure and represents the state's past, present and future," many in the state believe that tourism is the future gold in Colorado's cities and towns. Lawmakers agree.

With the "tourism creates jobs, tourism works" mantra from the tourism industry echoing in their heads, lawmakers look over a detailed tourism budget inside the Colorado State Capitol. They are considering whether to increase Colorado's state tourism budget for the next fiscal year. The largest line item for the tourism budget is for tourism marketing. As Colorado, and the nation at large, turns to tourism as an economic mainstay, more and more taxpayer money is being spent on tourism marketing and advertising. Billboards, magazine spreads, commercials, and public relations trips, insists the Colorado Tourism Office, are a necessity for economic wellbeing. They emphasize to lawmakers and citizens that taxpayer-supported advertising is *the* most important aspect of tourism governance activities. It is this line item in the state budget that I investigate throughout my dissertation.

Tourism Rush

Colorado is in the throes of a tourism rush. According to the state's official tourism authority, the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO), Colorado has consecutively broken visitation and spending records for the past 8 years, with 86 million visitors spending $21 billion dollars in 2016 alone, securing 3.1% of the overall travel segment in the U.S. and generating $1.28 billion in tax revenue (Dean Runyan, 2017; Wenzel, 2018). The state's tourism budget has kept pace; the CTO's state operating budget has ballooned from 5.5 million in 2000 to $19 million in 2017 (Blevins, 2015). The numbers are telling:

tourism has become a pillar of Colorado's economic, political, cultural, and geographical fabric.

The CTO spends more than half of its $19 million budget on marketing and public relations (Colorado Office of the State Auditor, 2012). In Colorado and other government-sponsored tourism offices in the U.S., tourism's purpose and success relies on advertising in the form of commercials, digital banner ads, magazine spreads, and billboards. The return on investment, or ROI, for advertising is the key indicator to lawmakers and citizens of a successful tourism campaign run by the state. Therefore, tourism media are the vehicle in which tourism discourses are enacted both to potential visitors and to state citizens whose tax monies fund tourism efforts. States produce and circulate place-based advertisements that appeal to desired tourists as they browse online, drive into town, fly on an airplane, and stand in a grocery checkout line. I use tourism media throughout *Ideal Tourist* to describe the state's marketing campaigns as well as discourses surrounding the advertisements, such as research or communication within the tourism industry.

While major news outlets, such as the *Denver Post,* sing tourism's praises, claiming that tourism contributes to $19.1 billion in economic impact and 160,000 jobs, coverage about the specific details of tourism marketing are rare (Blevins, 2016). For instance, where tourism advertisements are placed and how the ROI for marketing is calculated are considered proprietary information by the state (K. Ritter, personal communication, Sep. 29, 2017). This dissertation aims to do what journalists and state auditors have failed to do, to take a critical look at Colorado's tourism marketing

program. I use tourism media—the images, text, and documents used to disseminate narratives about tourism and Colorado—to understand one simple question: who is Colorado's ideal tourist? Who, I ask, is the person lawmakers imagine during legislative sessions at the Capitol when deciding line items for tourism promotion? Using the CTO as a case study, the project takes a multi-pronged approach to government-run tourism promotion in Colorado. That is, it sheds light on Colorado's public tourism marketing practices by analyzing the *content* of marketing and advertising campaigns, the *placement* of said campaigns, and the *justifications* given by the office for money spent for marketing efforts and tourism media decisions. I use tourism advertising to understand how Colorado tells a story about itself and its ideal citizens and consumers.

Ideal Tourist

The tourism story matters because the main character within it, the ideal tourist, is an illustration of the type of person valued in society at large. The state's ideal tourist reveals who the tourism industry imagines as having the "right kind" of tourist profile: what is the ideal race, gender, sexuality, class, location, and lifestyle of the ideal tourist? The answer is clear: the person the tourism industry expects and imagines arriving at lodges and ski resorts with a bulging wallet for spending is White. The CTO's representational and economic investment in whiteness vis-à-vis tourism media instills a value system that uplifts and centers whiteness while systematically devaluing, and even erasing, tourists of color. What is particularly telling about Colorado's tourism story is that the representational and economic investment in White tourists is done at the hands of a governmental entity. The tourism narrative is one that matches other U.S. systems of

governance that systematically privilege White Americans, such as housing, education, criminal justice, and healthcare. While tourism certainly benefits private industries such as skiing, the state's involvement in enabling whiteness through tourism is startling and ripe for intervention.

Preview of Chapter

In this introductory chapter, I lay a roadmap for analyzing Colorado tourism and for the three chapters that follow. I first detail the modern tourism landscape and its historical roots in conquest and post-WWII Colorado. Tourism funding has not always been a given in Colorado, and I contextualize the tourism budget within a funding battle that drives what I call Colorado's modern-day "tourism story." I explain the Colorado Tourism Office's mandated goals in order to set the groundwork for understanding how the "ideal tourist" is fashioned within this story.

Next, I explain my overarching methodological approach for answering who Colorado's ideal tourist is. I detail the methods, places, documents, and media with which I engaged alongside my theoretical orientations within the field of critical media studies. Lastly, I situate the "ideal tourist" within existing literature. Drawing upon tourist studies, communication, and environmental humanities, I explain how I approached this place-based project and the inroads scholars have created in order to approach the study of tourism in an entirely new way.

Mapping the Tourist Landscape

Colorado was founded on the premise that Euro-Americans had a God-given birthright to the land. Manifest Destiny and Old West lore tell a story of downtrodden

Easterners, immigrants, and pioneers braving the frontier and the associated "dangers" to make a better life for themselves and "strike it rich."[2] In order to understand tourism today, it is important to acknowledge how White settlers claimed Indigenous land as their own and built industries such as coal and tourism using the privilege and power that a Euro-American White identity provided.

Today, tourism in Colorado relies on immigrant labor. In 2013, immigrants comprised of 15.3% of Colorado's arts, entertainment, recreation, food, and hospitality industries (Vasan, 2015). Dubbed "The Quiet Force" by journalist David Page (2016), Hispanic and Latino immigrant workers make the wheels turn for resort economies. In Aspen resort's and Vail resort's Garfield and Eagle counties, for instance, Hispanic and Latinos comprise of 30% of the population—10% higher than other non-resort counties in the state (Page, 2016). One only has to enter a popular ski destination town in Colorado today and notice the identity and ethnicity of workers versus those who visit in order to see the way in which whiteness continues to undergird tourism in Colorado (Coleman, 1996).

[2] This narrative of Manifest Density vis-à-vis mining (Willoughby, 2008) is particularly evident in local museums and historical sites in Colorado's popular tourist destinations, which feature statues, monuments, and interpretive signage publicizing immigrant miners and the hardships they faced in the mountains. For instance, in Breckenridge, Colorado, "Josie's Cabin" in Cucumber Gulch tells the story of a family surviving the tough winters as miners. Similarly, the Welcome Center Museum centers miners' stories by beginning its interpretive timeline at "the first gold strike" and continues through boom-and-bust narratives up to when the skiing industry took hold. In popular culture, Old West narratives are prevalent in blockbuster movies filmed in Colorado, including John Wayne features such as *How the West Was Won* and *True Grit* or, more recently, Quentin Tarantino's *The Hateful Eight.*

Pre-WWII

The roots of modern-day tourism stretch deep into Colorado's history as a settler destination; however, the shifts surrounding WWII are particularly relevant to the role that advertising by state-sponsored tourism initiatives have played in constructing Colorado as a destination, highlighting the beginnings of many aspirations, customs, and organizational structures that are commonplace in the state-run tourism industry today. William Philpott's *Vacationland* (2013) is a guide for contextualizing contemporary tourism in Colorado within the context of Post-WWII America. Before WWII, "tourist promotion had mostly been a piecemeal affair, with scattered interests" ranging from city-specific interests in Denver to resorts or railroad operators (p. 49). However, like most products during the consumerist boom of the 1920s, creating demand was deemed necessary and was done so in a similar fashion for Colorado tourism as for other products in the 1920s with "emotional appeals aimed at establishing and cementing a brand" (Philpott, 2013, p. 20).

Through the process of branding and physically molding the landscape to meet consumer desires for authenticity and car culture, Colorado tourism boosters constructed Colorado as an ideal product for 20th century consumers.

Post-WWII

During the 1940s, tourist promotion became "increasingly integrated and coordinated," with the state government becoming involved in advertising, as evidenced by campaigns like the 1946 *Victory Vacation* campaign by the State Advertising and Publicity Committee (Philpott, 2013, p. 49). By transforming the state into what Philpott

called “vacationland,” Colorado curated a “landscape of the popular imagination—one with a key role to play in defining new approaches to the tourist business, new lifestyles centered on outdoor recreation, and ultimately a new postwar culture of nature” (p. 126).

This instilled a value system that protected certain landscapes, ignored others, and turned Colorado into the ultimate playground for postwar middle-class urban dwellers—in other words, a “landscape of leisure” (Philpott, 2013, p. 32). For instance, Philpott details the physical changes to the land after WWII to account for Colorado’s main tourist thoroughfare, Interstate 70, and the rise of the automobile in affluent Americans’ lives. Paved roads, for instance, helped package Colorado as a welcoming, “natural” place for leisure and were an amenity that attracted and funneled more tourists to the state. Interstate 70’s modernization allowed recreational travelers to avoid contending with rougher terrain, much like chairlifts made skiing terrain accessible (Philpott).

A Coordinated Industry

The 1950s was a notable decade in tourism marketing development, marking a legitimized obsession with tourist spending, tourism research, and statewide tourism coordination efforts—objectives that still drive the tourism industry in Colorado today.

First, a relationship between advertising and tourism was cemented. To increase funding following a low allocation in fiscal year (FY) 1950–51, lobbyist Lew Cobb did his own statistical study about the correlation between advertising and tourist spending. Calling his findings “disturbing,” Cobb asserted that tourists will only go where advertisements called them to, drawing upon data from 1947–1950 that showed tourism spending decreased by 7% when the state advertising budget decreased (Philpott, 2013).

However, Cobb's report was misleading: the number of tourists had *increased* by almost a third during the three-year period. Thus, "Cobb's true concern, then, was not that people were avoiding Colorado sans advertising, but that tourists were spending too little once they got there" (Philpott, 2013, p. 342). In truth, the decrease in advertising hadn't caused a decrease in visitors, as Cobb claimed. Nonetheless, thanks to Cobb's far-reaching lobbying efforts (and framing of his research), interested parties, such as the automobile and airline industry, secured tourism promotion monies, and the state began "mailing thousands of brochures, 'lure books,' event calendars, hotel and motel listings, and colorful state highway maps to people all over the country" beginning in the mid '50s (Philpott, 2013, p. 51).

Along with the rise of tourism advertising came the rise of statewide tourism coordination in the form of industry gatherings and research. At these events and through market research, an "orthodoxy began to congeal on how to best present Colorado to tourists" (Philpott, 2013, p. 53). In 1951, the first Governor's Travel and Hospitality Conference (now the Governor's Conference on Tourism) was held in Denver, allowing statewide tourist associations such as the Hotel Association and local chambers of commerce to gather in one place. The early 1950s also saw coordinated efforts between universities and governments for tourism research insights. A University of Colorado professor, L.J. Crampon, coordinated with the Advertising and Publicity Committee and began measuring "where visitors were coming from, how they got to Colorado, what times of year they liked to come, what they did on their vacations, how they spent their money, and what they thought of the State" (p. 54). This type of research encouraged an

increased reliance on tourism "experts," and their research "became widely held as wisdom across Colorado" through its dissemination at the statewide Governor's Conference (Philpott, 2013, p. 54).

Philpott's (2013) work provided a rich foundation in understanding the physical and cultural remodeling of Colorado's landscape for consumer desire as well as the history of statewide tourism practices in the form of advertising, branding, conferences, and marketing research. However, little has been done to understand how tourism has evolved since the post-WWII era, at a time when the U.S. has increasingly privatized and de-regulated itself at state and national levels. In what ways have the objectives and structures that were put in place in the 1950s remained the same or evolved today? What was Colorado's brand and promise to consumers and stakeholders (citizens) in the 2010s? How has tourism spending dictated the office's present-day advertising campaigns and strategies? How has new media technology changed the tourism media landscape?

The Colorado Tourism Office

The CTO, which was created in 2000 to "promote Colorado as a tourism destination" ("CTO Overview") was a reboot of the Colorado Tourism Board from 1983 and is housed within the governor's office. The governing structure of the CTO is a web of board members and contracts that connects the state with private industries. The 15-member CTO Board of Directors is composed of representatives and tourism industries. In 2016, the industries represented on the board were the "Ski Industry," "Tourism-Related Transportation," "Cultural Events & Facility Groups," "Private Attractions and Casinos," "Destination Marketing Organizations" (DMOs), "the "Retail Industry," the

"Hotel, Motel & Lodging Industry," the "Restaurant Industry," and "Other Outdoor Recreation Industries." The governor appoints tourism industry members. In addition, there are two state Senators and two Representatives (both Democratic and Republican, as of 2016) appointed by the Speaker and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives as well as two at-large members. In 2016, when this research was conducted, one at-large member was from Vail Resorts, one of the most prominent ski resort operators in the state, which manages four major ski resorts that all reside along the main thoroughfare from Denver International Airport and Denver: Interstate 70. The other at-large member represented the Colorado Dude & Guest Ranch Association.

Since 2006, the CTO has received roughly $19 million annually to fund promotional activities, official Welcome Centers across the state, agritourism programs, the Official State Vacation Guide (OSVG), and matching grant programs with in-state destination marketing organizations (DMOs). While the smaller line items often change in type and scope, more than half of the budget has been consistently allocated to advertising contracts (see Colorado Office of the State Auditor, 2009, 2012, & 2017). The Office also uses the budget to employ five people tasked with visitor services, U.S. marketing, international marketing, and heritage and agritourism. In addition, there are three committees that the Office oversees (advertising, travel resources, and heritage and agritourism), with members from local DMOs, hotel associations, and ski industry representatives.

CTO Communication

The CTO communicates *outwards* to potential visitors as well as *inwards* to citizens, lawmakers, and tourism industry professionals and non-profit tourism bodies such as the Tourism Industry Association of Colorado (TIAC), which works to "create a unifying voice of the Colorado tourism industry" and the Colorado Association of Destination Management Organizations (CADMO). CADMO unites 25 cities and towns in Colorado as well as other business involved in the industry. Because of its statewide unifying effort and taxpayer-supported structure, the CTO works just as hard to market itself to Colorado citizens and lawmakers as it does to market the state to potential visitors. The CTO produces communications directed at in-state audiences, explaining their role and various programs to Colorado residents and what the Office calls "industry partners," Coloradans who work in the tourism industry. In other words, the Office expends significant energy convincing citizens and lawmakers to continue providing taxpayer money to their work. The impetus for these strategic communications emerge from contentious past battles over funding.

To Fund or Not to Fund (Tourism)

In 1983, when the Colorado Tourism Board was founded as the official government-run tourism entity, it was funded by a tourism tax of two-tenths of one percent on items such as food, lodging, and vehicle rentals. During the politically conservative taxpayer movement in the mid 1990s, however—which would led to the still controversial and complex Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR)—taxpayers voted to discontinue funding in 1993, entirely eliminating the $12 million budget for more than 5

years. Under TABOR, Colorado taxpayers now had the power to decide any tax increases proposed by the government, creating a new audience for tourism boosters in addition to lawmakers.

In 2000, supporters of the CTO found a way to circumvent TABOR, thanks in large part to a newer entry to the tourism trade: gambling. An official tourism governing body was reinstated under Title 24, Article 49.7, as the Colorado Tourism Office began to receive funding primarily from a gaming tax, unclaimed property tax, and the general fund. The Office was, as of 2016, under purview of the Governor's Office of Economic Development and International Trade with the directive to "guide, stimulate, and promote the coordinated, efficient, and beneficial development of tourism and travel in Colorado" (Colorado Office of the State Auditor, 2009). The Office is also required to operate Welcome Centers throughout the state, award contracts that ensure state funds are maximized, "gather and disseminate" information regarding the economic effect of tourism marketing, and create policies related to expenditures for travel and tourism development and promotion.

This funding history typically gets told from the industry's perspective, and Colorado's loss of funding is used by other tourism bodies throughout the U.S. as a scare tactic for what's to happen with the loss of tourism funds. Some of the biggest advocates for state-sponsored tourism funding hail from Longwoods International, an international market research consultation firm whose research focuses exclusively on measuring tourism spending. The CTO pays more than $130,000 for a report from the firm each year (Colorado Office, 2009) and was the company's first state tourism client in 1986

(Siegel, 2009). Bill Siegel, the Chairman and CEO of Longwoods International, has even given speeches called “The Rise and Fall of Colorado Tourism,” about Colorado’s “roller-coaster funding ride” (Siegel, 2009). Siegal talked about the 1993 schism in dramatic fashion: After explaining the shift in marketing strategies in the ’80s from Colorado as a regional to national location, Siegel claims that in the early 1990s, “disaster struck,” when an “anti-tax activist from Colorado Springs, Douglas Bruce, successfully spearheaded an amendment to the State’s Constitution called the Taxpayers Bill of Rights (TABOR), which required any new taxes or tax increases to be approved by state voters in a referendum” (p. 6). He continues:

> Bruce’s coup de grace was to argue that, if the rich ski resorts could afford over a million dollars to run a propaganda advertising campaign on behalf of the tourism tax, then surely they should not be lining up at the trough for public funds (Siegel, 2009).

In the 1990s, taxpayers agreed with Bruce and thus voted down tourism funds for more than five years. According to its own “tracking system,” Longwoods International reported that in the years that followed, Colorado lost $1.4 billion annually in tourism revenue and 30% of the domestic tourism market share (Siegel, 2009). Given the larger history that Philpott (2013) provided from the 1950s, the debate in the 1990s was almost

identical to the debate about tourism promotional funds in the 1950s. In both, tourism *advertising* was heralded as the only productive and beneficial use of tourism funds.[3]

Bruce Douglas's argument to defund tourism in the mid 1990s has continued to dictate the CTO's own discourse about the budget. In fact, the director from 2015 to 2020, Cathy Ritter, continued to reference the 1993 funding break in speeches and interviews in 2016, and other tourism offices across the country have used Colorado's funding disaster as a case study for their own tourism stories. Visit Florida and Visit Savannah, for instance, have used Colorado's 1993 funding battle as a warning for the status of their own tourism promotional funds.

Tourism Comes to Life

Colorado's visitor and spending numbers have not always been as successful as they have been since the tourism rush took hold in the mid 2010s. The 2008 recession slowed tourism throughout the country, threatening the tourism industry's reliance on consumer spending (Borko, 2018). The CTO's budget was also at risk, with the budget reduced to $12 million in 2011 (Calhoun, 2012). However, since the recession, the tourism industry in Colorado has grown by one-third, according to a study done by the University of Colorado Leeds School of Business (2018), and the budget has bounced back to $19 million despite threats to reduce it. Colorado's budget growth is consistent with other states: since the recession in 2008, tourism budgets in the U.S. have steadily

[3] Even as Colorado's tourism funding has seemingly stabilized since 2000, other states, such as Washington, have questioned whether tourism funding should be a governmental line item at all. Washington reinstated its tourism budget in 2018 after a post-recession elimination of 7 years.

increased from an average of $14.9 million in FY 2008–2009 to $18.9 million in FY 2016–2017, apart from a few states like Washington who temporarily eliminated their budget (Peltier, 2018).This post-recession success happened alongside the state's most successful advertising campaigns in 2012, *Come to Life.* The campaign by advertising agency Karsh Hagan marked an era in which tourism marketing and advertising campaigns and brands were exploding around the country.

Specifically in the Mountain West region, Colorado's tourism brand has evolved alongside states such as Utah and Wyoming, who have increasingly relied on tourism as an economic mainstay within the context of fragile but lucrative boom/bust cycles of extractive industries such as oil and gas (Philpott, 2013). These Mountain West states are competing to outspend and attract their versions of the ideal tourist by mining data about potential consumers, luring lifestyle journalists to go on public relations trips, and crafting their own unique brand stories. In order to keep pace, governments contract with private companies, such as advertising agencies, for the creation and distribution of promotional material. At the same time that Colorado has ridden the success of *Come to Life* since 2012, Utah has launched the *Mighty 5* campaign, and Wyoming's *Forever West* campaign from Denver-based advertising agency Barnhart has been wildly successful, according to the state tourism authority.

As the rise of tourism branding suggests, the portion of money spent on promotion has outweighed all other tourism expenditures. For instance, in FY 2011–2012, Colorado's tourism office spent approximately 90% of its budget on advertising, marketing, and public relations (Colorado Office of the State Auditor, 2012). As

expected, the CTO and local news outlets define the Office's success in relation to these promotional line items and subsequent return on investment, claiming, for instance, that Denver-based advertising agency Karsh Hagan's *Come to Life* campaign was the sole contributor to Colorado's current tourism rush (Wenzel, 2018). This assertion points to the normalization of public-private partnerships that define contemporary taxpayer-supported tourism authorities. Tourism, as a complex cultural and economic phenomenon, becomes defined and understood in relation to the success of an advertising campaign's ability to secure high-spending consumers. As Colorado's tourism budget steadily increased, Cathy Ritter, the appointed CTO director, continued to call on lawmakers and citizens to increase Colorado's budget to match those of competing states, who similarly have diverted more and more public money to tourism (Ritter, 2016).

With a complicated topic like tourism, there are many lines of inquiry that a scholar could take, but all the signs point to advertising. As evidenced by the history of tourism promotion in the 1950s and the state's investment in Colorado as a product to be consumed (Philpott, 2013), tourism without advertising is unimaginable for the CTO and their boosters. Private advertising methods and goals, such as product development, increased consumption, competition, and audience segmentation, are essential for Colorado's livelihood, according to the state. Within this framework, the Office must operate as a corporate, market-driven entity. The CTO's mandate and purpose are tourism promotion, and the biggest proportion of monies is directed towards advertising campaigns. For media studies, this provides a unique opportunity to study advertising

practices within a governmental office. What tools can media studies provide to begin understanding how modern tourism operates?

Methods of Inquiry

My theoretical orientation for answering the question, "Who is Colorado's ideal tourist?" is critical media studies. Drawing upon British cultural studies, a critical approach to media maintains that media must be understood within the wider cultural, political, and economic social systems in which they are produced. By centering power, identity, political economy, and culture, there is an "intrinsically critical and political dimension" to critical media studies (Kellner, 2008). Cultural studies, in other words, is a "political project," that connects academic inquiry with "the ways in which power operates, the ranges of sites upon which power is constituted, [and] the mechanisms through which power is distributed throughout society" (Turner, 2005, p. 197). Drawing upon cultural studies' focus on the intersections of media and identity, I focused these questions of power on race and class specifically. I drew upon Stuart Hall's work on representation, race, and ethnicity by foregrounding the way in which tourism media are complicit in creating and sustaining discourses of race. More specifically, I approached tourism media by paying particular attention to how it intersects with racism and classism.

Therefore, power and how it is exercised was a constant question driving the *Ideal Tourist.* In constructing the ideal tourist, who is privileged, who is not, and why? As Turner (2005) explains, "cultural studies analysis is aimed towards a particular end—that of understanding the ways in which power relations are regulated, distributed and

deployed within industrial societies" (p. 17). Therefore, I attempt to understand how power is created, distributed, maintained, or contested through the construction of the ideal tourist within tourism media. In the section that follows, I disclose my positionality and relation to the subject before detailing how my research design fits within critical media studies' epistemologies.

Positionality

Before detailing my method, it is important to disclose my relation to the subject of this dissertation. My interest in Colorado tourism derives from my status as a 25-year resident of the state and frequent local tourist to ski areas, state parks, hot springs, and other tourist attractions. My taxes go directly into the state budget, which allocates millions of dollars to support the industry each year. I have both benefited from and paid for Colorado's tourism initiatives. In addition, I worked for the state tourism office for 3 years. I first worked as an intern for the CTO's marketing division in 2011 while completing my Bachelor of Science in journalism from the University of Colorado-Boulder. Following the internship, I worked with a company contracted by the CTO to write content articles for the vacation guide and official website.

At that time, I did not think about the type of visitor that the state office was valuing. That is, I wrote articles for "young urban families," not critically analyzing that this was code for White, rich people who were "cool" (as cool as the word "cool" permits, that is). As an intern for the tourism office, I sat in request for proposal (RFP) presentations where advertising agencies from across the country pitched their strategies and creative talents to the CTO decision makers. While I was often taken aback by the

glitz and glamour of modern-day Mad Men, I did not consider the definitive type of person, activity, and location that these advertising agencies assumed and perpetuated.

What's more, I possess immense privilege within my own state both as a tourist and White settler. As a cis-gender, middle-to-upper class White woman, I have never felt like I wasn't welcome to any tourist destination and have never faced discrimination during my time as a tourist. Rather, I have been the benefactor of tourist experiences made for my preferences. I have directly benefited from the cultural, political, economic and physical settlement of European Americans in the region. My race and socioeconomic status have given me free rein to explore and settle within Colorado with ease.

My own race and class privilege as White and affluent allowed me to give myself problematic permission to be comfortable and not see Colorado tourism, or my practice as a Colorado tourist, as a project contributing to white supremacy. Critical race theory and whiteness studies scholars such as Kwame Harrison (2013)—with whose work I engage in Chapter 2—showed me that racialized assumptions and problematic tourist practices have become so normalized that they seem common sense: the defining characteristic of hegemony. What Harrison's work and that of others has shown me is how tourism is a system of practices that uphold whiteness and work alongside more visible forms of racial discrimination. This became even more visible in 2016 (while working on this project), when White supremacy was given a more prominent platform in mainstream discourse. But as my research and the work of countless scholars and activists has proven, racism did not just "appear" following the 2016 U.S. election; White

supremacy has been an underlying logic of Western settlement and is a common logic in the tourism industry as well.

In *Toxic Tourism,* Phaedra Pezzullo disclosed her own enjoyment of tourism, thus further dissolving the separation between scholar/activist and even scholar/tourist. In using the word tourist (rather than traveler or academic), Pezzullo challenged the assumption that "tourists" are ignorant, classless, or a part of the "masses." Tourists have long been associated with low culture, but Pezzullo places them as valued actants of resistance through her identification as one. In line with this thinking, I use the term tourist and traveler interchangeably and fully identify myself as a tourist within the state in which I was born. Tourism does not always mean you need to cross state, city, or even country lines, and recognizing tourism practices within our own home might bring more light to the way in which tourism intersects with the everyday, especially in places experiencing tourism rushes like Colorado.

The following section details the research I undertook in order to peel back the curtain on Colorado's state-run tourism industry and my own assumptions about it. It is important to note that these methods were what was available to me as a graduate scholar with limited resources, time, and geographic proximity to my subject. However, at the same time, my fellowship monies and previous position provided me access to the tourism office that many are not afforded.

Research Design

The research design for *The Ideal Tourist* takes significant inspiration from Kellner's explanation of a cultural studies approach to media studies. Kellner (2008)

called for researchers to take a multiperspectival approach to media texts by tying together textual analysis, political economy, and reception for a more "comprehensive approach" (p. 15). Lutz and Collins's (1993) *Reading National Geographic* serves as an ideal example of multiperspectival approaches to media. In their study on *National Geographic* magazines, they took three perspectives: 1) production, 2) the reading and its relation to historical or cultural context, and 3) reader or audience response. By putting these three components in conversation with each other, they explain how, together, both readers and producers of *National Geographic* create racial and cultural differences from an American viewpoint, exposing the values and norms of American politics and culture (Lutz & Collins, 1993). Using Kellner and Lutz and Collins as models for a multi-perspectival approach to studying tourism media in Colorado, I researched the content, the audiences, and the production and circulation of tourism media. To be more specific, I wanted to understand how the "ideal tourist" has been fashioned through tourism reports, advertising campaigns, audiences, communication from the Colorado Tourism Office, and strategic plans. In so doing, I engaged with qualitative research through textual analysis and ethnography and used triangulation between my data sets in order to deepen my analysis.

Qualitative Research

In order to briefly elaborate on the characteristics of qualitative research, I turn to Brennen (2013), a self-described cultural materialist who has positioned herself alongside cultural theorist Raymond Williams and British Cultural Studies more broadly. Qualitative researchers are ultimately interested in "alternative notions of knowledge,"

which Brennen argues is a reaction against positivism (2013, p. 2). Ontologically speaking, positivists claim that reality is knowable through a scientific process and testing of this "reality" is possible without the intrusion of human bias. On the other hand, cultural theorists let values and meaning dominate their research process. Accordingly, there are multiple "little *t*s," or truths, rather than one knowable Truth. Qualitative researchers rely on "discourse rather than fact, meaning over truth" (Coleman, 2013, p. 265).

For Brennen (2013) and Coleman's (2013) work on African-American audiences and identity, communication is a cultural practice in which issues of power are at stake. Identity and power are negotiated through the cultural practice of communication. Brennen put forth critical theory and constructivism as an ontological paradigm that considers reality and truth to be shaped by historical, cultural, racial, gendered, and economic contexts. Accordingly, these researchers valued critiques of racism, sexism, oppression, and inequality. They were interested in social change and equality in the process of conducting qualitative research (Brennen, 2013; Heimtun & Morgan, 2012).

The complex nature of qualitative research and cultural approaches to communication make the research process more difficult to describe compared to the process of positivist researchers. Brennen (2013) argued that qualitative research is messy, time consuming, and "difficult to get right" (p. 1). Similarly, Coleman (2013) argued that messiness often comes at a cost for qualitative researchers; they are often seen as engaging in a "free for all" and have no methodological system or rigor. In response to the messiness of qualitative research, Brennen and Miles and Huberman

(1994) argued that transparency about method, theoretical orientation, and strategies are paramount. Miles and Huberman observed that there are no shared conventions for explaining the research methods used for qualitative studies; however, that does not mean researchers should not start the process of creating conventions. These authors proposed data analysis and documentation throughout the research process. Therefore, I have taken careful consideration to explain my exact methods both in this introductory chapter and in each case study chapter that follows.

Triangulation

Triangulation is the use of multiple methods in order to increase a more "in-depth understanding of social experience" (Brennen, 2013, p. 5). For instance, triangulation can utilize multiple data sources such as interviewing, observation, and data analysis (Coleman, 2013). The goal is not to verify, but rather to give more insight and depth to the object of analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) expanded the notion of triangulation beyond data sources. In their theory that triangulation is a "way of life," they explain that triangulation can happen between data source (persons, times, places), method (observation, interview, document), theory, and data type (qualitative text, recordings, quantitative data). All of these areas should complement each other, rather than compete.

Observation of a research topic must happen from at least two different vantage points (Flick et al., 2004). In line with Miles and Huberman (1994), Flick et al. (2004) explain that there can be triangulation of data (i.e. linking photos and interviews together), methodological triangulation (i.e., ethnography and analysis of photos), or triangulation of theories. It is important to note that each method has a different

theoretical background and multiple theories can bring new insights to the data. Triangulation helps with convergence rather than confirmation. That is, triangulation is not intended to confirm what your data set already has but to extend the depth of knowledge for analysis. Coleman (2013), Flick et al., and Miles and Huberman described triangulation *within* qualitative research, demonstrating the way in which mixed methods research is not just working across qualitative and quantitative methods, but within each respective research camp.

Mixed Methods

Mixed methods, insofar as combining qualitative and quantitative together, is considered progressive in tourism literature. For instance, Heimtun and Morgan (2012) conducted a study on midlife women on vacation as an example of bridging the gap between the two paradigms and "proposing paradigm peace" to *Tourist Studies* readers. They engaged with feminist methodologies of reflexive research that works to break down the barrier between those researching and those being researched. The qualitative aspect of the study was interviewing, while the quantitative component was a survey. These researchers called this a "transformative" paradigm, or a paradigm that aims to use research as an emancipatory mechanism that is constantly interested in power and justice. Similarly, Mertens (2007) used a "transformative paradigm" that centered power and privilege at every step of the research process. Mertens argued that mixed-methods research does a better job with "depth of understanding" on a topic and accounted for multiple lived realities rather than a methodology process that privileges those in power. Mertens also introduced an "axiological" component, which is an assertion that every

person be treated with respect and the research work toward a social justice agenda. The articulation of power that Mertens (2007) and Heimtun and Morgan (2012) called attention to is a foundational concept in critical media studies work; however, it is important to note that in tourism literature and in the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research,* mixed methods often incorporates a sense of social justice and societal transformation through use of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The Ideal Tourist was triangulated by method, theory, and data source in order to get a more in-depth understanding of state-run tourism media in Colorado. Each method, data source, and theory have "respective limitations" (Flick et al., 2004); therefore, I combined textual analysis with ethnography in order to get a better understanding of how the ideal tourist is conjured by the CTO.

Time Period of Study

Tourism in Colorado is constantly evolving. Like many governmental offices, there are always new initiatives, directors, and objectives. Therefore, I limited the scope of my project to 2012–2017, during the first 5 years of the *Come to Life* campaign, due to noticeable changes in the tourism landscape that unfolded during this time, including a re-branding strategy, leadership changes within the CTO, major population and political shifts in Colorado, and the landmark decision by voters to legalize marijuana.

Come to Life

Following the tourism industry's recovery from the recession, the *Come to Life* campaign, which first aired in 2012 and has continued through 2020, followed a campaign with advertising agency MMG Worldwide from 2007 called "Let's Talk

Colorado," which was ridiculed in local media outlets such as Denver's *Westword* for its "naptime" vibe (Calhoun, 2010*;* Giantasio, 2007). The new campaign and partnership in 2012 signified a big change in the Office's approach to advertising by means of a new agency of record and fresh content for tourism advertising.

Leadership Changes

Between 2012 and 2017, the CTO also underwent significant leadership changes. In 2015, Cathy Ritter was appointed by then-Governor John Hickenlooper as the new CTO Director, replacing the former director of four years, Al White. One of her first projects was to create a new strategic plan, *The Colorado Roadmap.* The *Roadmap* process included online surveys for tourism workers and residents, listening sessions across the state for citizens and tourism professionals, and "extensive analysis of existing CTO research" such as the annual Longwoods International report, which highlighted demographic travel trends in Colorado (CTO, 2017b, p. 3).

Population Growth

At the same time that Colorado has broken tourism records and introduced a new branding campaign, the state, particularly the Front Range area near Denver and Boulder, has exploded in population and economic growth. As major businesses such as Google have established headquarters in the area, property values have increased, benefitting some while forcing others out (Wolf, 2018) and becoming what the *New York Times* labeled in 2016 as a "millennial magnet" city. In the Front Range Urban Corridor, known as "Front Range" (the easternmost section of the Rocky Mountains that encapsulates Colorado's most populous region ranging from Pueblo north to Cheyenne, Wyoming,

with dense cities such as Colorado Springs and Denver in between), residents travel to Colorado's high country for skiing and other outdoor recreation; therefore, the tourism rush I describe here includes this recent migration of permanent residents to the state. In addition, many baby boomers are retiring in Colorado mountain towns such as Steamboat Springs, Winter Park, and Breckenridge, causing an increase in the 65-plus population in those areas (Svaldi, 2018). The issues surrounding growth in the Front Range, such as traffic, natural resources, and housing prices, are similar to those related to the tourism rush in popular spots such as Summit County, Colorado, home to popular towns and resorts such as Breckenridge (Blevins, 2016c). However, this recent population may be on the decline, signaling that Denver has reached its capacity and is firmly established as a city only accessible to high earners (Svaldi, 2016; Wolf, 2018).

Shifting Political Landscape

Colorado also reflected parts of the changing political landscape in the U.S. during the 2010s. Formerly a Republican stronghold, Colorado remained blue in the 2016 Presidential election, as it has since 2008, and voted solidly Democrat for the 2018 midterms. However, as the University of Colorado's Anand Sokhey pointed out, "it would be wrong to say Colorado speaks with a unified, liberal voice" (Marshall, 2019). Instead, researchers argue that Colorado's hue is purple, and constituents are still divided along political lines for topics such as fracking and religious freedom (Marshall, 2019). Whereas Colorado's Front Range is decidedly blue, more rural areas surrounding it on both the west and east are majority Republican.

Marijuana Legalization

Perhaps the most publicized political and cultural milestone between 2012 and 2017, and one that has intersected directly with tourism, was marijuana legalization for recreational purposes. After legalization in 2013, cannabis tourism in the form of dispensaries and tours popped up in popular towns such as Breckenridge and Denver. At the time, I worked as a replier to emails from Colorado.com visitors and fielded numerous angry emails from locals and tourists about legalization (e.g., "we can smell your marijuana smoke across the border in Wyoming!"). The Netflix documentary *High Profits* attempted to document the issues surrounding legalization and the arguments about "family-friendly" main streets in Breckenridge, acting as a microcosmic media text for some of the current and future concerns that marijuana legalization posed for some tourism industry members.

Marijuana legalization, alongside the changes in the CTO leadership, the population boom in Colorado, and the celebrated *Come to Life* campaign, created an ideal juncture for studying tourism media.

Methods and Data Sets

The Ideal Tourist utilizes textual analysis of CTO's marketing, industry communications materials, market research on select television network and magazine audiences, and ethnography. Through the process of using emergent coding on tourism reports, policy, and advertising campaigns from the CTO, I have identified what Colorado tourism decision makers and marketers have deemed to be as the ideal tourist and what they expect of them during their visit. In the following section, I detail each

method while also explaining various challenges posed by my research design to introduce more transparency into the research process. Finally, I explain the use of metaphors as a method.

Textual Analysis

My data sets for textual analysis were both quantitative and qualitative. I used quantitative research to document occurrences of and the screen time given to certain identities in advertisements, audience demographics, economic impact numbers, and the specific phrases used in tourism-related documents. For the qualitative sources, I used emergent coding as a method to identify various themes. Textual analysis is a method associated with cultural studies and differs from content analysis in that it is interested in questions of power. In my process of deploying textual analysis, I drew upon van Dijk's (1993) explanation of critical discourse analysis as "a detailed description, explanation and critique of the ways dominant discourses (indirectly) influence such socially shared knowledge, attitudes and ideologies" (p. 258–259). Therefore, I describe the texts I engage with, use emergent coding to identify themes, articulate meaning, and theorize how they influence ideologies and practices of tourism in Colorado.

***Come to Life* Advertising Campaign**. To begin my research, I analyzed the most visual, tourist-facing media: the *Come to Life* advertising campaign. Created by Karsh Hagan in 2012, *Come to Life* is now in its 7th year, indicating its mass appeal to Colorado tourism boosters and those outside Colorado. In 2015, the CTO won the "best U.S. state tourism bureau award" from the Travvy Awards for the campaign (Blevins, 2015). Featuring popular outdoor tourism landmarks such as Bridal Veil Falls in Telluride or

Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs, the campaign asks tourists to "come to life" and "forget that spreadsheets exist" by way of Colorado's vast landscape. I conducted my textual and document analysis of *Come to Life* within the context of environmental cultural studies, drawing upon William Cronon and other theorists to understand the cultural construct of "wilderness" or nature in the commercials. This put the ideal tourist in relation to its historical and cultural context. Lutz and Collins (1993) completed this step by coding photos in relation to U.S. policy or cultural climate at the time of the photograph. They analyzed *National Geographic* production during WWI, WWII, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War and found correlations between which places were photographed and U.S. involvement in certain areas. Although I will not expound on the findings here, my textual analysis method similarly used the historical context of tourism, audience studies, and representation.

Inward Communication. However, because the CTO also communicates inwards to Colorado's elected officials, news media, and those in the tourism industry, I also triangulated CTO-funded research reports, strategic plans, and communication partners from the CTO director, Cathy Ritter, with Colorado tourism industry. "Industry partners" is a term the CTO uses to describe those in the Colorado tourism industry who interact with the Office. These interactions can be through taking advantage of a free tourism-related business listing on Colorado.com, buying media placements in the CTO's tourist publications, or providing feedback to the Office through other means.

As previously mentioned, the state has long contracted with private research firms for data on traveler profiles and the success of advertising campaigns (Philpott, 2013).

Longwoods International is a private tourism research company that has been contracted by the Colorado Tourism Office to report on information such as demographics of visitors, geographic areas with the most spending, average overnight stays, and other quantitative data. Their annual report is utilized throughout this dissertation in order to report on visitor data, supposed economic impact, and dominant trip segments, such as ski tourism. The other main report the CTO pays for each year is the annual Dean Runyan "Economic Impact of Travel" report. Dean Runyan has been tracking traveler spending in Colorado's various regions and travel segments since 1996, focusing primarily on overnight travel, given its higher traveler spending yield. Lastly, the CTO has partnered with Strategic Marketing & Research Insights (SMARI) to measure the effectiveness of advertising campaigns and the perceptions of Colorado after marijuana legalization to see whether it impacted travel. SMARI uses research methods that attempt to figure out what percentage of viewers that have seen a *Come to Life* advertisement have booked a vacation and spent money in the state.

Ethnography

I used Geertz's (2008) definition of ethnography as "thick description" and attempted to understand tourism media in the physical spaces in which media was discussed and, at times, enacted. Alternatively, Brennen (2013) defined ethnography as "the qualitative method of observing, talking to and interacting with people in their natural environments; that is where they live, play, and/or work" (p. 160). The goal of ethnography is to uncover patterns by observation. Ethnographers are interested in the mundane: they are attuned to voice inflection, seating arrangements, group dynamics, and

context. These observations allow them to further understand experience in a particular place and time.

However, according to those attuned to spatiality and performance, observations should go beyond visual observations. Stewart (1996), for instance, explained that "the space on the side of the road" is a metaphor for understanding how social codes are narrativized. Similarly, Pezzullo (2009) explained how "embodying the visual" is a better description for understanding tourism rather than "gazing." Both of these scholars were heavily influenced by the work of de Certeau (1984). He pushed forth the idea of the embodied, the performative, and the negotiation of space. Walking, for instance, is a rhetorical act that can often contest the prescribed uses for a place. In other words, the view from the city at the top of the World Trade Center misses the footsteps, movements, and spatial practices from a street view. Moving outside of a linguistic way of knowing, Certeau focused on "pedestrian speech acts" that point to resistance, mediation, and appropriation of space (p. 97). This concept of spatiality is important for ethnographers to contend with.

In ethnography, there has always been negotiation regarding the self as an observer. As cultural theorists such as Brennen have mentioned, reflexivity in the sense of understanding the relationship between the observer and those being observed is paramount. Coleman (1996) explained in her methodological appendices of *Say it Loud!* that there are often several constraints throughout the research process such as time, resources, geography, or safety. One could add to this list "previous research or knowledge." For instance, Lutz and Collins (1993) wrote specifically about images of

Pacific Islanders in *National Geographic* because one of the researchers had previous knowledge on that region. This highlights the ways in which previous knowledge, access, and other messy and uncontrolled factors dictate research directions. Therefore, I embraced what I knew from my previous experiences at or with the CTO as entry points into my research.

Sites of Observation. I was confronted with several research constraints in the summer of 2016, when I began my research in Colorado. In particular, I was constrained by geography and resources. Whereas ideally I would have liked access to the production of the *Come to Life* advertising campaign or to the creators for interviews, I was not able to secure any contacts. Instead, I accessed the CTO where I could at three short-term observation/ethnographic sites. For the first two sites, I observed Listening Sessions for the Colorado Roadmap initiative. In 2017, the CTO board of directors approved the *Colorado Tourism Roadmap*, a state-wide strategic plan that outlined the CTO's vision for tourism in Colorado (Colorado, 2017b). The Office contracted with Nichols Tourism Group and the Radcliffe Company to lead the strategic planning process in 2016. The plan was the first major project by then-newly-appointed CTO director, Cathy Ritter.

Three major milestones in the *Colorado Roadmap* process informed my dissertation: 1) Two listening sessions were run by the strategic planning process team in popular ski destinations in Colorado, Breckenridge in June 2016 and Telluride in July 2016. These sessions were framed by the state as opportunities for citizens to provide input to the CTO. During this time, I also tracked a short-lived initiative by the marijuana tourism industry as they attempted to participate in the CTO's listening sessions. The

Roadmap listening sessions were public events during the *Roadmap* process. They were advertised mainly to tourism industry professionals through *Colorado Connect;* however, the time and date were also announced in *The Denver Post* the day before the first session. There were seven in total, and I was able to attend two. Both were in or around mountain resorts.

2) My second site of observation was at the 2016 Colorado Governor's Conference on Tourism ("GovCon") in Breckenridge, Colorado, in October. I received a scholarship from the Colorado Tourism Office to attend the conference as a researcher. Philpott (2013) called "GovCon" a "who's who" in the tourism profession for Colorado. The conference began in May of 1951, just as Colorado was beginning to coordinate its tourism promotional efforts statewide (Philpott, 2013). Participants come together to create shared visions for the future of Colorado tourism. At this conference, the Colorado Tourism Office was going to announce its findings on the *Roadmap* listening sessions. Therefore, I found it necessary to attend to correlate my observations in the listening sessions to the final report. This type of strategic planning is commonplace at the Governor's Conference. Philpott wrote that in the 1950s, the conference and state advertisements were to "develop a comprehensive, consistent, statewide strategy for building up the tourist trade" (p. 53).

And, 3) I was informed by the final published *Colorado Tourism Roadmap* strategic plan. The *Colorado Tourism Roadmap* is a state tourism manifesto of sorts that heralds the importance of tourism while setting a path forward to increase traveler spending, mobilize Coloradans as a "sales force" for the tourism office, justify state

funding, and indirectly address concerns about overcrowding, highway traffic, and climate change.

My research question at these sites, while still interested in the ideal tourist, pivoted to understanding and observing the process and practices used to create the *Roadmap.* I used traditional ethnographic methods of observation while also completing field notes. I did not participate in the listening sessions and only observed. I did not record them because I was not able to give all participants my IRB consent form. However, given that these sessions were public, I did not need to gain permission for observation and research. Therefore, I used field notes as a way to observe. I created summaries and reflections the day after the listening sessions.

Place-Based. Some theorists have argued that rather than approaching issues through disciplinary frameworks and "lenses," perhaps it is time to take a more issue-oriented, or regionally influenced, approach to research. For instance, LeMenager's (2013) *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century* deployed a method of "ground-truthing," a term coined by Matt Coolidge, in order to construct a new, influential narrative about oil. She permitted her experiences and findings to organically narrate her argument, rather than putting the argument at the forefront. For communication scholars, this was an important departure from the constant focus on nebulous and abstracted communication texts. Situating research through place allows for a more poignant critique of communication systems. It "grounds" communication research to the lived experiences of humans and nonhumans. Although communication has welcomed the "material turn," there is more room to conduct research that breaks free

of canonical approaches. Coolidge agreed, stressing that "going physically to visit the sites is crucial, because otherwise you're dealing with things of more of a representative and conceptual nature" (LeMenager, 2014).

Metaphors

Miles and Huberman (1994) argued that in the research process metaphors can serve as "data-reducing devices" (p. 252). Because of metaphors' ability to "unite reason and imagination," they allow the researcher to step back and see more overarching themes, patterns, and conclusions (p. 252). Throughout my project, I utilize metaphors such as a stage (inspired by performance studies scholarship) and gold panning to create large-scale and visual explanations of how tourism media operate.

Taken as a whole, I frame *The Ideal Tourist* within a metaphor of a gold rush. I use the gold rush to draw parallels between two industries that have been at the forefront of Colorado's dominant economic and cultural identity for more than 100 years and have had major environmental impacts on the physical landscape of Colorado (Philpott, 2013). Gold mining and gold rush narratives were aligned with the United States disenfranchisement of Native Americans, settlement, and long history of extractive practices for the purposes of wealth that have their roots in the very towns that are Colorado's cash cows. Tourism and mining are interconnected in most of Colorado's popular tourist towns: destinations such as Aspen and Breckenridge were originally entirely dependent on extractive industries for economic stability, and the roads leading to such places have molded the landscape in favor of tourist desires (Philpott, 2013). Now that some of these towns are struggling to transition to a new economic driver in light of

extractive boom and bust cycles, there are lessons to be learned from gold, or tourism, rush narratives. Just as the gold rush benefited a small handful of people, the tourism rush in Colorado has been oriented to the benefit of tourism professionals, overriding some of the problems to which tourism contributes, such as housing affordability and climate change. Comparisons with the gold rush help me as a researcher approach tourism as yet another iteration of settler ideology, which is continually evolving in its capacity to accrue environmental privilege and state power.

Literature Review: Situating Tourism Media

In 2017, I presented my latest seminar paper about my tourism research at a tourism industry conference in Vancouver, Canada. Assuming the conference would align with my research, I ignored all the red flags indicating it was a conference peddling a predatory journal: a nearly 100% acceptance rate despite not having a paper or abstract and aggressive email marketing. Wanting to avoid an academic/professional dichotomy, I listened in interest to the many industry researchers and tourism destination employees who praised the many merits of tourism. It reminded me of my days back at the CTO as an intern, where I listened to the various marketing and advertising strategies for the state. Agritourism and slow tourism were the new "hot trends" in the industry, and smartphones were increasingly positioned as tools for millennial engagement.

What I was not expecting at this tourism conference was the lack of self-reflexivity among the presentations. Tourism, a famously complex phenomena, was presented unquestionably as "good." After my presentation about the ways in which the CTO constructs and privileges the ideal tourist, only one person wanted to speak to me

afterwards. She was a researcher in Mexico City and came to the conference to present an exposé on corruption from international tourism governing bodies such as UNESCO. We soon found kinship in talking about the ways in which tourism operates as a governing body by placing value on various ethnicities, races, and genders. We bonded over the aggressive responses to our research from audience members: many did not want to hear that their own industry could be complicit in discrimination. My presentation of the "ideal tourist" aligned with her critique that government-supported tourism bodies have done more harm than good to Indigenous peoples of Mexico. However, these critiques are often discarded in the name of the economy.

I bring up this story as a way to situate my project within scholarly literature. My project is interdisciplinary and engaged with disciplines such as critical media studies, leisure and tourism studies, literature, performance studies, sociology, and the environmental humanities. Most directly, my research contributes to a small but growing body of research examining the intersection of communication and tourism; by focusing on domestic tourism audiences and a state-supported tourism authority, *The Ideal Tourist* fills knowledge gaps in topics that have been underdeveloped or nonexistent in tourism-focused communication research.

The following literature review will give credence to the field of tourism studies as well as subsets of other fields, such as communication studies and performance, who have engaged with tourism as an object of study. I propose a study of tourism media through a critical lens, highlighting the way in which tourism media intersects with power. However, tourism media is unique within the field of communication studies

given its reliance on *place.* Therefore, I draw upon the environmental humanities in order to argue that place-based scholarship allows for a more interdisciplinary study. Media studies together with environmental humanities helps explain how promotional tourism discourses constitute meaning around identity and place. Given the climate crisis, I call on media studies scholars to more directly engage with the budding field of environmental humanities.

Why Study Tourism?

One of the main tenets of cultural studies is a dismantling of the high/low culture binary by expanding what are conserved credible cultural texts that circulate meaning (Kellner, 2008). Cultural theorists contend that the everyday, the popular, and what has been deemed as "low culture" are important sites for understanding where and how domination and resistance are exercised. For instance, rather than looking at traditional "high culture" texts, audience studies scholar Radway (1983) placed importance on romance novels and cultural practice that is traditionally trivialized. As Raymond Williams (2011) asserted, "culture is ordinary."

Much like popular culturists have argued, tourism researchers maintain that leisure has been overlooked and trivialized by scholars (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Critical tourism researchers argue, for instance, that "by considering the typical objects of the tourist gaze one can use these to make sense of elements of the wider society with which they are contrasted" (p. 3). Löfgren (2002) suggested that we think of tourism studies as a type of "cultural laboratory … in which fantasy has become an important social practice"

(p. 6–7). The laboratory metaphor is beneficial in that it helps scholars justify tourism as their object of study.

Tourism Studies

Tourism studies wears multiple hats and therefore encompasses very polarizing perspectives. One such perspective is that of "policy led and industry sponsored work," which does not account for cultural or critical critique (Franklin & Crang, 2001). This perspective is what I encountered at the conference mentioned at the beginning of this literature review. Franklin and Crang (2001) explained this, and other "troubles with tourism," in their introductory editorial piece for the *Tourist Studies* journal in 2001—a time when the critical aspect of the field was just gaining traction. While Franklin and Crang (2001) rightly accused industry-focused research of not having the "tools necessary to [analyze] and theorize the complex cultural and social processes that have unfolded," their most poignant critique of tourism studies was the field's tendency to become too focused on economics (p. 5). On the other hand, critical tourist scholars stray away from an economics-only approach to tourism and incorporate a less industry- and business-focused approach.

Critical Tourism Studies

Rather than just "following the money," critical tourism studies allows consideration of the more nuanced and less straightforward aspects of power, particularly in relation to leisure and pleasure. In line with such notions of a home/leisure relationship, several tourism sociologists have argued that tourism serves as a type of quest for authenticity (see MacCannell, 1973, or O'Reilly, 2005). Urry and Larsen (2011)

argued that it is not merely authenticity that tourists are after, but instead tourism represents "a difference between one's normal place of residence/work and the object of the tourist gaze" (p. 13). In other words, it is a break from the mundane. This break gives privileged insight into the societal power dynamics that are materialized through tourism.

The Tourist Gaze

Urry's (1992) "gaze" is a well-known theoretical framework in tourism literature. Urry categorized different tourist gazes, such as the romantic or collective gaze, which "are structured according to class, gender, ethnicity and age" (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 3). Most pertinent to my research for Colorado tourism was the romantic gaze. given the *Come to Life* campaign (as I'll explain in Chapter Two's focus on wilderness scenery). Romantic gazers, in their individual and spiritual tendencies, seek "the deserted beach, the empty hilltop, the uninhabited forest, the uncontaminated mountain stream" in their tourist activities (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 19). This gaze is particularly useful when thinking about the conjunction between communication and tourism, given that they are "endlessly used in marketing and advertising tourist sites, especially within the 'west'" (p. 19). Urry (2005) has attended to the role of media and claims "images of place are fundamental to the symbolic branding of many goods and services" (p. 23). Additionally, he pointed to the "visual economy of nature" and in doing so called attention to the role of media in tourism practices. However, although Urry slightly engaged with communication, his most influential contribution to tourism was the concept of the tourist gaze. Urry's gaze is useful insofar that it helps identify just one aspect among many in

tourism and provides researchers a solid framework for analysis. However, it tends to focus on the individual rather than larger systematic influences in tourism.

Tourism studies also tends towards international travel and studies that navigate intercultural exchanges (Moufakkir, 2011). Drawing upon Edward Said's concept of "Orientalism" (1978), "Othering" and the relationship between Us/Them (tourist/local) is a prevalent approach in the field. What are not as common, however, are environmental topics. Although concerned with travel, which is inherently concerned with "place," the field skirts around environmental concerns except when they relate to ecotourism. For instance, the special issue on "Materialities of Tourisms" from the *Tourist Studies* journal, although engaging with "things," failed to correct this oversight. A bright point, however, was Gibson's (2014) research on the Texan cowboy boot. He echoed my concerns that tourism studies focus on Urry's (1992) "gazes" as opposed to environmental ethics and contended that "in the case of cowboy boots, tourists come into grizzly contact with an assortment of nonhuman animals, feeling their dead skins, smelling them, *wearing* them" (Gibson, 2014, p. 293–294; emphasis original). He questioned the power humans exert over animals for material objects and prioritized ethics in relation to the nonhuman world. Gibson's (2014) engagement with nonhuman agency serves as an example of how more environmental work can be done; nonetheless, the field also has a long way to go in their engagement with critical perspectives that foreground race, class, place, gender, and sexuality.

Given the "poverty of tourism theory" to which Franklin and Crang (2001) drew attention in the early 2000s, I turned to other disciplines such as environmental

communication, performance, and sociology in which scholars have engaged with tourism as a *topic* of their inquiry. These scholars have used the theoretical foundations and insights provided by their own disciplines and applied them to various tourist sites. By using knowledge produced by these disciplinary projects about tourism in places as far away as New Zealand, I was able to have a more holistic approach to studying tourism media in Colorado, and each influenced the framework and findings of my research.

Tourism and Communication

Environmental communication literature tends towards an international focus, like tourism studies. Articles about tourism in the primary journal, *Environmental Communication,* are few and far between; however, they are all concerned with power, whether of humans over place or humans over nonhuman entities. For instance, Ann Marie Todd (2010) explored the idea of "anthropocentric distance" in *National Geographic* depictions of Africa, arguing that images place the visitor, or the outsider, at the center of the images and render Africa as "invisible." Tema Milstein (2011) looked at transnational wildlife tourism, considering the ways pointing and naming mediate the tourist experience. Whale tourism, she argues, is an individual experience, highly dependent on Western conceptions of nature that "generally does not include challenges to one's lifestyle or deep questioning of the world as one knows it" (Milstein, 2011, p. 20).

Discourse, Communication and Tourism (Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005) represented an important development in the correlative relationship between tourism

studies and discourse. Expounding this nexus has allowed researchers to "explore how tourism and travel create their own systems of signification, providing keys for the construction of self and others" (p. 2). The book correspondingly leaned toward international contexts; however, the edited volume began to showcase the way in which discourse is embedded and mutually constitutive with tourism. The methodological commitment of the text resides in Foucault-inspired critical discourse analysis similar to that of my own textual analysis, which is a common method in critical media studies given its attention to "the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 269). For instance, in a chapter on alternative travel in India, Davidson (2005) claimed that although alternative travel touts an ethos of self-awareness and sensitivity to poverty, a "traveler's motivations, meanings and actions are grounded in the broader structures of power, economic, and material interests" (p. 30). Similarly, O'Reilly (2005) argued that the backpacker identity, although "politically liberal," is dependent on "globalizing forces" in order to be actualized (p. 154). In other words, a traveler's ability to be mobile and claim a backpacker status while traveling is enmeshed in privilege and power.

In line with this thinking, a central theme of *Discourse, Communication, and Tourism* (2005) is identity, even beyond the trendy topic of backpacking. Pritchard and Morgan (2005) used Stuart Hall's ideas to situate the relationship between visual communications and identity politics. Through the process of analyzing early 20th century comic postcards from Wales, Pritchard and Morgan wrote:

> Visual images place an increasingly central role in the ongoing making and remaking of places and identities. Their constant privileging of certain stories and narratives contribute to particular definitions of identity, history and community. (p. 71)

The authors went on to say that the absence of certain "stories and identities" can have the impact of suppressing alternative narratives as well.

The concept of *absence* is one that is common in media studies and frequently discussed concerning representation in popular culture. Audience studies scholars, including Baynes (2007), have claimed that "many people learn about other groups through television" (p. 255) and that representational absences "[implies] that certain individuals or groups exist" (p. 256). One such absence in communication studies scholarship on tourism is gender. Although Pritchard and Morgan briefly mentioned the "gendered gaze" (p. 57) in their chapter on Wales postcards, gender is largely missing from their analysis and others in *Discourse, Communication, and Tourism* (Pritchard & Morgan, 2005). According to the index, gender is referenced only once under "gender relations," and each chapter tends to privilege class over gender and race identities. Race and ethnicity are only implicitly engaged within the previously mentioned study on backpacking in India (Davidson, 2005). This oversight further points to the need for critical work on tourism in relation to not just class, but gender and race as well. The *Ideal Tourist* attempts to fill this gap within the context of domestic tourism.

Tourism as Performance

A satellite field to communication, performance studies, also engages with international tourism. Blau (2013), in *Performance on Behalf of the Environment*, examined the Western tourist through a strikingly personal and honest autobiographical account of ecotourism in the Amazon Basin, teasing out the contractions of place and spectacle. Blau's ability to narrate both his personal sense of place and the tensions of "othering" opened the possibility for scholars to pay more attention to places that they have taken for granted or places that have been uncritically "consumed" (Urry, 2005). This autoethnographic method placed emphasis on the importance of one's own positionality in research and tourism practices. Much in line with feminist scholarship, the acknowledgement of privilege, personal "investment," and risk in research is arguably an ethical and political decision and one that environmental communication can benefit from.

Tourism studies have historically relied on sight as a way of knowing and experiencing place. The term "sightseeing" is just one example of the way in which tourism is understood as an activity where tourists see places, people, and sights. However, rhetorician Phaedra Pezzullo (2009) took to task the reliance on gazing as a tourist practice and asked us to consider how tourism is also embodying the visual. Her book called attention to spatiality and walking, breath, sound, and pain as other aspects of tourism that must be considered. In tourism, and on toxic tours specifically, other senses besides sight are engaged such as smell, sound, and watery eyes. She argues that toxic tours "embody the visual" and act as "embodied rhetorics of resistance" to the structural

systems of power that allow for toxins to destroy the environment and the bodies of those who live in/around toxic sites. Pezzullo provides a vision of what tourism can be. Through participating in three toxic tours in New Orleans, San Francisco, and Mexico (via film), Pezzullo aimed to "politicize the pleasurable" by drawing attention to the political capacity of tourism practices.

Performing Citizenship Through Tourism

Margaret Werry's (2011) study on tourism in New Zealand in *The Tourist State* similarly emphasized a move away from the symbolic and representative aspects of tourism and instead paid attention to the material and/or embodied aspects. This thinking who much in line with other performance scholars who have called attention to the limits of the "world as a text" metaphor (Conquergood, 1995). Werry wrote:

> In positing tourism as a representational projection—a simulacrum *behind which* casual or explanatory entities (such as empire, the state, or capital) remain invisible, untouchable, and all-powerful—the postcolonial analysis can divert us from the very questions it might illuminate: How can tourism enroll the energies and imaginations of so many individuals and communities in shaping environments, institutions, economies, and conditions of opportunity? ... How, in short, does it contribute to state making?" (p. xiv–xv, emphasis original)

In other words, Werry (2011) called upon researchers to think beyond what tourism represents to what tourism *does.* This is in line with Franklin and Crang's (2001) vision for tourism research that "[searches] for links with other mobilities such as

commuting, mobile [labor] markets, migration and Diasporas" (p. 11). Philpott's (2013) aforementioned environmental history of tourism in Colorado did just this by connecting tourism as advertising to tourism as a project that physically molds the land.

However, Werry (2011) was also interested in how tourism and identity intersect. Understanding tourism as a state-making entity highlights the ways in which ideal citizenship is constructed and how certain populations are excluded and oppressed through the tourism regime. Werry identified what she calls the Free Independent Traveler (FIT), a traveler that exhibits New Zealand's attempt to attract "higher yield" tourists as opposed to more tourists (2011, p. 148). These FITs "embraced nature not as a spectacle but as an immersive environment in which to participate" (Werry, 2011, p. 148). Werry argued that this ideal tourist also mirrored what New Zealand imagined to be the prototype citizen, and consequently, "tourism conjured the subject it imagined as a citizen: the White, wealthy, cosmopolitan witness to and consumer of the self-enunciation of a nation" (p. xx).

Citizenship

Within media studies, citizenship is considered within the context of audiences. Butsch (2008) historicized how audiences have been perceived as citizens, mobs, or political actors in the 19th and 20th centuries. Through historicizing terms such as mass, public, and crowd, he explained how certain notions of civility have been privileged, while others have been feared. For instance, rational thought has been privileged as a way of creating a healthy public sphere, which in turn has tended to create race- and sex-based notions of who ideal citizen is and how they should act. The ideal, not surprisingly, is a

White male. Citizenship, according to Butsch, is always "limited by race, class, and gender" (p. 7). He applies citizenship to audiences, arguing that "audiences can be understood as judgments of fitness for citizenship" (p. 4). Taken together, Werry (2011) and Butsch (2008) explained how the ideal tourist (a combination of the ideal visitor and the ideal audience) emboldens notions of ideal citizenship. Tourism, therefore, is not just frivolous leisure unworthy of scrutiny, but is instead one of many sites in which various social groups are valued and privileged in the public realm.

Environmental Privilege

Park and Pellow's (2011) study on tourism in Aspen, Colorado, is perhaps the most transparent and intentional linking of citizenship to tourism in Colorado. In *The Slums of Aspen,* Park and Pellow highlighted the people and conditions that help elite tourism functionon by focusing on immigrant workers and their paradoxical situation living among and working for the world's elite vacationers. Furthermore, their study exposed the ways in which environmentalism has been used to promote nativism and belonging by targeting immigrant workers as the cause for environmental degradation. Nativism has been rhetorically used to blame immigrant communities for pollution and over-use along Interstate 70. In their study, questions of citizenship came to the fore, as undocumented and immigrant workers have become the invisible backbone of elite tourism in locations like Aspen as well as the target of nativist discourses.

According to Park and Pellow (2011), tourism functions as a type of *environmental privilege,* which "results from the exercise of economic, political, and cultural power that some groups enjoy, which enables them exclusive access to coveted

environmental amenities such as forests, parks, mountains, rivers coastal property, open lands, and elite neighborhoods" (p. 3). Park and Pellow's concept of environmental privilege is woven throughout the *Ideal Tourist.* It provides an analytical tool to identify who is welcome and unwelcome in certain "coveted" places and the various practices, both material and representational, used to maintain access for specific social groups. Because of the tourism and population rush in Colorado, environmental privilege is becoming even more apparent as space becomes limited and place becomes more expensive and exclusive. However, Park and Pellow still contended that in tourism, "image is everything," opening the door for more analysis on tourism media (2011, p. 17). Tourism media, therefore, are where the images are produced and circulated and where environmental privilege is also exercised.

Chapter Previews

Each of the case studies in the chapters that follow answers the question "who is the ideal tourist?" through different methods, texts, and theoretical orientations. Chapter Two, "The Tourist Stage: Wilderness Ideology in Tourism Media" addresses the relationship between tourism, race, and wilderness imagery in contemporary tourism marketing. The landscape, narration, and production behind the *Come to Life* campaign reveals the state's economic and representational investment in the ski industry and its "high-yield" tourists who are assumed to be able to afford expensive overnight accommodations and resort activities. Using textual analysis, I examine the stage on which the ideal tourist performs and argue that narratives about place—specifically the "wilderness"—act as codes and signs that point to the type of tourists Colorado desires. I

argue that because of how particular notions of wilderness, authenticity, modernity, and spirituality work together within the campaign through narrative, music, and cinematic techniques, the *Come to Life* campaign mimics the post-WWII White flight migration and privileges White recreationalists as preferred tourists, rendering invisible tourists of color. What's more, the CTO's silence in response to their own reporting of disproportionately White tourists signifies a continued investment in whiteness.

Chapter Three, "Football, Country Clubs, & Cannabis: Identifying Tourism's Imagined Audience" puts audience studies scholarship in conversation with the stated purpose, placement, and measurement of the *Come to Life* advertisements as well as the industry and state response to marijuana legalization in 2013. By looking at where the *Come to Life* print ads, commercials, digital displays, and billboards were placed in the winter of 2013, the ideal tourist emerges even more clearly. Key commercial placements during NFL and college football games demonstrates the Office's desire for predominantly White tourists, while placements in city-specific lifestyle magazines and airline media indicate the Office's desire for affluent and highly educated tourists.

In the midst of Colorado's tourism rush, another rush has unfolded. After recreational marijuana legalization in 2013, Colorado's cannabis industry has exploded for mostly White business owners with dispensaries, tours, and other tourist-related activities throughout the state in what some have called the "green rush" (Jan & Nirappi, 2017), or what *Buzzfeed News* called the "Whites-only weed boom" (Lewis, 2016). Chapter 3 addresses this contentious moment during the summer of 2016 in CTO circles. Shedding light on the Office's "imagined audience" in response to cannabis tourism, this

chapter explores the government's complicity in racist, gendered, and classist assumptions about which audience members were more likely to visit Colorado and its subsequent valuing of certain identities through inclusion and exclusion of media exposure, which has been blatant and questionable given the government's supposed commitment to equity. By contextualizing marijuana tourism within the War on Drugs, the ideal tourist re-emerges through a new tourist activity. This chapter also questions the government's use of private advertising practices as well as the lack of transparency in doing so—a theme that runs throughout the *Ideal Tourist.*

Chapter 4, "Panning for Rhetorical Gold: Sustainable Tourism and the Green Traveler," looks at the recent turn to sustainability rhetoric in the CTO's communications. Using the metaphor of gold panning, I document how the CTO turns rising concerns of climate change, overpopulation at tourist destinations, and the related, growing housing affordability crisis into environmentally friendly green messaging that does little to address these major critical issues. I argue that the Office pans, sifts, and washes critiques of tourism's environmental and social impact into rhetorical gold that ultimately upholds the ideal tourist, consumerism, and environmental privilege. In so doing, the Office constructs the ideal "green traveler": an imagined tourist who shoulders environmental anxieties through individual, behavioral acts such as staying on hiking trails, wearing sunscreen, and dressing in layers. This chapter explores the limitations of consumer-oriented tourism offices to address the growing climate crisis and, more troubling, the way in which it continues to protect environmental privilege for affluent travel professionals and ideal tourists alike.

The conclusion, "New Directions in Tourism Media," points to additional directions for tourism-related communication research. I start by comparing Colorado's tourism rush to that of the gold rush. To demystify the tourism story, I introduce competing research that has pointed to the limits of the Office's own research and proven that a tourism rush is one that is produced. Finally, I propose recommendations for changes in how the state allocates tourism money, calling for more transparent, diverse, and solution-oriented research and spending. Accordingly, this dissertation sustains a long-term career goal to investigate the viability of tourism marketing and industries in U.S. cities that are, or once were, dependent on extractive industries such as coal or natural gas. By moving away from *tourism as advertising*, both workers and residents might better benefit from taxpayer-supported programs.

Chapter 2:

The Tourist Stage:

Wilderness Ideology In Tourism Media

The CTO's advertising program is the most visible evidence of Colorado's vision of the ideal tourist, stipulating visually where the tourist goes and what they are supposed to do once there. From the *Victory Vacation* campaign during the post-World War II era to campaigns in the early 2000s such as *In a Land Called Colorado* and *Let's Talk Colorado*, state-funded tourism advertising is an attempt to tell a story about place and to inspire visitors from afar to spend vacation time, money, and resources in Colorado. Tourism advertising is viewed as emotionally laden, inspirational media that is supposed to inspire potential visitors to take action: book a plane ticket, reserve a hotel room, and so forth. The CTO's advertising agency Karsh Hagan (2014) claimed in a behind-the-scenes video for the campaign that

> when people book their summer vacations, they choose a destination based on emotion. They dream of the feel of the sun on their faces and the sound of their children's laugher. Only then do they start searching for hotels and plane tickets.

Therefore, what is considered dream-worthy material (e.g. children's laughter) exposes how the CTO constructs an image of the state and ideal visitor.

More money is allocated to these campaigns via advertising and public relations budgets than is allocated to any other tourism program, such as state-funded motorist Welcome Centers or Tourism Development Grants for smaller cities and towns. Data from a 2012 audit indicate that just over half of the state's tourism budget goes to

advertising, marketing, and public relation efforts (Colorado Office of the State Auditor, 2012). The most recent advertising campaign, *Come to Life*, has run in various iterations since 2012 and is widely considered by the CTO and local news outlets such as *The Denver Post* and *Westword* to be the most successful campaign in the state's recent history (Bane, 2012; Blevins, 2016; Calhoun, 2012). In addition, the campaign was celebrated as an "inside job," meaning it was produced by an agency in Colorado. While the CTO had been criticized for using out-of-state agencies such as Kansas- and New York-based MMGY in the past, *Come to Life* was created by a Denver-based agency, local musicians, and local on-screen talent (Bane, 2012). A homegrown agency has the added bonus of silencing claims that taxpayer money should be spent within Colorado's four borders and, in so doing, deflects criticism that tourism budgets do not support *all* Coloradans.

In order to compete with other tourist destinations and maintain a sense of identity, *Come to Life* creates an image of empty wilderness and the promise of spiritual awakening for tourists. The *Come to Life* campaign is a significant departure from previous campaigns in that it almost exclusively represents empty, mountainous landscape and wilderness scenery from Colorado's most popular outdoor destinations (Bane, 2012). Karsh Hagan proposed that *Come to Life* positions Colorado as a type of antidote to civilization by promising that Colorado's natural amenities will inspire and make visitors essentially "come to life." In addition to print advertisements, digital banners, and billboards, the campaign has produced television spots that are archived on the state's official YouTube channel. In total, the campaign has produced more than 20

videos since 2012, and according to the CTO, *Come to Life* has garnered more than $2.72 billion in economic impact (CTO, 2017).[4]

Whereas the CTO's advertising campaign content is visible via YouTube or in news reports from *The Denver Post*, there are other methods by which the state develops the ideal tourist and imagined state that are less obvious than the content of the commercials. Research produced for the tourism office affords insight into key visitor segments (ski, outdoor, overnight), visitor demographics (gender, race, income), and other demographics and categories the CTO deems valuable. Each fiscal year, the Office contracts with market research company Longwoods International, a self-proclaimed "leader in brand strategy and ROI research" (Longwoods International, 2019). The Longwoods report includes age, gender, income, and ethnicity of travelers; national travel trends; and data about specific industry segments such as downhill skiing or gambling. Longwoods International's demographic markers indicate who is considered worthy of measuring as a tourist and who is considered less valuable. For instance, when detailing outdoor trip demographics in the travel year 2016, the Office reported that the segment "skewed male," and was "more upscale in terms of education and income than the norm for outdoor vacationers" (Longwoods International, 2017). By categorizing tourists in relation to race, gender, education, and income and drawing attention and assigning value to the dominant demographics in each category via bar graphs and terms such as "upscale," the Office assigns worth to those trip segments and people. These reports, in

[4] Although there are 20 videos, many include the same footage. Therefore, most of the campaign can be viewed in the longer videos on the YouTube channel.

conjunction with the *Come to Life* advertisements, indicate who the CTO's ideal tourist is.

In the chapter that follows, I interrogate the landscape or "stage" of *Come to Life* commercials within the framework of environmental cultural theorists (Cronon, 1996; Kollin, 2001), scholars of place and race (Harrison, 2013; Smith, 2017), and former studies on gender performances in the outdoors (McNiel et al., 2012), arguing that the "wilderness stage" in *Come to Life* functions as a form of branded authenticity that draws upon historical lineages of wilderness as places for Euro-American settlement and anti-modernity. The construction of wilderness in *Come to Life* media cannot be separated from identity, particularly whiteness. *Come to Life* advertisements have helped circulate meaning surrounding an imagined Colorado, and in so doing, have signified Colorado's landscape as one for White male recreationalists, thus exposing the CTO's investment in whiteness. I explore how nature-based or ski tourism advertisements have been constructed in and through both racialized and gendered power. In Chapter Three, I will turn more directly to the ways in which tourism *audiences* are valued and privileged along race, gender, and class lines; however, here, I will focus on how dominant notions of wilderness as represented in tourism media aim to maintain whiteness as the norm in Colorado while also providing an answer to the White male crisis in masculinity.

Theoretical Framework

Tourism advertisements do not simply transmit information about a place or a person's interaction with it; they are in and of themselves constructing an imagined Colorado. The word "imagined" is fundamental to understanding the construction of

identity and place and builds on Benedict Anderson's (2006) *Imagined Communities*, in which he explored the invention of nations and nationalism. Anderson's germinal work argued that nationalism arose out of the displacement of dynastic rule in conjunction with the rise of print capitalism. He explained that print capitalism allowed for the circulation of vernacular texts that fostered nations, or "imagined political communit[ies]" (p. 6). His argument highlighted the ways in which communication, in this case print, contributes to fostering certain notions of place, identity, and homogeneity. Nations, according to Anderson, are 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" (2006, p. 6). Accordingly, Anderson argued that communities are distinguished by the "style in which they are imagined" rather than economics (2006, p. 6). Anderson's argument was ultimately about the role of culture. He focused on the "cultural roots of nationalism" rather than the physical or economic ones. For instance, he grappled with the question of why millions of people are willing to go to war for a nation. What are the cultural underpinnings of this phenomenon? Anderson placed media production and distribution at the forefront of understanding how imagined communities form.

Accordingly, the setting in which the ideal tourist performs tourism co-constructs the tourist's identity. Put differently, *where* the tourist goes in Colorado and the meaning attached to those locations helps indicate who the ideal tourist is. Therefore, in order to understand how the CTO defines ideal tourist, it is important to understand the ideal landscape, or the stage, in which the ideal tourist moves. Literary and environmental

cultural studies scholars would suggest that the content and imagery in the *Come to Life* campaign says less about the actual landscape and more about dominant cultural values, identities, and meanings attached to place. These scholars start from the assertion that nature and, by extension, tourism advertisements like the CTO's that are contingent on natural scenery are "a product of knowledge, something that is not just out there to be found but that is created within particular social contexts and for particular purposes" (Kollin, 2001, p. 177). An environmental cultural lens, in the process of centering culture and power, sheds light on why these particular landscapes are favored, by whom, and for what purpose. For instance, using Alaska, America's "final frontier," as a case study, Kollin (2001) argued that imaginations of Alaska say more about the United States' identity, anxieties, and expansionism than they do about Alaska as a landscape. Social identity, as well as messages that constrain who can go where, when, and in what fashion, are key to understanding the ideal tourist in areas that use nature as a promotional tool.

Therefore, tourism media circulate what I call *place identities*—YouTube videos, television commercials, magazine advertisements, billboards, press releases, and tourism research—which formulate an imagined place and imagined tourists. Tourism media perpetuates certain notions of an imagined place for outsiders; however, it also fosters a sense of imagined communities for those that produce or live in them. For instance, in the video short "The Making of the 2012 Colorado Tourism Campaign," the tourism Office asserted that they "set out to explain to the world just how it feels to be in Colorado" (CTO, 2012b, 3:15). The video makers' sense of place was manifested in the commercial and circulated as an advertisement, fostering a sense of a Colorado community or

identity. Colorado is "invented," just as nations are, according to Anderson's theoretical framework. This invention opens the possibility to challenge and change the dominant narrative put forth by the tourism office. Understanding Colorado as imagined prompts questions concerning whose vision of the state is put forth at the expense of others. Who or what does this vision privilege? Who is imagined having access to this wild, pristine and magical landscape? And, who is absent from such imaginings?

Nature and Race

Cultural discourses that construct "nature" are fundamentally racialized (Moore et al., 2003). This racialized discourse works to obfuscate multiculturalism and classifies place in accordance to whiteness. Moore et al. (2003) suggested that whiteness in nature-based tourism media is prominent because discursively speaking, our culture's understanding of nature and "wilderness" has racial underpinnings and these norms dictate who can perform tourism within such settings. Wilderness as a concept is a White, Euro-American ideal. They argued:

> power works in and through nature in several overlapping ways: through violent acts of domination, through the constitution of subjects and truths, and through the maintenance of these identities and difference across time and space. (p. 15)

In another piece that attempted to challenge Aldo Leopold's or John Muir's Euro-American, White male perspectives of wilderness and instead illuminate "black land stories," Smith's (2017) "Wild Black Margins" argued that viewing nature as a place for recreation or escapism entails a White "colonial memory." In a challenge to this imagining, she explained how Black and brown non-Native bodies do not experience the

settler paradigm of wilderness as a place for finding oneself but rather as a site already recognized to be "inhabited with a thicket of cultural meaning" (p. 142). As the founder of the *Black/Land Project,* an online platform that gathers stories "between Black people, land, and place," Smith argued that African Americans identify the circumstantial underpinning of nature; meanings attached to land are made within the context of displacement, labor, solace, or danger (Black/Land project, 2020). The Great Migration, for instance, created a scenario in which African Americans built the very urban environments that White recreationalists sought to escape. Rather than drawing a dichotomy and suggesting that African Americans either do or do not experience wilderness as a site of reverence and awe, Smith (2017) complicated notions of a monolithic wilderness. Using the metaphor of an ecotone (a place of contact between two ecological communities with different climates, vegetation, and wildlife), Smith explained how the wild is a site of *both* "mourning and awe" (p. 142). The wilderness Smith described, which is also present in urban areas where weeds/wildflowers surface through cement cracks, is not accessible to "the dead-eye whiteness of settler colonialism" and is an understanding of wilderness outside the White, Euro-American canon. She explained:

> The relationship of blackness to land we think of as wild is always informed (but not wholly defined) by wilderness as an unsafe place. It remains inhabited by the specter of flight from patrollers enforcing ownership of black bodies and black labor. Every tree offers memories of fruits both sweet and strange. Still, through listening to black land narratives and through living my own, I know the wild is a

> place in which we belong and that belongs to us; it is also a physical space and an interior condition of which we have been perpetually robbed. (p. 142)

Referencing Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit," Smith suggested that to separate wilderness and culture ignores and perhaps even kills off Black and brown land stories—stories that reconfigure wild, wilderness, and nature as complicated spaces in which racism, violence, migration, labor, hiking, or relief coalesce. Pushing back against essentialism and the "land-as-wilderness" standard, Black land stories, like ecotones, dismantle binaries of urban/wilderness, urban/rural, domestic/wild, or nature/culture. Smith contended that Black land stories, like plants that seep through urban cracks, flourish in the margins. Rather than only validating and telling Eurocentric land stories that view wilderness as a site of rejuvenation and spirituality, Smith pointed to a need to listen to and elevate Black stories of place.

Skiing and Race

Anthony Kwame Harrison (2013) was similarly concerned with the racialized components of place-making discourses and narrowed his analysis specifically to the ways in which everyday racism maintains White spaces in mountainous landscapes and for the sport of downhill skiing. Particularly relevant to my analysis, given the CTO's reliance and focus on skiing in both advertising and reporting, Harrison argued that there are both structural and symbolic actions that discriminate against African-American skiers and create spaces of exclusion. Moving from the large-scale conception of place or wilderness to a more specified, case-study analysis, Harrison pointed to instances of "familiar and routine practices of defining and defending social space" and debunked

common stereotypes about Black people not enjoying skiing or racial minorities not being able to afford the sport (Harrison, 2013, p. 316). Employing the concept of *racial spatiality,* Harrison (2013) explained how exclusionary practices appear in seemingly hidden ways, such as residential planning or the tourism industry. Harrison argued that ski resorts function as a form of White flight, where White recreationalists seek refuge from perceived threats of minorities in urban areas. The rise of second-home buying in ski resort areas further segregates White people and people of color by increasing property taxes and employing spatial codes and guidelines. Rules such as noise ordinances or trash upkeep create a "discursive trope of niceness as an important moral and aesthetic measure that functions to defend social arenas where [w]hite racial spatiality prevails" (p. 331). As second-home purchases from wealthy tourists increase, thus making property prices rise, workers in ski areas (who are frequently people of color, lower income, or immigrants) or those who do not fit the White flight social category are discouraged from the space, further mapping "geographies of exclusion" (Harrison, 2013, p. 331).

In another example, Harrison (2013) observed the transformation of skiing from a local activity to a tourism-based economic driver that demands "consumer profiles," where assumptions about recreational preferences are often rooted in racial myths (p. 322). *Racial spatiality* is a deliberate discriminatory act that aims to protect whiteness geographically and restrict the participation of African Americans or other non-White groups in certain activities such as skiing (Harrison, 2013). Drawing on Coleman's (1996) history of skiing's transition from a low-entry, working-class, local pastime to a

consolidated corporate empire, Harrison (2013) explained how resort towns such Vail or Breckenridge are "marked by whiteness" both in style and in "boundary making measures," such as stares from White skiers (p. 323). For instance, Colorado's ski industry was developed by European skiers (most of whom were WWII veterans) and influenced the post-WWII development of towns such as Vail, which aimed to emulate European ski towns or the Old West in a utopic fashion. Towns such as Aspen or Breckenridge embodied a mythologized Wild West with cowboys, saloons, and gold panning references that "characterized the West as a white domain" (Coleman, 1996, p. 170).

Nature and Gender

Feminist scholars West and Zimmerman (1987), using Erving Goffman's performance terminology, argued that gender is a "display," or something that can be "done." People "do gender" in a way that essentializes and naturalizes gender, hiding the cultural mechanisms that contribute to the social construction of man/women or boy/girl. To further their explanation, they also engaged with place, explaining how the "stage" often permits certain performances while discouraging others. In particular, they argued that certain places, such as a bathroom, enact gender in a certain way, explaining that "the physical features of social setting provide one obvious resource for the expression of our 'essential' differences" (p.137). Through the use of codes, what it means to "do gender" is produced and circulated, even within tourism media.

Accordingly, bathrooms, National Parks, U-Pick farms, hot springs, ski slopes, and even breweries can be considered "social settings" or stages for doing gender. In

particular, the construction of wilderness serves as a stage for actors/tourists in relation to their activities and behaviors. The wilderness stage is important, because it serves to further naturalize tourist performances, given the tourism office's dependence on nature scenery and recreational pursuits in mountainous landscapes. Additionally, the ideal tourist is a confluence of multiple identity categories; it is constituted by vectors of race, class, gender, and sexuality—all of which are contingent on the other in their formation and "accomplishment," to use West and Zimmerman's (1987) vocabulary. For instance, the male tourist depends not just on gender and whiteness but on heterosexuality as well to successfully perform masculinity in wilderness settings.

Other scholars have noted the gendered messages in wilderness stages through advertising. McNeil, Harris, and Fondren's (2012) study of 195 outdoor recreation advertisements in *Backpacker* and *Outside* magazines provided a baseline framework and reference point for examining themes in women's representation in wilderness settings and what those themes indicate about gendered power relations. The advertisements, they argue, were complicit in normalizing "appropriate places and activities for men and women," such as representing women doing domestic roles despite being outdoors, stereotypical color coding of clothing, and women engaging in lower levels of participation in the outdoor activities compared to their male counterparts (McNeil et al., 2012). Women are rarely permitted seclusion or individuality in the outdoors, solidifying the outdoors as a male territory. Women tend to exhibit lower levels of engagement with outdoor recreational activities, often appear to require guidance from a male counterpart, and are frequently represented with children in outdoor recreation advertisements, further

substantiating their domestic roles, even in the wild (McNeil et al., 2012). For instance, women in their study were often represented simply holding outdoor equipment rather than actively using it in way that required physical effort or time. What McNeil et al. highlighted was the extent to which social constructions of gender do not disappear in outdoor settings contrived by advertising agencies. In fact, these types of settings re-establish dominant gender roles in a sneakier, less obvious way, by buffering gender with scenery and activities that are supposedly "natural" for humans to partake in.

The Tourist Stage

In 2020 a White woman called the police to report a man she believed was out of place. Black birder Christian Cooper was doing a popular outdoor activity in Central Park when he asked the woman to leash put a leash on her dog. Her subsequent response and escalation to call the police highlighted the way in which place is racialized and policed by White individuals and institutions. Simply being Black while birding is dangerous, explained many Black Americans following the incident. Outdoor recreation and natural spaces are dominated by whiteness, so much so that the mere presence of a Black recreationalist is deemed dangerous, potentially resulting in police violence. Black naturalist Corina Newsome commented that for "far too long, black people in the U.S. have been shown that outdoor exploration activities are not for us" and called attention to how "media chooses to present who is the outdoorsy" (Flaherty, 2020). The #BirdingWhileBlack critique is not insulated from other outdoor settings, and the attention Black activists have raised to the stereotypes and barriers that attempt to segregate the outdoors has a far reach.

IDEAL TOURIST

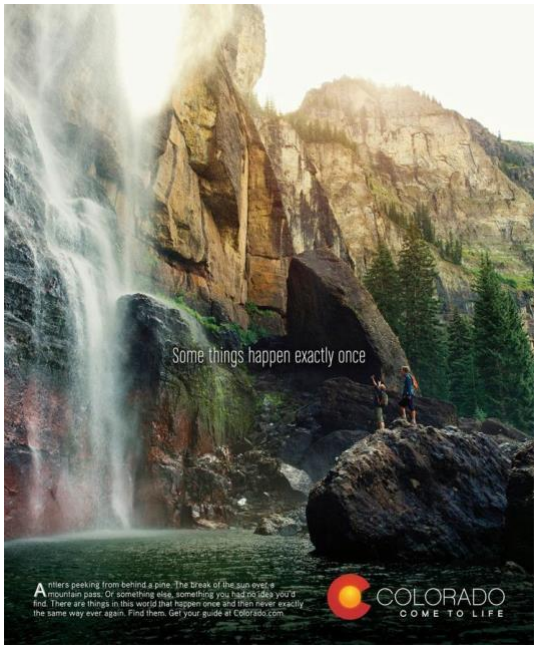
In the analysis that follows, I demonstrate how tourism media have proven Newsome's argument and made necessary the aims of the #BirdingWhileBlack through representation of ideal tourist, or "outdoorsy" type, in nature-based and government-funded tourism advertisements. Settings and places are triggers for discourses and actions that ultimately uphold White supremacy by making Black and people of color dangerous exceptions to the rule, thus normalizing nature as a place for White male recreationalists. I analyze the *Come to Life* commercials according to the following themes: wilderness ideology, authenticity, and anti-civilization. My analysis then transitions from the "stage" in which the ideal tourist resides to the identity of the tourist themselves, thus explaining how the ideal tourist identity is informed by a masculine, White, Euro-American ideology of place.

Wilderness Ideology

Wilderness ideology has saturated Colorado's advertisements, setting the stage for where the tourist should perform. The *Come to Life* campaign almost exclusively relies on natural and wilderness scenery: commercials are infused with red rock outcroppings, high-alpine lakes and waterfalls, high-plain vistas, expansive sand dunes, and flowery mountain meadows where tourists (in groups no bigger than four) unearth their desire to come alive by embedding themselves in the landscape. Figure 1, for instance, is a print advertisement from the *Come to Life* campaign in which a father and son stand in front of Bridal Veil Falls in Telluride, Colorado.

Figure 1.

Come to Life *print advertisement.*



The waterfall and surrounding rock faces dominate the image, enveloping the boy's outstretched arms as he seemingly worships the towering natural feature. They stand at the edge of a slanted rock as if they are baptized by the waterfall's spray, from which the light source radiates. Despite Bridal Veil Fall's status as an extremely popular tourist destination in Colorado, the father and son are represented as the only tourists in the image, as if this moment was curated for their personal private desires. Nature, in other words, is something isolated and unique for *them*, and only them. Other *Come to Life* print and commercial campaigns similarly position individuals or small groups of people surrounded by waterfalls, mountains, and slopes, conveniently erasing other people in order to frame the location as people-less and revelatory.

IDEAL TOURIST

The *Come to Life* campaign is not the first marketing effort by Colorado to imbue images of landscape with reverence, authenticity, and awe. During the development of Colorado's post-WWII modern tourism industry, for example, Colorado's high-country tourism literature relied on what William Philpott (2013) labeled "scenic clichés" such as "snow-packed peaks," high-alpine meadows sprinkled with wildflowers, and sparkling lakes that were labeled as "majestic" or teeming with "splendor" to create a "landscape of leisure" (p. 32–59). Like Philpott's analysis of 1940s and '50s tourism literature, I found that tourism advertisements in the 2010s relied on similar "scenic clichés" rooted in romanticism: clouds enfolding mountainous valleys, waterfalls set alight by rainbows, luminous night skies, and trees weighed down with fresh snow work to render the landscape as a place to fulfill tourist desires.

In "The Trouble with Wilderness," Cronon (1995) explained why mountaintops, waterfalls, and meadows appear in Colorado's tourism guides, commercials, and related tourism media. Like Smith (2017), he dismantled the tightly held belief that nature and wilderness are innately transcendental or separate from culture. Wilderness, according to Cronon, is a social construct that embodies European notions of The Garden of Eden, the sublime, the frontier, masculinity, rugged individualism, and elitism. Euro-American culture has cultivated reverence, awe, and privilege for specific landscapes. Embedded in these landscapes, argued Cronon, are spirituality and religion: In the Euro-American mindset of the 18th and 19th centuries, wilderness was constructed as a set of sacred places where both Satan and Christ existed—places where the "boundaries between human and nonhuman, between natural and supernatural … seemed less certain than

elsewhere" (p. 73). This spiritual endorsement transformed particular landscapes into sacred and favored sites where "God was on the mountaintop, in the chasm, in the waterfall, in the thundercloud, in the rainbow, in the sunset" (p. 73). Aligning specific terrain with spirituality and religion abetted in permitting certain places to escape both time and context. Cronon (1995) explained that "this escape from history is one reason why the language we use about wilderness is often permeated with spiritual and religious values that reflect human ideals far more than the material world of physical nature" (p. 80)

In name alone, the *Come to Life* campaign references a higher being and spiritual awakening. Music for the commercials is symphonic, and in each, a male narrator promises to provide travelers with a way to escape their everyday and truly experience life:

> Our skin was meant to feel the sun, our legs were meant to travel; our eyes are meant to see great things; to photograph them for our memories. We will not wait another day, for waiting is the opposite of living. (CTO, 2012a).

By employing music composed by the Colorado Symphony, choral music with dramatic crescendos reminiscent of Christian hymnals, and images of sunlight over a backdrop of empty mountainous terrain, the CTO creates a place, or landscape, of authenticity and spiritual awakening; the promise of "coming to life" in this landscape indicates divine intervention into the process.

For example, the commercial "Awe" begins with scenes of tourists' faces occupying half of the frame and looking expectantly upward at the sky. The sun back-

lights their bodies and faces as sun flares occasionally peak out or white out the frame entirely. “The willingness to feel awe, do we still have it?” the narrator asks as time-lapsed clouds move over a mountain, its steep face draped in scree. Then a father and son descend into an empty mountain valley, as the narrator continues: “There are wonderful things that can amaze us and shape us, … and we don’t have to find them. But we do have to get up and go out there where they can find us” (CTO, 2012).

Here, the landscape transforms into an active agent that bestows awe on the tourist. Opposite the nomenclature of “finding Jesus,” the commercial asks tourists to let themselves be found by the landscape, permitting them to feel awe once again. The landscape, full of its spiritual capabilities, will find and transform the tourist.

Third-Person Wilderness and Masculinity

Von Glahn (2011), through her work on male and women composers during the 19th century, asked an important question: “how was nature or the nation defined, and who got to define it?” (p. 399). During 19th century conservationism, men (whether artists like those in the Hudson School or even nature “observers” like John Muir or Henry David Thoreau) created, dominated, and disseminated their perception of American wilderness discourse through art, writing, and music. Van Glahn explained how this representation of wilderness was fundamentally gendered: “iconographic ‘natural wonders’ confirm the ubiquity of the collective … national project that gendered the United States, via its rugged, muscular, natural phenomena and the pioneer spirit it required, male” (p. 400). For example, Brooks Toliver’s (2004) analysis of Ferde Grofe’s *Grand Canyon Suite*, from 1931, detailed the way in which this orchestral piece, which

eventually found its way into the Disney short *Grand Canyon,* was contingent on American identity of westward expansion and resource extraction. This perspective can still be understood through a historical lens with the concept of "the overlook." Toliver explained that the concept of "the overlook" in Hudson River School painting and landscape music "serves the purpose of expanding the horizon; from it one can imagine a nearly limitless—and thus sublime—wilderness. … It invokes containment under an authoritative gaze; from it, one *surveys* the land in a cartographical sense" (p. 340).

The *Come to Life* advertisements, although created more than 100 years later, hold onto these male-fashioned constructs through visuals, gender performances, and music. The music featured in the original, 2012 iteration of the *Come to Life* commercials was written by the Colorado Symphony and echoes music like that of the other composers writing about nature in the mid 1800s, with dramatic crescendos matched only by the craggy peaks they accompany on screen. The orchestral music, heavy with chimes and oboe, work to brand each state as authentic, grounded, or even God-inspired as mainly White tourists hike into valleys and open their arms in excitement under waterfalls. The religiosity exemplifies a Manifest Destiny ethos by which White settlers used a divine justification to violently settle the West.

In another example, a camera angle common in several *Come to Life* commercials positions tourists on the left- or right-hand side of the screen with the camera shooting from behind their shoulder(s). The film industry calls this a "third-person shot," or an "over the shoulder" camera angle, where the viewer is positioned as if being *with* and *behind* the people in the advertisement. This angle encourages the viewer to experience

the same activities, feelings, and scenery as the people in the commercial. For instance, the third-person shot in the Colorado advertisements appears when two men are sitting looking out over a mountain valley and with a male sitting at the foot of a high alpine lake (CTO, 2012b). This type of camera shot, in combination with the numerous people-less landscape shots of mountain terrain, is a modern take on the 19th-century wilderness ideology that was born out of White male ideas of nature. Landscape visuals without humans or as third-party shots are problematic because notions of vast empty landscapes paved the way for relocation and violence against Native American populations and Euro-American settlement in the West and continue to function as representing the West as a White domain. Empty landscapes allow the subject of the viewing, in this case the tourists, or, in the 19th century, White male explorers, to take ownership of the land.

Come to Life advertisements are brimming with stereotypical performances of masculinity, performances that favor individualism, physicality, and men's "position of dominance" in society (Kimmel, 1995, p. 233). Whereas women in these ads are accompanied by men or children, men are seen more frequently experiencing Colorado alone. Representations such as these reference other idealized men of the American West such as John Wayne or Theodore Roosevelt. The "mythic frontier" where these men roam in their "true form" is a place in which a man can prove himself and become "the rugged individual he was meant to be before civilization sapped his energy and threatened his masculinity" (Cronon, 1995, p. 78). *Come to Life* advertisements rely on gender essentialism as they promise men the opportunity to escape society and return to their masculine natures. It should come as no surprise that the narrators for all of the

tourism commercials in the Mountain West are men. In Colorado, this has been the case since the early 2000s, further pushing the individualistic male perspective, seeing that the literal voice of the person defining the experience of traveling in the West is male. The ubiquity of the male voice in these ads further illustrates how normalized and dominant male perspective and ownership of the Mountain West "experience" has become.

Mountain as Cathedral

The emotional and spiritual attachments to place in *Come to Life* commercials contribute to what Cronon (1996) calls the myth of the "mountain as cathedral." Drawing attention to the relationship between "nature" and Christianity, Cronon argued that mountains are the church in which famous wilderness authors like Muir and Thoreau "prefer to worship." The lineage detailed by Cronon in the 18th and 19th centuries (and by Philpott in the 20th), helps to explain why the *Come to Life* campaign is laden with images, from Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs to the 365-foot Bridal Veil Falls near Telluride to unidentifiable downhill ski slopes. President of Longwoods International (the company that conducts tourism research for the CTO) Bill Siegel called attention to the mountain mythos aptly when he claimed Colorado is "blessed with a unique travel generator—the Rocky Mountains" (Siegel, 2009). Spirituality and mountains go hand-in-hand within this framework. Accordingly, mountains are *the* selling point for Colorado (Philpott, 2013). Just west of Denver, otherwise known as the "Queen City of the Plains," the Rocky Mountains bend and fold the Earth in ways vastly different from those of Colorado's neighboring Great Plains states of Kansas and Nebraska. Match the mountain mosaics with anti-modern, spiritual narration about "not

waiting another day" or "the willingness to feel awe," and the *Come to Life* campaign provides the ideal liturgy for a worship service in the mountains.

What these cathedrals provide for Colorado's Tourism Office is not a traditional 10% tithe, particularly in the winter tourism season. Skiers spend on average almost three times more than other travelers to the state, according to the CTO (2017b). Spending an average of $1,306 per person, skiers vastly outspend the next type of travelers—business and leisure, at $455—while city visitors spend a relatively measly average of $387 per trip. With downhill lift tickets costing more than $150 per day for adults at most resorts, it is no wonder that skiing is the state's most profitable tourist activity on paper and one that is consistently featured in both advertisements and research reports. A lift ticket for one day of skiing alone is just under half the price of an entire trip for city travelers. Furthermore, the additional costs associated with skiing for accommodations, clothing, equipment rentals, food, and transportation far outweigh a camping vacation during the summer months.

The language, imagery, cultural meanings, and money attached to mountains create a landscape of elite exclusion, in which those tourists who can afford to enter mountainous landscapes reign supreme in the CTO's eyes. Elite exclusion is represented in *Come to Life* through *not* having to interact with other humans. In the campaign, there are no ski lift lines, no selfie-taking tourists, and no large crowds jockeying to get the best view of Maroon Bells. Instead, the imagery suggests that couples and individual explorers experience authenticity through isolation and privacy. *The* wilderness experience favors those with the income and time to pause their everyday life to go out

and find themselves in the wild and "get away from it all" (Cronon, 1995, p. 85). That is, both the landscape and those who have "coveted access" to it are privileged (Park & Pellow, 2011). The tourist yield in resort areas explains why Colorado's winter campaigns are exclusively composed of either skiers or tourists participating in winter activities with traditional downhill skiing attire. For instance, in the commercial "Snowball Melee" tourists are seen throwing snowballs at each other; however, the family is on what one would assume to be a groomed downhill slope and are wearing goggles (a piece of clothing almost exclusively used for skiing in Colorado). In "Perfect Day," snow bikers carry skis on their backs as they bike through downtown Crested Butte, a ski resort town.

Skiing is big money for Colorado. With the trademark "America's Best Skiing" in hand, the CTO has proudly boasted that the state is the most popular overnight downhill ski destination in the U.S., claiming 19% of overnight ski trips (Longwoods International, 2017). With Vail Resorts and Copper Mountain Resort representatives occupying two of the 11 CTO board seats, it is not surprising that the office insists on promoting ski tourism. However, skiing, like other outdoor recreation, has too often been positioned as an activity on a "virgin" landscape. For skiing, this means transforming the mountain resort area into one that seems authentic and untouched, further promoting the notion that mountains are to be revered. Coleman (2004), for instance, explained how skiing areas have increasingly become a corporatized landscape in which "presenting an empty, pristine, wild, and natural landscape paradoxically became a business, with mechanization not just a necessity but a boon" (p. 118). The ski industry relies on the

guise of wilderness, nature, and authenticity to ensure visitors continue to spend thousands of dollars in their carefully constructed resort lands, which often reside on national forest land. For instance, even the names of ski runs in Colorado resorts—"Northwoods," "Pioneer," "Frontier," "Blackhawk," "Upper Enchanted Forest"—reference "mythical images" of the West as a place untouched and first discovered by White recreationalists (Coleman, 2004). Similarly, Philpott (2013) explained how Interstate 70, which gives access to ski resorts such as Vail or Copper, was constructed to make a landscape that was once seen as dangerous and inhospitable to front range residents seem like a "natural place for an interstate" (p. 103). This process is ironic: in order to make the landscape appear untouched and appeal to leisure-seekers wanting to experience wilderness, the state had to put a considerable amount of money, advertising, resources, and infrastructure into doing so. What's more, the myth of the untouched wilderness belies the environmental damage done at the hands of the closely related tourism and energy industries—a dynamic I detail more in Chapter 4.

Authenticity

The claim to authentic landscapes has not just been peddled by the ski resorts: the state as a whole claims authenticity, and its tourism media are composed of selected and edited scenic shots that construct a narrative of "coming to life" organically. In *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture,* Sarah Banet-Weiser (2013) developed the notion of what she called "brand cultures": spaces that exist in areas where people traditionally find authenticity (politics, spirituality, self-identity), which are also increasingly structured via the logic of branding. Accordingly, consumers increasingly

find authenticity and meaning *through* brands, rather than in opposition to them. While advertising since the 1920s consumerist boom has promised intangible wants and desires such as love or inclusion through consumption, brand cultures take marketing a step further by branding authenticity itself. As Banet-Weiser (2013) put it, "this transformation of culture of everyday living into brand culture signals a broader shift, from 'authentic' culture to the branding of authenticity" (p. 5).

As Banet-Weiser (2013) suggested, authenticity is the crown jewel of modern advertising. Colorado as a product seems to side-step our traditional notions of branding and advertising as being materialistic, exploitative, fake, or consumeristic by rhetorically positioning itself as an authentic space. Through the "language of branding," and "brand logic" (Banet-Weiser, 2013, p. 5), place becomes a branded space where the CTO attempts to both tell a story and create a relationship with the consumer. Authenticity as a branded product is reserved for tourists whom the office deems most valuable, as evidenced by Figure 1, in which the father and son are given exclusive, private access to the state's most coveted destinations. As communication scholars, it is important to understand how branding (the process of marketing a product for a consumer) appears not just in the selling of products, but in the defining of place. I therefore understand the authentic tourist "stage" as a branded stage, where Colorado's image has been constructed by marketers with the guidance and oversight of a state-funded office.

Furthermore, the act of consumption and consumerism cannot be distinguished from the larger tourism premise. Philpott (2013) explained how post-WWII consumerist mentality influenced the way in which tourism functioned in Colorado: rather than

travelers viewing landscapes as symbols of national identity or collective experiences, Colorado's high country became a product for individual consumers and was prized for its ability to meet a tourist's needs, such as a desire for authenticity, spiritual awakening, or a sense of freedom. This is why tourism media shifts and morphs in accordance with the perceived desires of tourists. For instance, before the *Come to Life* campaign, CTO marketers in the late 1980s believed that it was beneficial to highlight amenities in the mountains such as golf clubs or spas. Based on research from the initial Longwoods International study, images of empty mountainous landscapes were considered unsuccessful, and instead a campaign centered on the mantra "[m]ountains and much more" was suggested (Siegel, 2009). Now, amenities are seen as detractors from the authentic landscape, and the *Come to Life* campaign relies on supposed non-human-imposed scenery.

Colorado, therefore, has shifted back to campaigns focusing on a romantic rendering of wilderness and a strict nature/culture divide. The landscape, as an authentic, amenity-free space in its representation, is instead branded. The branded wilderness/urban and spiritual/non-spiritual binary is exactly what Smith (2017) argued is rooted in whiteness. The mountain-heavy campaign exposes the underlying presence that White perspectives have in both framing and representing Colorado.

Using wilderness imagery, the CTO's *Come to Life* campaign promises that Colorado is a place where tourists can find themselves. The wilderness allows them to "Come to Life," forget about their day-to-day lives, and live authentically. Given this promise, the Colorado brand "strive[s] to cultivate relationships with consumers,

relationships that have at their core ‘authentic’ sentiments of affect, emotion, and trust” (Banet-Weiser, 2013, p. 214). Traveling to Colorado via the brand promise, according to Banet-Weiser’s framework, will “enhance possibilities for individual identities, cultural practices, everyday politics” (2013, p. 214). In other words, the Colorado product undertakes an emotional, affective exchange with potential tourists and brands Colorado in the process. Tim Kemple, Karsh Hagan’s director of *Come to Life*, exemplified this logic when explaining the production process behind the campaign, saying that they started with “a blank slate: go anywhere you want in Colorado and tell an authentic story about how people can interact with just this beautiful place” (Karsh Hagan, 2014). In this quotation, it was assumed that Colorado is already an authentic place reflected accurately in tourism media (Hall, 1997). This authenticity attached to place speaks directly to the White settler ideology of private ownership and in so doing re-erases Indigenous peoples who called Colorado home long before White settlement and continue to live on, or were forcibly removed from, the land. The expectation presented to the audience is that the land was, is, and will remain empty. In a video about the production of the campaign, Karsh Hagan (2014) explained the process of “[showing] the world what it feels like to be in Colorado” as they “poured pure emotion into awareness vehicles like TV and print” (Karsh Hagan, 2014). This “pure emotion” puts forth the perception that Colorado’s story is not generated but rather translated or relayed in the commercials, suggesting that Colorado is genuine and original and separate from culture.

Gender Performances

Given that wilderness and outdoor-recreation landscapes are branded as "natural," cultural codes of conduct remain even more stubbornly intact and are naturalized within the context of "authenticity." For nature to remain untouched and pure in the popular imagination, the people who are represented in it must remain pure and "unmarked" as well. Therefore, idealized tourism performances, particularly in wilderness settings, are normalized to the extent that they seem "natural." These seemingly invisible performances are compounded by the wilderness stage in which tourists perform, given the dominant Euro-American discourse that wilderness and culture are separate.

Come to Life commercials disproportionately represent women as passive and feminized (via color codes, activities, and body language) rather than active participants in the wilderness settings. In other words, women are accessories to tourism rather than tourism subjects themselves. Women are often accompanied by men or represented with children and are accessories to the main tourist. In the television spots "Awe" and "No Waiting," a White father and son appear with arms outstretched in front of a rainbow-lit waterfall (Figure 1), while a White mother and daughter pick wildflowers in a high-alpine meadow—images that signify transcendental moments in Colorado's high country within strict gender roles. While the men experience the main tourist attraction and enjoy the more physical activity of hiking, the mother adoringly places flowers in the daughter's hair as they sit in a high-alpine valley. Here, women's place in wilderness is both frivolous and "a means of enriching the lives of their children rather than a means of personal exploration" (McNiel et al., p. 51.)

Along a similar vein of passivity, women's bodies, rather than their actions, are often the focus of the scenes in *Come to Life* campaigns. Their bodies become the subject and aspect of male tourism, rather than women being independent tourists; women tend to be filmed in close ups, placing emphasis on their eyes, faces, feet, and hands. In the commercial "Bliss," for instance, the camera follows a White woman walking up the steps to a hot spring, spending a considerable amount of time focused on her feet, calves, and legs as she joins her male counterpart in the hot spring pool. In "Moments," the opening shot of the commercial is of a White women's left eye blinking. Her eye takes up an entire half of the camera shot. Later, the camera shot focuses on her hairband-adorned wrist, her face looking out the car, and her hand touching the water as a canoe moves through a lake, and a downward shot captures the women's bathing-suit clad body as she climbs a small cliff. There is only one brief moment when the male's hand is the focus of the commercial. In another example, the Colorado winter spot "Memories," a White heterosexual family with a son go skiing and snowboarding before snow tubing. The father's face is never shown from the front, let alone up close. Meanwhile, the woman is pictured in close proximity to and then accompanying the child down the tubing hill. This focus on the female body positions women under the male gaze within the already romanticized wilderness stage. In other words, rather than focusing on women as active participants in the wilderness, women are objects that further imbue the landscape with awe, spirituality, and pleasure. Only one commercial features a girl or woman by herself outdoors—in this one she is on horseback; however, the camera once again focuses more directly on the girl's face rather than on the act of horseback riding. Men, on the other

hand, are typically filmed using shots from farther away and in panoramic scenes. They are represented as *active* tourists. They handle rock climbing equipment, fly-fish, hike solo, and are alone in the wild. The largest proportion of screen time in commercials is given to large landscapes with male subjects amid nature.

In several commercial spots, the sun backlights White women's faces, suggesting purity and reverence for the White female body and further preserving the "spatial consolidation of whiteness" in wilderness settings (Moore et al., 2003). For instance, the commercial "No Waiting" begins with a view of a large mountain foregrounded by wildflowers, followed by a high-alpine river and valley as a women's acapella voice sings and a child is seen running through a field of wildflowers. The camera then does a close-up of the woman and her child in the field. The point of view is below the White woman as the sun backlights her face, as if the viewer were kneeling before her in awe. In this particular commercial, the tourist is again accompanied by a child, and together they pick wildflowers. In the commercial "Moments," a mixed-raced heterosexual couple climb in the Collegiate Peaks area of Colorado. A medley of scenes exhibits the White woman's face as she looks out the car's passenger window and sips coffee in a sleeping bag in the morning while her male partner stands on a rock in the background. Here, the woman's activities reference domesticity through material objects like coffee and bedding whereas the man is free of material objects and truly "in nature." The camera then zooms in on her eyelids, hands, and swimsuit-covered body as she climbs a cliff before a final scene of her and her partner jumping together from it into a river. Not once is there a close-up of her male partner. Thus, even when women or girls are active

participants in wilderness settings (such as horseback riding or cliff jumping), the focus remains on their body; this signifies that their importance is in being gazed upon in comparison to the active, full-bodied men in these ads. The White tourist woman functions as a supplementary fixture in the wilderness stage and is meant to appeal to a male audience conditioned to favor the White female body.

Women are often feminized in outdoor settings, and relatedly, women's positions in the outdoors mimic domestic settings (McNiel et al., 2012). *Outdoor* and *Backpacker* magazines often picture women in pink and purple attire—marking their gender through color stereotypes—adorned with jewelry or other accessories. In the *Come to Life* commercial "Beyond," women are shown in purple attire while snowshoeing (CTO, 2012c). In "What Should We Say?" women ski in pink jackets, wear purple and pink jackets while throwing snowballs, and wear pastel blue jackets while sitting with a male counterpart on a winter hiking trail (CTO, 2012g). Beyond color codes, accessories play an even more important role in the advertisements in *Outdoor* and *Backpacker*. McNeil et al. (1012) argued that accessories correlate consumer capitalism and materialism to outdoor recreation (for women in particular) as well as situate women in the domestic sphere. They wrote: "instead of presenting rugged individualists, many ads appealed to women's caretaker ethic by highlighting how wilderness settings—with the right products—can help replicate the home environment and traditional gender relations within the home" (p. 48–49).

One example is a scene from the commercial "Bliss," where a woman is alone in a hot tub at night, staring at the sky. Sitting in a hot tub associates her with comfort,

passivity, and civilization in the "wild," situating her in the domestic realm (McNeil et al., 2012, p. 47), whereas her male counterparts in other *Come to Life* commercials are actively hiking, climbing, and standing on rocky vistas with no civilization in sight. She is not active, but is passive and relies on the material comforts of home (a heated pool) even while she is well outside of it. Additionally, her body language is noticeably less expansive and powerful than that in scenes that feature men alone: her arms are submerged, and her head is looking upward to the sky.

Anti-Civilization Rhetoric

The connotations embedded in place-making are critical in understanding how power is exercised through tourism and tourism advertisements. Tourism media, like nature essays and other land-based texts, "not only describe[] but also construct[] the landscape of the West" (Ray, 2015, p. 82–97). Therefore, tourism advertisements are not simply transmitting information about a place or a person's interaction with it; they are constructing an imaginary Colorado, which in turn constructs an imagined tourist. This imagined tourist is a product of identity politics and places considerable value on certain social groups. In Colorado's case, the ideal tourist is one who mirrors White Euro-American settlers in that the image of the tourist views nature as untouched, uninhabited, ahistorical, and made by God for the tourist's consumption.

To that end, the most prominent message put forth by Colorado's *Come to Life* is the claim that nature is both counterpoint and remedy to civilization. Colorado is "a symbol of what it means to get off the couch," according to the *Come to Life* campaign makers. Consequently, the couch becomes a symbol for society, with the antidote

residing in wilderness settings. Cronon (1995) went even further with this observation of anti-civilization rhetoric by suggesting that wilderness ideology also attempts to "escape history." Interconnected with anti-civilization rhetoric is the supposed passing away of the U.S. frontier and the mythos attached to frontier ideology. According to Cronon (1995) and Kollin (2001), contemporary wilderness sites in the United States embody a "frontier nostalgia," which attempts to counteract the ills of civilization and alleviate fears about the frontier's waning claim to wilderness. In the 1890s, Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier thesis" exposed the White settler paradigm that was contingent on frontier mythos and wilderness. White settlers assumed that the wilderness landscape of the frontier was always already uninhabited and existed for their enjoyment. Cronon (1995) explained:

> Those who have celebrated the frontier have almost always looked backward as they did so, mourning an older, simpler, truer world that is about to disappear forever. That world and all its attractions, Turner said, depended on free land—on wilderness. (p. 77)

Come to Life commercials have attempted to recapture this frontier dogma through "implied ambivalence, if not downright hostility, toward modernity and all that it represented" (Cronon, 1995, p. 77). *Come to Life* uses montages of hikers entering mountain valleys as if exploring them for the first time while the narrator laments the nuisance of traffic lights or commuting—in other words, modernity. Colorado's tourism commercials almost entirely depend on the construction of Colorado as an anti-urban,

anti-technology, anti-modern, and anti-couch space. An excerpt from one TV commercial in the *Come to Life* campaign, "No Waiting" laments:

> No longer should we wait. Not for the second hand or the stoplight. Not for the phone to ring the line to move. Or some sign from the sky. Our skin was meant to feel the sun. Our legs were meant to travel. Our eyes were meant to see great things. To photograph them for our memories. We will not wait another day. For waiting is the opposite of living (CTO, 2012d).

The CTO's argument is that Colorado's wilderness areas provide a pure and authentic way to "come to life" amidst the fast-moving modern world that forces us to "wait" to live. The pronouns "our" and "we" insinuate a universal human experience and desire to escape modernity. Phrases such as "meant to" suggest a primitive and essentialist way of being. Authenticity in Colorado's tourism media entails adhering to the ways our legs, eyes, and skin area "meant to" feel, travel, and see. The narrative suggests that humans are not meant to be urban and those who live (or recreate) in urban areas (by choice or because of financial, economic, social, physical or cultural barriers) are not authentic. To live an unauthentic, city and people-tainted life is not truly living—a bold proposition meant to inspire travel and funnel potential visitors to Colorado.

White Flight

In the U.S. West in particular, wilderness scenery is connected with race, particularly whiteness. When wilderness areas are framed as empty, pristine, and as "a world unmarked by the encroachments of modern civilization," wilderness becomes a "particular form of White flight" (Kollin, 2001, p. 122). Referencing the movement of

White Americans to suburbs in the post-WWII era, wilderness as White flight sets in motion parameters on who can enter wilderness areas and for what purpose. Wilderness settings, therefore, are an "alluring escape from history" and people and furthermore assume nature can cure all the ills of humanity—ills that White U.S. Americans in the 1950s and '60s reasoned resided in urban areas. White flight to "blank slate landscapes area" expanded beyond suburban areas to popular tourist destinations in Colorado's mountainous regions. In post-war Colorado, for instance, Philpott, citing Coleman's work on the history of downhill skiing in Colorado, explained how skiing industry powerhouse Vail was appealing to "a suburban ideal: the desire for social exclusivity, for an enclave safe from society's unsavory elements, a place where middle-class respectability (and perhaps whiteness) reigned supreme" (Coleman, 2004, as cited by Philpott, 2013, p. 179).

Accordingly, the actors permitted in wilderness settings mimic promises of White flight in the post-war era (Kollin, 2001). The idea of wilderness settings also holds the assumption that new landscapes provide a blank slate, or new beginning. References to urban and white-collar nuances are commonplace in the *Come to Life* advertisements. The narrator performs a siren song for the imagined urban desk worker: "our lives are busy, noisy" and we are forced "to color inside the lines." Only by visiting Bridal Veil Falls, Garden of the Gods, or Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park (all locations featured multiple times in the commercials) can the tourist remember what freedom feels like and "forget that traffic jams and spreadsheets even exist" (CTO, 2013).

Come to Life travelers are always *the only* people in these wilderness scenes. Tourists are depicted alone or in small groups in *Come to Life* advertisements as opposed

to the more realistic tourist experience, in which popular places like Rocky Mountain National Park see more than 4.5 million visitors each year (National Park Service, 2019). This suggests that landscapes are empty until visited by the tourist. By positioning nature as authentic and untouched, *Come to Life* commercials mythologize wilderness and put it in opposition to civilization and modernity. Wilderness, therefore, can be understood as "the ultimate fetish, an object given inordinate value and thought to be endowed with special powers" (Kollin, 2001, p. 122). The CTO relies on anti-civilization rhetoric that promises spiritual awakening in the Rocky Mountains, and the wilderness stage sets the script for White, affluent visitors to "escape history," escape everyday life, and find themselves in nature (Cronon, 1995).

An Answer to the Crisis in Masculinity

The performances of gender and whiteness fused together in Colorado's ads reveal how Colorado tourism aims to answer what scholars have labeled a "crisis in masculinity," that is, White men believing themselves threatened by the feminization of the workforce (e.g., less emphasis on physical labor) and by the advancements of women in political, economic, and social spheres (Rogers, 2008). In order to reclaim their manhood, they must prove themselves in wild, primitive, settings where the civilized, feminized city life (that supposedly put them in the crisis in the first place) does not, in theory, exist. In the *Come to Life* campaign, men are seen jumping off of ledges into high alpine lakes or standing with arms outstretched in front of waterfalls. The CTO's gendered tourism scripts in particular provide an answer to the crisis in masculinity—a crisis in which heterosexual White men are threatened by modernization and women's

advancement in society and attempt to return to their "primitive" and natural states through tourism. Tourism media contingent on outdoor scenery appeals to White male's anxieties about women's advancement and urban life. Using Alaska as a case study, Kollin (2001) argued that wilderness settings create a place for men to prove their authentic manhood (Kollin, 2001). Places like Alaska, Colorado, and other Western landscapes become a solution for the "crisis in masculinity," and tourism is the vehicle in which this meaning is circulated.

Whereas women are often filmed in close proximity, associated with children, or represented with signifiers of the domestic sphere, White men in *Come to Life* commercials embody individualism, freedom, and breaking free from the constraints of a feminized home life or civilization more generally. Colorado tourism promises men an experience that is both physically and spiritually transformative. Male tourist performances in *Come to Life* commercials feed off dual themes of anti-civilization and individualism. In the CTO's marketing material, men's bodies are filmed from a distance, focusing less on separate physical characteristics of their bodies and more on their whole body's physical ability to occupy the vastness of mountain valleys and waterfall sprays. In the commercials, men enter the landscape on their own terms; for instance, in Figure 1, two men stand at the foot of a waterfall with arms outstretched in ecstasy in an expansive performance that literally takes up space and sends the message that this land is *their* land.

Place Identities

Colorado becomes a branded landscape imbued with notions of authenticity that echo promises aimed at affluent White visitors who wish to escape civilization and return to a "lost Eden" (Smith, 2017, p. 140). Tourism media authorize wilderness discourse and thus aid in a process of inclusion and exclusion on the bases of gender, race, and class. In other words, tourism media construct identities tied to the construction of place. *Place identities* describe the type of people and behavior permitted in the wilderness stage constructed by the *Come to Life* campaign. The place, or stage, in which tourists are represented co-constructs the ideal tourist's identity and acts as a policing agent for inclusion and exclusion. This final section of this analysis transitions from the wilderness imagery and its associations with authenticity and anti-civilization to detailing the dominant identities of the tourists within the wilderness settings.

Racial Demographics

Come to Life commercials disproportionately represent White tourists.[5] Even when tourists of color are represented, they are associated with a White woman in a mixed-race couple. The sole exceptions in the campaign are short scenes of two kids climbing rocks at the Garden of the Gods, a split-second shot of a mother and daughter in ski gear, and a man preparing to rock climb. Figure 2 is a coding table that details all of

[5] In my research I made assumptions about peoples' race and ethnicity in the advertisements given that it is solely based on what I could see in the commercials. Although out of necessity I assume that tourists are white and of Euro-American decent, this consequently centers whiteness and also does not account for mixed-race tourists and/or tourists who do not identify as white. In the following section, I group tourists into either "white" or "of color" in order to argue that representationally, tourism media in Colorado represents white and white passing tourists. Later, I specifically talk about African-American tourists given the CTO's categorization in the Longwoods International report.

the available videos from the *Come to Life* campaign, the year they were produced,[6] and the assumed racial identity of the tourists represented.[7] The blue highlights indicate winter campaign commercials that ran from 2012 to 2017.

[6] The CTO does not produce annual commercials; rather, commercials made in 2012 were televised and circulated until new ones were made in 2016.

[7] The videos represented in Figure 2 were television commercials or segmented pieces of each commercial, meaning there is overlap in scenes between each. It is impossible to know which were televised and which reside purely online; however, despite the overlap in scenery between each, the numbers still represent a campaign saturated with white tourists.

Figure 2.

Come to Life commercials and racial demographics

Commercial Title	Year	white Represented	Black/POC Represented
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Inspiration	s2016	X	
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Moments	s2016	X	X
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Journey	s2016	X	
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Breathe	s2016	X	
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Invitation	s2016	X	
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Bliss	s2016	X	
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Wonder	s2016	X	
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Happiness	s2016	X	
Colorado Tourism: Garden of the Gods	s2012		X
Colorado Tourism: Dunes	s2012	X	
Colorado Tourism: Farmers Market	s2012	n/a	n/a
Colorado Tourism: Brewery	s2012	X	
Colorado Tourism: Waterfall	s2012	X	
Colorado Tourism: Awe	s2012	X	X
Colorado Tourism: No Waiting - :60s	s2012	X	
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Once	s2012	X	
Colorado Tourism: Awake	s2012	X	
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Potential	s2012	X	
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Open	s2012	X	X
Colorado Tourism Commercial: What Should We Say?	w2012	X	
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Walk In The Woods	w2012	X	
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Wipeout	w2012	X	
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Snowball Melee	w2012	X	
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Courdaroy	w2012	X	
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Anticipation	w2012	X	
Colorado Tourism Commercial: Perfect Day	w2012	X	X
Totals		24	5
% of campaign representation in commercials with people		96%	20.00%

Out of the 26 commercials available to view, 25 had people present. Twenty-four out of 25 campaign commercials (96%) represented *only* White tourists, whereas only five out of 25 (20%) represented Black or Brown tourists with White tourists. Only one out of 25 commercials had tourists of color as the only tourists represented. The percentages represented in Figure 2 are somewhat misleading, however, given that oftentimes the Black or tourists of color were seen in a short, second-long montage. The total amount of screen time is far less than 20% suggests. For instance, in the commercial

"Perfect Day," White tourists are seen skiing down a groomed run and walking into a ski town with skies slung over their shoulder and a Labrador retriever in tow. For less than one second in the 30-second spot, a tourist of color is seen smiling at a mid-mountain picnic table in ski gear. Put into context, this means that out of 3 minutes and 4 seconds of winter-specific commercials, tourists of color were represented in 1 second. A viewer could blink and miss the single representation of a tourists of color in Colorado's winter landscape.

By representing Colorado's landscape as one that includes mainly White tourists, especially in the winter ski-themed commercials, the state has practiced what Moore et al. (2003) called "spatial consolidation of whiteness" (p. 30). Advertisements inform audiences that White Euro-Americans are welcome into wilderness settings or ski resort areas by making White tourists visible and rendering tourists of color invisible, thus perpetuating the myth that wilderness is a site for discovery and settlement of European Americans, or, in a modern context, a place of White flight to escape modernity.

Nuclear Family

In the *Come to Life* commercials, scenes featuring two tourists or families represent exclusively in heterosexual couplings in canoes, skiing, or snowshoeing, in hot springs, or with a child while snow tubing. Only two scenes in the *Come to Life* campaign feature same-sex tourists together (when they are not assumed to be a parent and child). One is of two men ascending into a mountain valley together. The image is brief (less than five seconds), and although it is unclear what relationship they have to one another, proxemics would suggest that they are not romantically involved given the considerable

gap between the two men and the absence of them smiling at one another—a behavior common to heterosexual couples represented in the advertisements. Another image with two men of significantly different ages and sizes suggests they are father and son as they hike into a valley and then stand in front of a waterfall. In contrast, advertisements that include heterosexual couples clearly show them acting together: canoeing on a high-alpine lake, enjoying a soak in Strawberry Hot Springs, walking to a fly-fishing spot, skiing, sitting side by side at a lake, and snowshoeing. The persistence of this pattern contrasted with the absence of LBTQIA models suggests such tourists do not have a place in the imagined Colorado. Additionally, there are no scenes featuring adult women together—only a scene with a mother and her daughter. This pattern of representation thus reinforces heteronormativity (alongside whiteness) in Colorado's landscape.

"Research"-Supported Representation

In addition to what is visible in the content of *Come to Life* commercials, the Longwoods International (2017) report prepared for the CTO placed emphasis on White tourists by highlighting them as the most frequent visitors. Figure 3 is from a report on travel year 2015 that detailed the racial demographics of overnight and leisure-trip travelers, which are the most valued trip segment for the CTO given the high amount of spending required for overnight trips. Given that success is measured by money spent in the state, overnight travelers are greatly valued both representationally and in amount of reporting done about them in Longwoods.

In high-cost ski resort areas specifically, tourists can literally "buy their way into an alpine village or western cow town" (Coleman, 1996, p. 154). In the corporate ski

resort model, ski tourists have more significant barriers of entry to the sport, such as planning well in advance, geographical distance from populated areas, and multi-day accommodations. Since skiing has transitioned to a primarily tourist activity, it more heavily relies on demands for tourist spending and assumed attributes of a particular activity or identity (Harrison, 2013). For instance, assumptions that African Americans cannot afford a ski vacation or associations between skiing and being "primitive" or "wild" paves the way for subsequent marketing efforts to attract White ski tourists. Take for instance, the CTO's coded words to describe outdoor trip tourist demographics: "more upscale in terms of education and income" (CTO, 2015). The word "upscale" places more value and emphasis on income and education as indicators of outdoor participation. In conjunction with Figure 3 (which is in the same report), this term associates particular income and education levels with the tourist identity, further racializing the graph. Put simply, the corporate tourist paradigm facilitates segregation that promotes certain social groups' involvement in the sport by constructing and maintaining exclusionary spaces in which African American skiers become invisible or extraordinary (Harrison, 2013).[8]

[8] As Harrison (2013) suggested, this is especially prevalent in White-dominated winter sports such as skiing and is a reoccurring discourse surrounding athletes like Canadian hockey player Sarah Nurse and former French Olympian ice-skater Surya Bonaly, who faced anti-Black discourses, from subtle unbelonging to exoticism and rarity, as they excelled on the rink.

Figure 3.

Racial demographics of overnight leisure trip tourists from the Longwoods International Travel Year 2015 report prepared for the Colorado Tourism Office in June of 2016

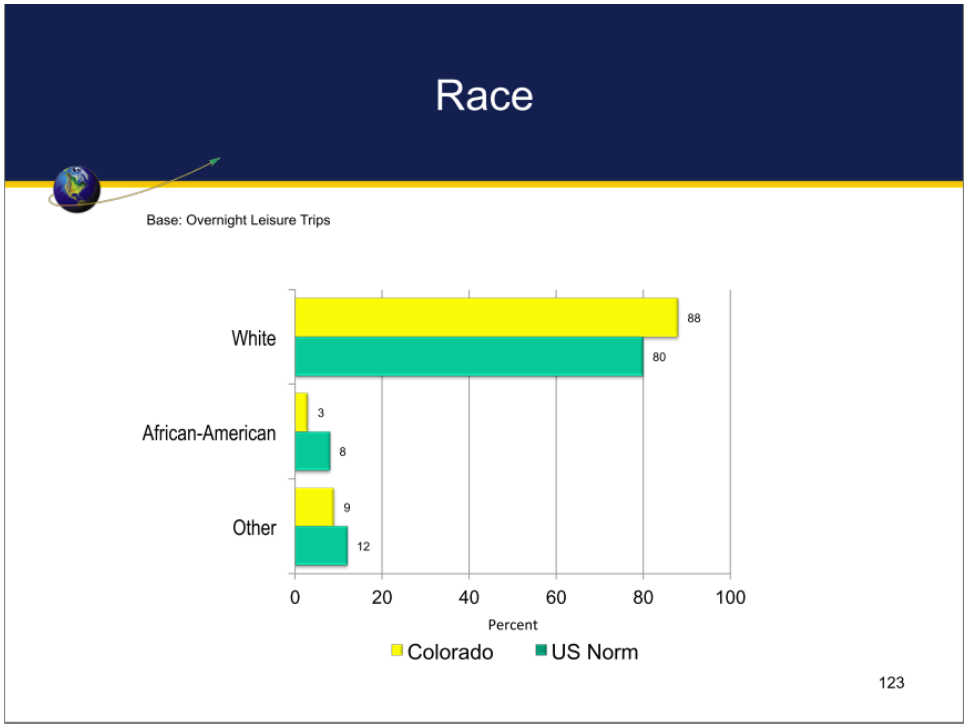


Figure 3 shows the focus on White tourists, who dominate overnight leisure trips and therefore have become the center of CTO attention; a focus on White tourists also reproduces divisions between White, African American, and "other" tourists in the overnight leisure industry. The CTO does not view this graph as an opportunity for business growth for African American and "other" tourists (Harrison, 2013); rather the demographics were presented favorably in the Longwoods report, and White tourists have become the focus. The identity of the largest bar in Figure 3 (White) adheres to the conception of wilderness as a welcoming landscape for White individuals to find

themselves in. This is evidenced in the content of the *Come to Life* campaign and the construction of the wilderness stage in order to inspire potential tourists into the marketing funnel. Accordingly, wilderness and whiteness go together and serve as the dominant perspective behind the *Come to Life* narrative.

Compared to the U.S. norm, Colorado Overnight Leisure trips also skew male. According to Colorado's research partner Longwoods International, the U.S. norm for overnight travel is 49% male, whereas Colorado has a significantly higher percentage of male tourists, at 56% (CTO, 2016).[9] For outdoor trips in particular, which are the types of trips featured in a majority of the advertising videos and print material, Longwoods reported a higher skew, with 59% of visitors identified as male (CTO, 2016). Colorado's tourism advertisements are a case study that showcase how the White, male-centric definition of the West (e.g., expansive, powerful) from the 19th century as seeped into representation and reporting that informs the CTO of the ideal tourist.

Discussion

Following Smith's research on "Black land stories," I contend that the CTO's discursive focus on White bodies and wilderness as innately spiritual and empty obscures the presence of Black and brown land narratives and further substantiates a problematic binary between wilderness and civilization. The very notion of wilderness as "pristine" creates an oppositional space of civilization as "dirty" and considers people, places, and identities associated with built environments as undesirable. The bar graph in Figure 3 is

[9] Longwoods International, "Colorado Travel Year 2016," 2017, 118.

a metaphor for the land ethics that are valued in our culture, where power resides in cultures and activities associated with White wilderness. News media have recently amplified Black folks' critiques of how environmental stages are exclusionary and even dangerous for Black recreationalists and people of color. For instance, stories about Patricia "Blackpacker" Cameron hiking the 485-mile Colorado Trail to bring attention to the lack of diversity in Colorado's outdoor community has helped shed light on the overwhelming whiteness of Colorado's outdoor activities.

In the *Come to Life* context, one can see how a state-run tourism office sets the stage for certain activities shown in campaigns such as skiing and hiking, through narration and imagery about wilderness being a religious site of discovery; they adhere to the John Muir-style "land as wilderness" paradigm, excluding those who do not identify with the White male doctrine (Smith, 2017, p. 137). What are the implications of *racial spatiality* (Harrison, 2013) for tourism media? Harrison explicitly called attention to the role of media in ski representation and imagery, arguing that "the ability of media representations … to shape the market in ways that attract some subsegments of the population while discouraging others is perhaps unprecedented" (p. 322). White skiers are complicit in *racial spatiality*, continue to participate in the sport uncritically, and are responsible for the symbolic and material exclusion of African American skiers (Harrison, 2013). In addition, Harrison (2013) attributed fault with image-makers such as the CTO and Karsh Hagan: campaigns such as *Come to Life* and research reports from Longwoods "have, either foolishly or savvily, upheld the dogma that keeping skiing white is good for business" (p. 333). Racial segregation, according to Harrison, should be

challenged in every aspect of society, particularly around ski tourism, where segregation often goes unquestioned and where whiteness is privileged and protected.

Terrains of Struggle

By constructing Colorado as an oasis amidst civilization and mirroring promises of White flight and settler colonialism, the CTO exhibits Harrison's (2013) *racial spatiality* as well as feminist scholar Gigi Durham's (2015) concept of *social geographies of power*, in which the office's discourse determines who is a proper traveler to certain landscapes and in which contexts. *Social geographies of power* forefronts the idea of place in media studies by arguing that media representations act as maps that "orient us to our surroundings" (Durham, 2015, p. 177). As in any map (or stage), what it communicates is not an accurate representation but a specific understanding of place from a particular perspective. Imagery, text, symbols, and narratives in state-sponsored tourism media work together to re-map and stage tourists in accordance with the CTO's vision and goals. Maps draw a connection between the ideal tourist and the places where the tourist is encouraged to go. In the CTO's discursive mapping of the state, significant power has been given to empty mountainous landscapes or landscapes that reference ski resorts through clothing or activities. These renderings of place further authenticate wealthy, White tourists and represent the landscape as a place to be consumed.

Absence

Beyond the power embedded in mountains and the imagery surrounding the romanticization of the landscape, media discourses (and by extension, maps) signify absence as well (Hall, 1997). Whereas Harrison's (2013) study points to how *racial*

spatiality makes Black skiers extraordinary or deviant, additional attention should be given to how place indicates absence as well. Absence works in several layers: First, by representing the landscape as wild and empty, there is an erasure of not just tourists of color, but of Indigenous peoples as well. White tourists (such as the men hiking into an empty valley or women picking wildflowers in a meadow) perform a settler ideology that places their relationship with the land as principal, thus continuing the "vanishing Indian" narrative and claiming first and only rights to the land (Wilcox, 2010). In other words, wilderness narratives act as a type of totalizing conquest that frame Native Americans as "powerless victims of impersonal forces" (Wilcox, 2010, p. 115). While groups such as Denver-based NativesOutdoors aim to return place names to their original Indigenous language after Euro-Americans "named" peaks and places, wilderness narratives that frame Colorado as an empty, pristine, uninhabited landscape actively contest this work.

Conclusion

Given that dominant society attaches racialized spiritual and romantic values to the natural settings featured in the *Come to Life* campaign, the types of bodies and performances welcome in such settings expose a value system in accordance with race, gender, class, and sexuality. Therefore, place acts as a "potent signifier" in relation to various identities (Durham, 2015). As the landscape is placed on an idealized pedestal, it becomes a signifier for the affluent White tourist. Similarly, working at the cross-section of place and media, Durham (2015) argued that media are "terrains of struggle" in which narratives of place are circulated. I argue that "terrains of struggle" are also constructed and "circulated" through tourism media. The landscape becomes a "terrain of struggle,"

both in the symbolic and material realm, in which certain identities are privileged while others remain undervalued through absence or dismissal.

The CTO's tourism media and reporting put forth a particular "imagining" of Colorado. The *Come to Life* campaign exclusively associates winter tourism with ski resorts through attire and activities, thus constructing a place that signifies (and benefits) ski resorts and justifies the continued use of this land by White, settler tourists. Furthermore, Colorado's geography is represented as one that exists outside of discourse, history, and politics. This mapping maintains whiteness as the norm. As the CTO aims to align Colorado with authenticity, "authentic Colorado" becomes defined through whiteness. To that end, more attention needs to be given to how place and tourism participate in larger systems of racism, classism, and sexism. Harrison (2013) argued that "to the extent that certain leisure pursuits are thought of as 'White' and 'Black,' historical patterns of segregation are reproduced" (p. 321). The wilderness stage, with its seemingly "natural" façade, needs to be continually interrogated and understood as a mechanism that maintains whiteness.

Chapter 3:

FOOTBALL, COUNTRY CLUBS, & CANNABIS: IDENTIFYING TOURISM'S IMAGINED AUDIENCE

A textual analysis of the Colorado Tourism Office's (CTO) most recent advertising campaign, *Come to Life,* is worthwhile in identifying the ideal tourist through representation; however, equally telling is where the CTO places the *Come to Life* advertisements in hopes of capturing eyeballs and pocketbooks, indicating more overtly the state's vision of the ideal tourist. Focusing on just the creative aspects of advertising (the content, semiotics, imagery, brand) misses the "essential aspects of advertising's social role" (Turow, 2011, p. 19). In other words, advertisements are social identifiers in their own right, indicating who or what is meant for certain products and implying the assumptions about who is best fit for products regardless of who is represented in the ads. This chapter uses existing audience scholarship as a framework for demonstrating how Colorado's ideal tourist is revealed through the audience by way of the purpose, placement, and measurement of *Come to Life* advertisements.

Imagining Audiences

Marwick and Boyd (2011) explain that "every participant in a communicative act has an *imagined audience*" (p. 2). Audiences are imagined because it is impossible to accurately identify all who could possibly encounter a Tweet, billboard, magazine spread, or television spot. Nonetheless, advertisers create discourses identifying their preferred audiences and make attempts to capture their attention because the "imagined audience" is always—although not blatantly—marked by race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and

other social identity markers. Advertisers like the CTO and the private advertising and media buying companies they contract with, such as advertising agency Karsh Hagan or digital advertising agency Booyah, actively construct and inform people of their worth in the digital, print, and televised domain through placements of the *Come to Life* campaign. Their advertising practices bring forth concerning questions surrounding the state's investment in certain identities and active exclusion of others. In other words, although the CTO is a governmental entity, it exercises discrimination by vigilantly selecting whom they invite to the state. Tourism advertisements are different from product advertisements in that they are "inviting" a viewer, like a party invitation, to physically travel to the state. Invitations to visit Colorado are sent to televised sporting event viewers, magazine readers, and Internet users—audiences who are valued by the CTO for their high household income, gender, age, education level, and race.

I argue that the CTO's advertising practices give credence to other discourses in the political, cultural, and economic realm about inclusion and exclusion based on race, income, and education. For instance, racial targeting through advertising works alongside narratives such as #BlackLivesMatter, which highlight how police brutality and violence render Black lives in America unworthy. This similarly happens in advertising, where Black audiences are seen as valueless, meaning potential Black tourists are seen as valueless as well. Or, the focus on educated and wealthy tourists mirrors rising income inequality rates in the United States and reflects the benefits of the "haves" and the increasing barriers for the "have nots." What's more, in tourism media, governments

increasingly act as corporate brands by exercising both audience discrimination and ambiguity surrounding their own advertising strategies and measurements.

Preview of Chapter

In the chapter that follows, I first draw upon audience studies scholars to frame the CTO's advertisement placement strategy and the ways in which "imagined audiences" are classed and racialized. I detail the purpose, placement, and measurement practices for the *Come to Life* campaign with the limited data publicly available. While Colorado consecutively broke tourism spending records during the *Come to Life* campaign, marijuana legalization in 2013 disrupted the tourism industry landscape, introducing a formerly illegal activity into the tourism attraction lexicon. This created a problem for the tourism office, whose vision of the ideal tourist with their large wallets, high education, and happy families did not include marijuana usage. For a brief moment, marijuana legalization introduced a new image of the ideal tourist. However, as this chapter will detail in the second section about the "green rush," both the state and cannabis tourism industry's response to marijuana tourism re-centered the ideal tourist and imagined audience, specifically its White race, and reintroduced racist ideologies through narratives about drug usage. While the state framed cannabis under a framework of public safety, cannabis tourism operators aimed to whitewash their message in order to fit within the CTO's advertising objectives. I use this disruption to further emphasize the Office's investment in the ideal tourist.

Both the green rush and the CTO's marketing tactics demonstrate the state's investment in whiteness in the tourist realm, raising questions about the way in which

tourism intersects with other economic, political, and social domains of discrimination and oppression.

Audience Studies

Audience studies scholarship investigates the ways in which media producers and advertisers make marketing and content decisions based on a perceived or desired audience. For the purposes of this chapter, I divide audience scholarship into three categories: interpretation, commodification, and identity formation. Although overlapping, these three approaches help bolster textual analysis and shed light on the complex ways in which media objects are produced and circulated in relation to the desired audience.

Interpretation

Media scholars have argued that researching audiences lends to a more dynamic analysis by considering the ways in which audiences interpret, negotiate, and accept or reject messages (Kellner, 1995). Using phrases such as a "dominant" or "oppositional" reading of a text, audience research moves away from "one-sided textualist orientations to culture" (Kellner, 1995, p. 12). Scholars have approached audiences as politicized, complicated subjects challenging patriarchal systems (Radway, 1983); sites of resistance to racial stereotypes presented on television (Boylorn, 2008); or as complicit consumers of narratives of U.S. exceptionalism (Lutz & Collins, 1993). Although an audience's interpretation of a text is not always accessible to a researcher, the way in which an audience is understood by media creators lends insight into the commercial value of a media object like the *Come to Life* advertising campaign.

Regardless of the subject matter, scholars interested in interpretation aim to contextualize media texts in the broader cultural, political, and economic moment. Radway (1983), through her germinal audience study about women who read romance novels, suggested that, to understand a media object and how it is received, the "interaction of text and context" is just as important as the content itself. Following Radway, I examine tourism media in relation to the context in which it is produced, circulated, and consumed. Although my study does not engage directly with audience interpretations of tourism media, it focuses on the audience as an object of analysis and aims to understand how tourism audiences are described and sought after within the context of contemporary, government-run tourism initiatives. How audiences are commodified for advertisers is pertinent to understanding the stated purpose of the CTO's campaigns.

Commodification

Understanding audiences in relation to commodification exposes the prominent role that advertisers have play in the U.S. media system for content or in the advertisements themselves. In other words, in a largely advertiser-supported media network, advertisers influence what we are exposed to and embed commercials for commodities throughout programming. Advertisers identify and target desired qualities of media consumers in hopes the consumers will buy the product. Advertising exposes the symbiotic relationship between media content and advertisers. As Gandy (2007) asserted, "media are in the business of producing audience attention for sale, or lease, to advertisers" (p. 115). McChesney (2015) explained further that the U.S. commercial

media system favors a "risk-averse" content production system that produces television, film, and music based on what has been successful in the past to maintain profit and appease advertisers. For instance, the U.S. television landscape is saturated with sports, business, sex, celebrities, violence, and other "attention getters" that retain audiences (McChesney, 2015, p. 34). Corporate media culture, with its commitment to profit by way of commercialization and consolidation, is always oriented towards safely delivering affluent audiences to advertisers (McChesney, 2015, p. 77). Given that the CTO measures its success on money spent in the state, the CTO creates advertising schema in a similar fashion to other advertisers such as BMW or Apple: by targeting the audience which they assume can pay for a product.

Gandy (2007) critiqued scholars who have a singular economic approach to studying audiences, arguing that "most have tended to focus their lens on the development of class consciousness, while giving short shrift to racial identity" (p. 110). Instead, Gandy argued that audiences need to be understood along class *and* racial identity lines. Audiences, therefore, are valued for money *and* demographic markers, such as their race or gender. Audiences are valued for who they are in addition to what they can buy. A race-conscious approach to audiences explains how power, inequality, and repressive ideologies about social groups are articulated and actualized through identifying and targeting audiences for the benefit of advertisers.

Identity Formation

Who is the audience that advertisers imagine purchasing their product or booking a vacation to their destination? Gandy's (2007) concept of *audience segmentation,* or "the

use of content and production techniques that attract audiences that are more homogeneous by race and social class," illuminates advertising as it pertains to identity (p. 115). The problem with a purely economic view of audiences is that it appears unbiased, unproblematic, and natural because advertisers are simply "following the money." Audience researchers concerned with identity formation through media circulation are interested in which audiences are exposed to certain products and how that correlates with systemic discrimination (Gandy, 2007).

Where advertisements are placed also indicates advertiser assumptions about social groups. Answers to "*who* should buy this product?", "*who* can afford this product?", and "*who* are worthy audiences for this product?" reveal entrenched assumptions about which social groups are both desirable and profitable. Gandy (2007), for instance, looked at what he called "tastes and preferences," explaining that audience preferences are "shaped by the strategic efforts of marketers who seek to influence an individuals' expectations and experiences with consumer goods" (Baker, 2002, as cited by Gandy, 2007, p. 113). In other words, advertisers construct a "racial class" in the circulation of their advertisements. For instance, certain goods and services have been assumed to be outside the economic means of African Americans or other minoritized audiences, thus creating an economic assumption and context in which content for minority-oriented media channels is of poorer quality due to less advertiser revenue (Gandy, 2003). Research has also shown how, because of the way in which minority audiences are less valued or seen as vulnerable, advertisements for problematic products such as cigarettes and beer are circulated amongst minoritized audiences. This

explanation by marketers re-substantiates "distribution bias that we observe elsewhere in society" and showcases how African-American audiences in particular are "scarred through contact with both edges of this twin-edged sword" (Gandy, 2007, p. 118). Meaning, African Americans are both devalued as consumers for some products while valued as audiences for hazardous products such alcohol (Pew, 2005). For instance, Pew found that "African-American youth saw 77% more alcohol advertising than non-African-American youth" (Pew, 2005).

Attesting to the claim that audiences are valued in terms of both economic and social identity is Meehan's (2002) work on network television and the "commodity audience." A "commodity audience" framework explains how content producers and advertisers manufacture audiences and ratings according to demographic markers such as gender, age, and race. In order to be successful, content producers and networks depend on selling the audience to advertisers for revenue, thus transforming the audience into a "commodity" that can be sold. For broadcast television in particular, the commodity audience valued for its intersectional collective identity is White males ages 18 to 34. Considered "higher quality" by networks and advertisers, the commodity audience has become synonymous with *the* audience, given their presumed economic and decision-making authority in the household. In other words, audiences are constructed and imagined according to advertisers' ideal customers, and advertisers obfuscate their decisions based on identity by simply calling consumers *the* audience rather than by their identifiers (e.g. "the White, male, 18–34 audience").

IDEAL TOURIST

Meehan (2002) pointed out an important contradiction in the commodity audience paradigm: although women are typically the main buyers of household goods in a heterosexual partnership (and also work full-time, paying jobs, like men), they are not valued as much as an audience or even rendered as one in ratings given that they are not the assumed "breadwinners." Thus, the commodity audience or "the audience" stands in stark opposition to viewership or "people who actually watch television" (Meehan, 2002, p. 320). In other words, the audience as understood by advertisers is not composed of all television viewers, but a *construction* predicated on a belief about the most valuable people watching television: men ages 18 to 34. This narrowcast vision of the audience, argues Meehan, "suggests that *noneconomic assumptions* undergird beliefs about what sorts of people ought to be the audience and that those assumptions follow familiar patterns of discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, social status, sexual orientation, and age" (2002, p. 318, emphasis mine). The overvaluing of the commodity audience exposes the sexism embedded in advertising pricing for television by identifying specific social groups as "prime" during primetime television.

In line with Meehan (2002) and Gandy's (2007) evidence that audiences are constructed and valued according to assumptions about race and gender, Turow (2011) argued that audiences are categorized and segmented by advertisers into "reputation silos." Moving from television to digital media for his analysis, Turow criticized data mining practices (the collecting of personal data of Internet users) as actions in which segregation is invisible to the public eye and, relatedly, unquestioned by consumers. As online audiences are categorized and targeted by advertisers according to race, income,

sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, age, location, education, or even browsing history, individuals are victims of "narrowed options" for products and discounts, "social discrimination" based on their online profile. For instance, the language used by the industry to distinguish between "targets" or "wastes" for a particular message, is telling of the value system embedded and naturalized in audience segmentation practices (Turow, 2012; Gandy, 2007). Potential consumers are labeled as "waste" depending on their browsing history, identity markers, or location. From an individual perspective, advertisements displayed on television sets, smartphones, billboards, and magazines "are status signals: they alert people as to their social position" (Turow, 2011, p. 6). Which advertisements you encounter, in other words, are based on whether or not advertisers value you and, according to Turow, can affect the way you view yourself.

Increasingly, discrimination through advertising is shrouded in complex algorithms, which allow advertisers to be "unintentionally ignorant" in the ways their advertisements exercise discrimination (Speicher et al., 2018, p. 2). Speicher et al. (2018) argued that Facebook's "attribute-based targeting" or "look-alike audience" targeting, for instance, has allowed advertisers to target potential consumers based on "facially neutral" data (e.g. *Harper's Magazin*e) that delineates users by sensitive demographic markers (race, gender, sexual orientation). Starting by targeting audience members based on non-sensitive demographic markers alleviates advertisers of direct culpability and the way in which advertisers participate in discriminatory data mining practices. Speicher et al. and others studying data mining, machine learning, and algorithms and intersections with discrimination based on race, class, and gender have made the same argument as scholars

such as Meehan (2002) and Gandy (2007): regardless of the medium where an advertisement appears, the discriminatory practices of inclusion and exclusion based on identity remain the same.

Tourism's Audience

In line with the audience scholarship presented above, I use a political economy and cultural framework to uncover how tourism audiences are valued for their economic viability *through* their identity. The economic value of audiences is always laced with values and stereotypes prescribed to different social groups. So, who does the CTO imagine and assume can afford a vacation to Colorado? Just as corporate media companies deliver safe and predictable content, how does the CTO—a government office—target what they believe are safe and "risk-averse" audiences through audience segmentation?

Whereas audience scholarship has turned to corporations' advertising products and network television, the CTO introduces new questions for audience scholarship as it pertains to a governmental office. The advertising strategies used by the CTO demonstrate that governmental entities are increasingly deploying corporate tactics for state tourism initiatives. As my case study will show, the CTO's lack of transparency surrounding the ideal tourism audience and how they measure the effectiveness of the *Come to Life* campaign further shields culpability when it comes to audience segmentation. Accordingly, Coloradans are expected to treat the government as brand by consenting to forgo details of the Office's advertising practices that ultimately benefit and value those with immense amounts of privilege both in the audience and at home.

The Imagined Tourist Audience

The question that drove my audience-centered research was inspired by the literature previously reviewed: who is the CTO's imagined audience? To investigate this question, I charted CTO advertisements using three factors—purpose, placement, and measurement—drawn from my ethnographic work in Colorado as well as any publicly available documents and news reports about the CTO's advertising strategy. Collectively, these three moments in an advertisement's lifespan expose the CTO's imagined audience and ultimately the ideal tourist that they aim to attract.

First, the *purpose* of a tourism advertisement like the *Come to Life* campaign is, in an obvious way, to get viewers to travel to Colorado; however, the state views tourism advertising as a scaled and tiered system. The state-level advertising done by the government is the broadest level, acting as a type of inspiration-to-go campaign that drives potential visitors to specific locations and places to book hotel rooms or other experiences. This process is known as the funnel system and is the first stage in which the imagined audiences are articulated.

Second, I gathered as much information as I could on the *placement* of *Come to Life* advertisements, a list that included television shows, the location of advertisements, magazine publications, and websites. Because the goal of this project was to understand the ideal tourist and imagined audience, the advertisements' placements overtly indicated who the state wants (and does not want) to visit.

For the last piece, I needed information on the *measurement* of the *Come to Life* campaign. Given the amount of energy the Office has put into strategizing towards the

imagined audience, how they define, track, and report on audience engagement with the *Come to Life* campaign gives more insight into which audiences are valuable enough for measurement, and which are considered "waste." However, as my case study will illuminate, oftentimes the absence of information was more likely the reality. The CTO does not regularly report on where it places advertisements and how it measures their success. This created a new line of inquiry about audiences and the way in which government-run tourism entities operate in a market and corporate brand-like paradigm contingent on secrecy, competition, and public-private partnerships. Why, I ask, does a government entity insist on keeping information about their desired audience a secret?

Purpose

The CTO's advertising campaigns intend to catch potential tourists at the beginning stages of the trip planning process. Globally, tourism authorities describe this process by using the analogy of a funnel to explain how customers move from dreaming about visiting a certain place to conversion in the form of booking a hotel room or purchasing a plane ticket. This framework was derived from author William Townsend's (1924) "purchase funnel," which he introduced in the early 20th century; it has been referred to as the "sales funnel" or "marketing funnel" as well. In the 1920s, when the founders of the public relations and advertising industries—Edward Bernays and Ivy Lee perhaps most notable among them—were beginning to connect psychoanalysis with selling products, similar models were being developed by bonds sellers to understand how a potential bonds buyer moves from inspiration to action (Ewen, 1996). Townsend

proposed the funnel metaphor and used an analogy of a Western wrangler to explain the funnel's conceptual power, writing:

> The real salesman [sic] with the funnel concept firmly in his mind borrows a leaf from the book of the Western horse wrangler. He first constructs his corral with a narrow entrance at the point of a V-shaped fence which spreads out at a wide angle. He then ranges far and wide to pick up his wild-horse-of-a prospect wherever he can find him and establishes his point of contact or agreement on the necessity of desirability of traveling in a certain general direction. … If the fences (which with the salesman can be themselves shifted slightly to conform to conditions as they develop) have been well built and strengthened there will be little chance for the prospect to bolt and jump from the freedom of the open range. (1924, p. 110)

Townsend's model follows four steps: 1) awareness, 2) interest, 3) desire, and 4) action. Various iterations of the model have developed over the course of its nearly 100 years of existence. For instance, Figure 4 is an example of New Zealand's funnel booking schema, which loosely follows Townsend's model by moving from "dreaming" (a.k.a. inspiration) to "booking" (New Zealand Tourism, 2015, p. 15).

IDEAL TOURIST

Figure 4.

Tourism New Zealand "Visitor Consideration Funnel"

Although Colorado's funnel model is no longer available on their industry partner website,[10] the model is referenced in written communication to industry partners frequently. The most recent strategic plan written by the CTO mentions the benefits of brand-sharing practices that allow tourism industries across Colorado to use the CTO's branding material in order to "access prospects at the 'top of the funnel'" (CTO, 2017b). Colorado argues that television viewers, for instance, see a tourism advertisement and are prompted to order a *Colorado State Vacation Guide* and jump on Travelocity.com to secure their future trip to Colorado. State-sponsored tourism advertising, in other words, is meant to amplify Colorado to the national stage, funneling potential visitors to monetary conversions. Or as CTO director Cathy Ritter said in an interview with local news program *Next with Kyle Clark,* "We don't advertise to make people aware that we

[10] While I worked as a contract editor for the CTO, I came across the funnel imagery; however, it cannot be located now. Therefore, I chose to use New Zealand's model, which is similar to the CTO's. Also, this funnel relates via scholarship through Margaret Werry's (2011) work on tourism in New Zealand.

have snow in the mountains or that we have a beautiful state, we advertise to make people take action and come here, and spend their dollars" (KUSA Staff, 2017). In other words, advertising on TV campaigns is meant to both inspire and sift visitors to conversions; to take action in the form of "spending their dollars." In this interview, Cathy Ritter assumed that the audience already knows about Colorado, so therefore the aim is to inspire action—from dream, to action. The content of the advertisements, as explained in Chapter Two, indicate as much: images of snowy mountains with few people, prose about "forgetting that spreadsheets exist," and dramatic orchestral music all lead to a directive to viewers to visit Colorado.com to begin locating businesses to book hotel rooms or order a vacation guide filled with advertisements and listings from Colorado tourism businesses.

For the industry partners (tourism-related businesses in Colorado that buy media in CTO publications or engage with the Office in some capacity) in particular, where the CTO places the *Come to Life* advertisements may directly affect advertisers in the traveler guide and the website to which the campaign directs visitors. As Governor John Hickenlooper said at the 2016 Governor's Conference, the CTO establishes "an overall brand that allows local marketers to fit in." For instance, local marketers ranging from bed and breakfasts or ski resorts may buy display ads, print advertisements, or listings in the CTO's two publications (Colorado.com and *The Official State Vacation Guide*). Then, when the CTO places a *Come to Life* advertisement during a Monday Night Football game calling for the audience to visit Colorado.com, an industry partner's paid advertisement will appear on the homepage. The audience the CTO targets is also the

audience that third-party advertisers such as Vail Resorts or a dude ranch in Salida, Colorado, are hoping to siphon after they have moved past the inspiration segment of the funnel. As one Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) director stated at the Governor's Conference on Tourism, "We depend on the CTO for the long-haul." Long haul here means tourists who will stay at a destination for multiple nights rather than for just the weekend. The CTO makes promises to these third-party advertisers that audiences funneled to their websites are pre-qualified into the demographics most desired by tourism operators. In a media kit for potential advertisers that explains the CTO's advertising opportunities on the website or print travel guide, for instance, the state explains:

> The Colorado Tourism Office executes a robust paid and earned media strategy on a national scale to increase awareness of the tourism and recreational opportunities in Colorado. That strategy and multi-million-dollar marketing campaign drives an incredibly qualified, active, travel-planning audience directly to the Official State Vacation Guide, COLORADO.com and all related channels. (CTO, 2017c)

The terms "incredibly qualified," "active," and "travel-planning audience" are coded and signify the ideal tourist and audience: wealthy, educated, and disproportionately White. As other audience researchers have shown, advertisers and media producers use seemingly neutral terminology such as "prime-time" to obfuscate the discriminatory practices of stereotyping audience members by way of determining whether they are valued customers for an advertiser's product (Meehan, 2002). As the next section will

show, the placement of the advertisement defines what the Office means by "incredibly qualified" audiences and showcases how the funnel acts as a corral (to use Townsend's Western terminology): by locking in a particular demographic that it wishes to inspire.

Placement

Just as Meehan (2002) explained that "prime time" television is code for White males aged 18 to 34, what does "incredibly qualified" for the CTO signify? In order to answer this question, I turned to *where* the advertisements have been placed in the hopes that it might give a clue to the Office's imagined audience. But, pulling back the curtain on the advertising program was not simple: the CTO does not regularly report on their media placement practices publicly. My previous experiences with the CTO indicated that the Office regularly gives reports to the board and private companies they contract with on their advertising strategy. Before I began my academic research, I had seen documents circulated with information on billboard placements, television spots, and magazine spreads explaining the CTO's strategy for third-party advertisers—Colorado's tourism partners—to understand what audience the Office was funneling to its websites. However, when I began seeking information for this project, the Office had removed any documents indicating this information. At the time of this case study (2014–2017) the Office had barely any documentation available (including meeting minutes from board meetings in which such strategies were approved by members). When I emailed to inquire about documentation on where the advertisements are placed, the Office replied that such information is proprietary and that they were unfamiliar with any documents that told the public or tourism partners where the advertisements are placed. When I filed

a Colorado Open Records Act request, the response was the same. Consequently, to piece together the placement of *Come to Life* advertisements I had to rely on one document that I knew was available from my experiences working as a content editor for the CTO. I used the Internet archive project Wayback Machine to locate a document from 2013 in which the Office explained the winter media strategy and highlighted certain marketing placements.

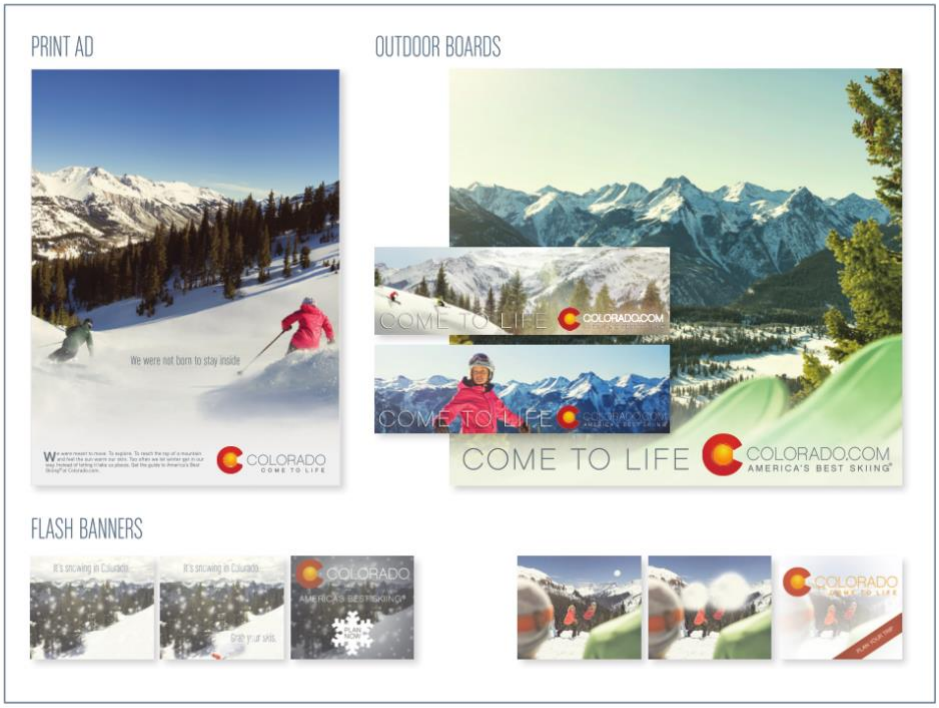
FY Winter Media Overview

The document, entitled "FY Winter Media Overview" (CTO, 2012f), is a snapshot of the CTO's media buying practices; the easy-to-digest, four-page document was intended for the CTO board of directors, the CTO's subcommittee on marketing and PR, and industry partners (tourism professionals who have a relationship with the CTO). The document details primary and secondary audiences, examples of where the campaign was placed (i.e. *Hemisphere Magazine),* and examples of print advertisements, billboards, online display ads, and television spots. Figure 5 is page 3 of the four-page document, where print, outdoor, and online advertisements are represented.

IDEAL TOURIST

Figure 5.

Third page of FY13 Winter Media Overview." Examples of print advertisements, online "flash banners," and outdoor billboards. (CTO, 2012f)



The "FY Winter Media Overview" is the *only* document publicly available from 2012 to 2017 that reveals where the CTO advertises. It is important to note that the "FY 13 Winter Media Overview" is for winter tourism only and represents 24% of the budget spent on advertisement placements, which amounts to $2 million, according to the CTO. While this is not the season when most of the media spending occurs (summer is), winter media buying represents 10% of the CTO's overall budget. Ski tourists are productive consumers for the state and collectively represent 13% of 14.7 billion dollars in spending

from overnight tourists. According to the Longwoods' categorizations of trip purposes of overnight visitors, skiers represent 13% of all overnight spending each year (Longwoods International, 2017, p. 98). Although significantly lower than "Visits to Friends/Relatives" (31%), the per person expenditures for skiing ($1,306) were significantly higher than visiting friends and relatives ($311). Clearly, ski tourism is the most profitable trip segment despite the fact that it is not the most popular. For the Office, skiing offers more bang for the Office's buck. Given that the Office reports on tourism dollars spent in the state, it makes sense that ski tourism is a crucial audience segment.

To get a fuller picture of the CTO's desired audience for each tourism segment, I deconstructed the "FY13 Winter Media Overview" placement-by-placement. I took each advertisement placement presented in the document (titled a "highlight" in the report) and pulled available audience demographic information from the publication's media kit or from Nielsen. A publication's media kit is used for potential advertisers to know what audiences an advertising venue is supposed to deliver. The age, gender, and income allow publications to appeal to advertisers looking for specific audiences. Nielsen is a data firm that measures media audiences and consumer behavior and is often used by advertisers and television content producers in their decision-making for the popularity of various shows (Meehan, 2002). The following sections break up the placements by television, print, travel, and digital.

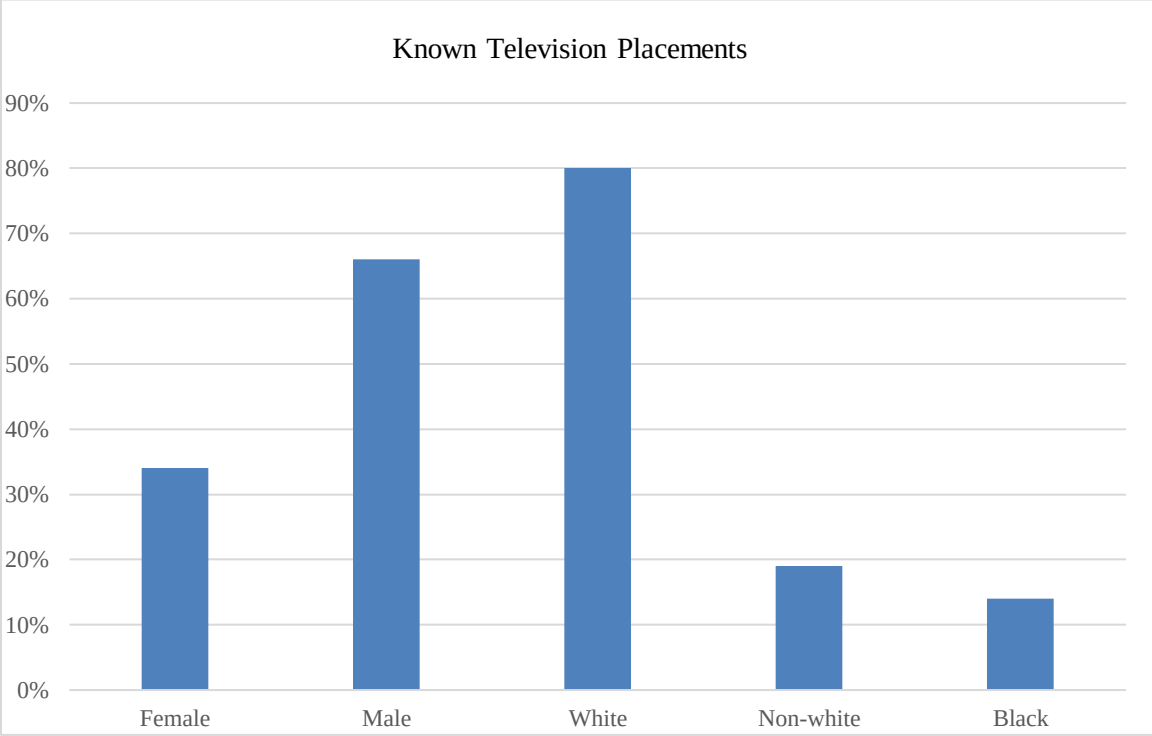
Television

Television highlights in the "FY13 Winter Media Overview" were dominated by sports media, specifically football. Four of the five highlights were from professional or

college football games, including a Monday Night Football game, College Gameday, the Rose, Orange, Sugar, and Fiesta bowls, and the BCS National Championship game. The one exception was the vague description of "premium cable networks" placements, which could mean a multitude of channels at any time of day and therefore impossible to identify an audience for. For sporting events, however, the Nielsen Company compiles an annual "Year in Sports Media" report with viewership and demographic numbers for several sports or specific games (Nielsen, 2014). I used the 2013 report to gather information about NFL and college football viewership. Table 1 represents the average race and gender identity for college and professional football viewership.

Table 1.

Aggregated average percentage of gender and racial demographics from three Come to Life *placements during Monday Night Football, four College Bowl Games, and the BCS National Championship (Neilsen, 2014)*



Viewership for the *Come to Life* television placements was primarily White men, with NFL viewership at 65% male and college football at 66% male. More disproportionate than gender demographics in sports media placements, however, were racial demographics: 77% of NFL viewers and 82% of college bowl games were White, creating a combined 80% of audience members for sports television as White.

The rate at which the CTO has targeted White audiences during sporting events is alarming and disproportionate to the country's racial demographics. Imagining an

alternative is useful in illuminating the whiteeness of tourism advertising. For instance, NBA events (also during the fall season in which winter tourism ads run) cite only 40% White and 45% Black viewers (Neilsen, 2014). The NBA has 31% more Black viewers than the NFL. Although the CTO does not outright disclose a strategy of attracting White males in the "FY13 Winter Media Overview" report, the Nielsen data reveals a strategy of attracting what Meehan (2002) termed the "commodity audience," or an audience of primarily White men that has been valued and deemed primary in network television advertising rates.

The CTO's television strategy suggests that the CTO assumes that White audiences are more economically valuable and actively discourages visitors of color by not buying placements during sporting events with a majority minority audience. Gandy (2007) argued that the process of identifying and segmenting audiences according to demographic markers such as race or income and their "contribution to the reproduction of social distinctions is too important to ignore" (p. 115). In other words, the strategy of the CTO reproduces gender, income, and racial divisions elsewhere in society through advertising. The message is clear: White sports media spectators are welcome as tourists, whereas spectators of color are not.

Audience Segmentation and Ski Tourism

As chapter 2 noted, the content of the winter-themed *Come to Life* commercials almost entirely revolve around the sport of downhill skiing through locations on ski slopes or tourist attire. The imagery and content in the "FY 13 Winter Media Overview" is similar: tourists are pictured skiing on groomed trails for billboards, flash banners

display the state's trademark phrase "America's Best Skiing," and rich media banners provide live snow reports with new snow in inches listed for ski resorts. Only a few sample advertisements show an activity other than skiing; however, even the tourists snowshoeing and launching snowballs for a family snowball battle are still pictured on a ski slope. For winter tourism, the advertising strategy is clearly to attract ski tourists, a group that, due to higher-priced accommodations, ski tickets, and other associated costs with a vacation in the mountains, yields much more revenue than tourists visiting cities. The "Winter FY 13" report, therefore, correlated winter tourism exclusively with skiing and attempted to funnel potential tourists to the state's already profitable ski corporations such as Vail Resorts. In the television realm, these potential tourists were predominantly White men—a representational technique that segregates potential ski tourists according to race and gender.

Audience segmentation through advertising is particularly salient for downhill skiing, which is an industry with symbolic and geographic "forces which work to define and maintain skiing and its associated social spaces as essentially white" (Harrison, 2013, p. 316). Citing Elmendorf et al.'s "marginality thesis," which is the "implicit assumption … that if socioeconomic barriers were not there, Black people would participate in proportionately equivalent numbers to White people," Harrison instead encouraged us to focus on the "ethnicity-based arguments" that contribute to skiing's whiteness, such as "boundary marking measures" like "Critical White gazes," and the overt discrimination in the sport (p. 323–323). Harrison explained that the White gaze is particularly relevant in a sport where the ratio of Black to non-Black skiers is two to 100 and that oftentimes

Black skiers are present through special events organized by Black skiing organization, rather than continued and normalized presence on the slopes. This ratio and the ever-presence of whiteness on the mountain exposes the reality that skiing is both expensive *and* a White space.

Harrison argues that skiing's price tag (the sport is extremely expensive and has become even more so in recent years) is often used as a rationale for not attracting African American skiers. Citing literature about the decline in skier numbers due to global warming or other leisure activities, Harrison (2013) demonstrated that skiing is *still* heavily invested in whiteness and actively avoids attracting African American skiers despite a slight decline in participation in recent years and the "logic that attracting more skiers of any race would seem to make good business sense" (p. 317). Therefore, the CTO contributes to the "racial exclusion that sustains skiing's Whiteness" (Harrison, 2013, p. 316) by advertising during television content where audience members are predominately White. By niche marketing to NFL and college football audiences, Colorado actively participates in segregation through audience segmentation (Gandy, 2007). The CTO uses television as means to delineate winter tourism and skiing as White; however, it uses print and travel media as well to construct an affluent and highly educated audience.

Print

In high-end grocery stores across the U.S. such as Whole Foods, city-themed magazines sit above check-out conveyor belts surrounded by a collection of organic chewing gum, 98% dark chocolate bars, and other expensive snack foods. Containing

glossy-paged restaurant reviews, profiles of the best doctors, write-ups about weekend getaways, and other high-end lifestyle content, the city-specific, lifestyle magazine genre is a key advertising placement for the CTO. Whereas television indicates the CTO's preference for White male tourists through sports media, print *Come to Life* placements indicate a desire for highly privileged audiences who are educated and wealthy.

Magazines' websites generally have "media kits" for potential advertisers that explain the magazine's circulation numbers and advertising opportunities for potential advertisers. A publication's media kit also discloses favorable readership demographics such as gender, average income, and education level. These media kits are not shy when it comes to touting the wealthiness of their audiences. For instance, the magazine *Mpls. St. Paul* unabashedly tells potential advertisers that their readers are 143% more likely to belong to a country club and 45% are millionaires (*Mpls. St. Paul* Magazine, 2017, p. 9). *Mpls. St. Paul* also highlights key activities from readers including what percentage have bought apparel (96%) and what percentages plan to visit a spa (46%) and take a vacation or cruise (84%) in the next 12 months (2017, p. 11). Advertisers therefore can place their product into a behavioral category of the readers, drawing an assumed correlation between cruise and spa goers and potential ski vacationers. Table 2 represents the average income of readers from *D Magazine, Texas Monthly,* and *Mpls. St. Paul Magazine*—magazines in which the CTO advertised for Winter 2013. Table 3 represents the average net worth of the same magazines, further indicating the immense wealth that city-specific magazine subscribers contain.

Table 2.

Average income of readers for D Magazine *in Dallas (*D Magazine, *2017),* Texas Monthly *(*Texas Monthly, *2017), and* Mpls. St. Paul Magazine *(*Mlps. St. Paul Magazine, *2017)*

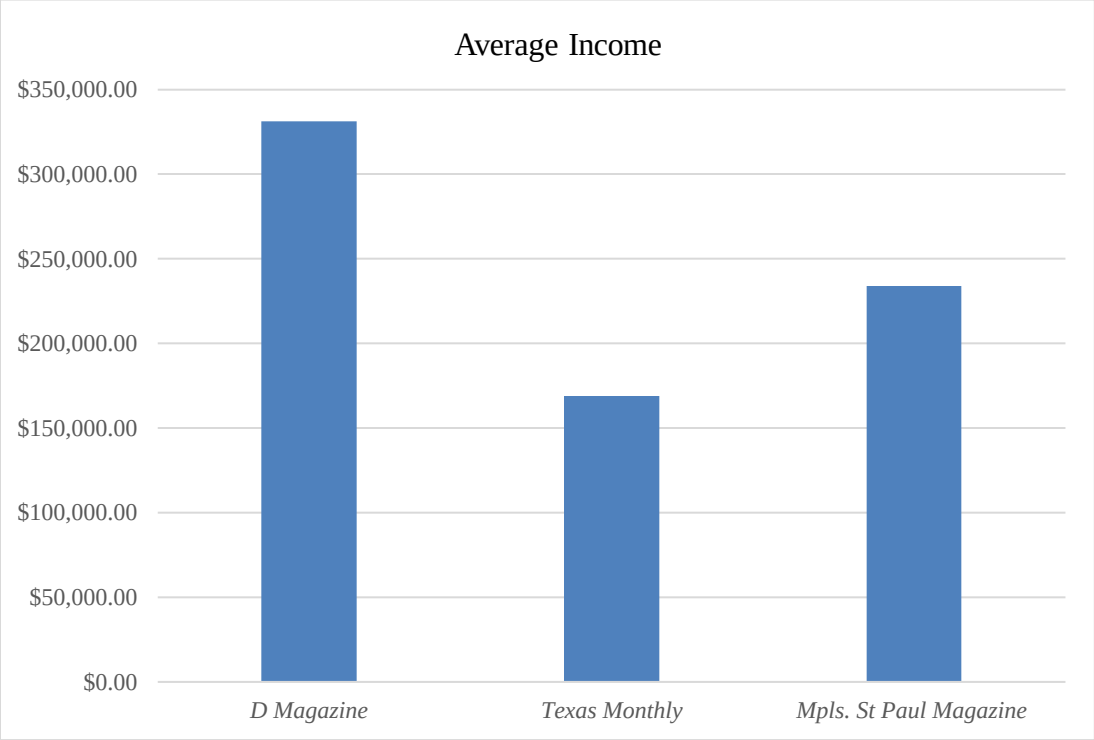
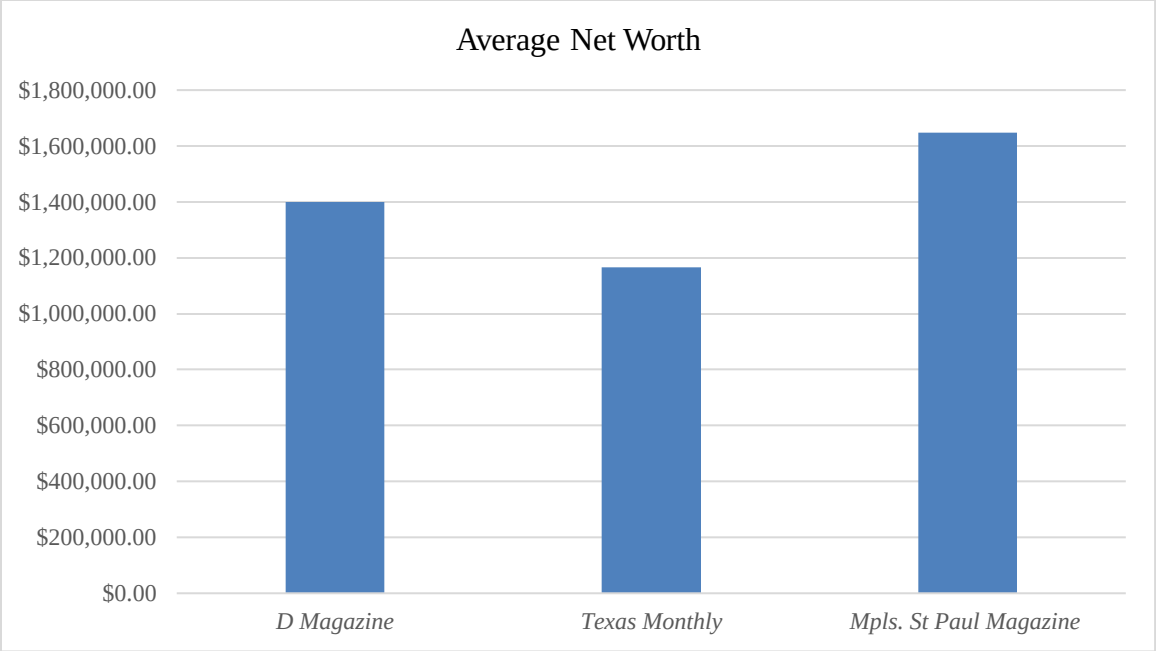


Table 3.

Average net worth of readers for D Magazine, Texas Monthly, *and* Mpls. St. Paul Magazine



Put together, the print strategy highlights how the CTO imagines a highly affluent audience with readers for all three publications averaging a $244,000 annual income and $1.4 million net worth. To contextualize these numbers, the median income of U.S. households in 2013, when the *Come to Life* advertisements were placed in lifestyle magazines, was $52,250 (Noss, 2014). The average U.S. household thus needed $191,000 more in income to fit within the imagined audience demographic.

Location-specific lifestyle magazine audiences also maintain a highly educated audience. *D Magazine* and *Mpls. St. Paul* reported on the education level of their readership, with 85% and 75% of their readers, respectively, holding at least a college

degree. Whereas *Come to Life* audiences are educated, in the entire U.S. population, only 42.3% of adults over the age of 25 have an associate's degree or more, and 32.5% hold a bachelor's degree or higher (Ryan & Bauman, 2016). This means more than half of the country's population doesn't fit into the imagined audience's profile as far as education level goes. Further scrutinizing the numbers also indicates barriers to education based on race and ethnicity: whereas White individuals in the U.S. match the average of those with college degrees, Black and Hispanic individuals are vastly below the average, at 32.4% and 22.7%, respectively.

The CTO exercises discrimination by advertising in city-specific magazines, actively and intentionally *excluding* those without college degrees and constructing the imagined audience in a way that is most likely to attract those with a vast amount of privilege economically and educationally. This group is disproportionately White Americans. Therefore, the "highly qualified" audience member and ideal tourist that the CTO promises they will funnel to other tourism businesses in the state is likely to be wealthy, and educated, and White.

Travel

Given that mass tourism relies heavily on airline travel, especially for what the CTO calls "long-haul" tourists who are from outside the West and Midwest region and tend to stay longer in Colorado (read: spend more money), it is not surprising that the CTO advertises inside airplanes and on travel-specific websites. Outlets such as *Hemisphere* magazine, in-flight tray table displays, "premium club displays," and in-flight videos compile the United Airlines in-flight media strategy for the CTO.

Meanwhile, websites such as Travelocity, Orbitz, Expedia, Trip Advisor, Frommers, iExplore, and HomeAway constitute the digital marketing strategy.

Information for specific website audiences is not available, but like the print strategy in city-specific lifestyle magazines, advertisements in United aircrafts are geared towards high-income and educated audiences. *Hemisphere* magazine has reported that 88.7% of their readers are college educated, with a median household income of $113,700 (United, 2017). Once again, the goal is clear that the only travelers the CTO wishes to "inspire" and wrangle at the top of the funnel are those with high incomes and education. What's more, as the following chapter will demonstrate, the airline advertising strategy exposes a deep contradiction in tourism: the lands tourism relies on are threatened by climate change, but the means by which tourists travel to those destinations contributes greatly to carbon emissions.

Digital

In addition to advertising on the *New York Times* and BBC websites, the CTO also included highlights of digital advertising in the FY 13 report. Given the increasing reliance on data mining practices for advertisers, there is much information missing on how the CTO targets Internet users because the Office refuses to disclose its strategy. Nonetheless, the turn to digital media advertising signals a move towards even more targeted advertising. For precision, I distinguish between banner and targeted advertising: banner advertising is presented to a visitor of a website regardless of their digital profile, whereas targeted advertising utilizes the user's digital information available such as spending and search history, liked pages, geographic location, and so on (Speicher et al.

2018). As Chapter Four will explain, targeted advertising is becoming more of an objective for the Office as complaints about "over-tourism" arise. Because many popular destinations voiced concerns of too much tourism at the listening sessions for the *Roadmap* strategic report in 2016, advertising campaigns that target fewer tourists with a higher yield (in other words, more spending) become an alternative to more less affluent tourists. That is why one of the Office's "critical issues" in 2016 was "[refining] customer targeting" (CTO, 2017b). Data mining and digital advertising provides a platform to further refine the tourism audience.

Personalization

Another way to label targeted advertising is "personalization." As one of the CTO's contracted advertisers described at the 2016 board meeting, the Office is moving "from an era of mass media to mass personalization." This means that the Office is trying to more accurately target the ideal tourist through digital advertising. The television and print placements described earlier in this analysis gave some indicator of who the Office is trying to get to through "mass personalization" (e.g. White, educated, affluent). More clues were in the FY 13 document's identification of primary and secondary markets. The winter media strategy named its primary "target" audience as "snow enthusiasts," who are ages 25 to 49, "frequent skiers," with a high household income. Labeled as "modern families" and "upper class, down to earth," secondary audiences are similarly affluent, with household incomes at $75,000 or $100,000 and higher. Secondary audiences are categorized to be in their mid 30s to mid 50s and are described as having "college+" education levels. The description of the primary and secondary audiences was where the

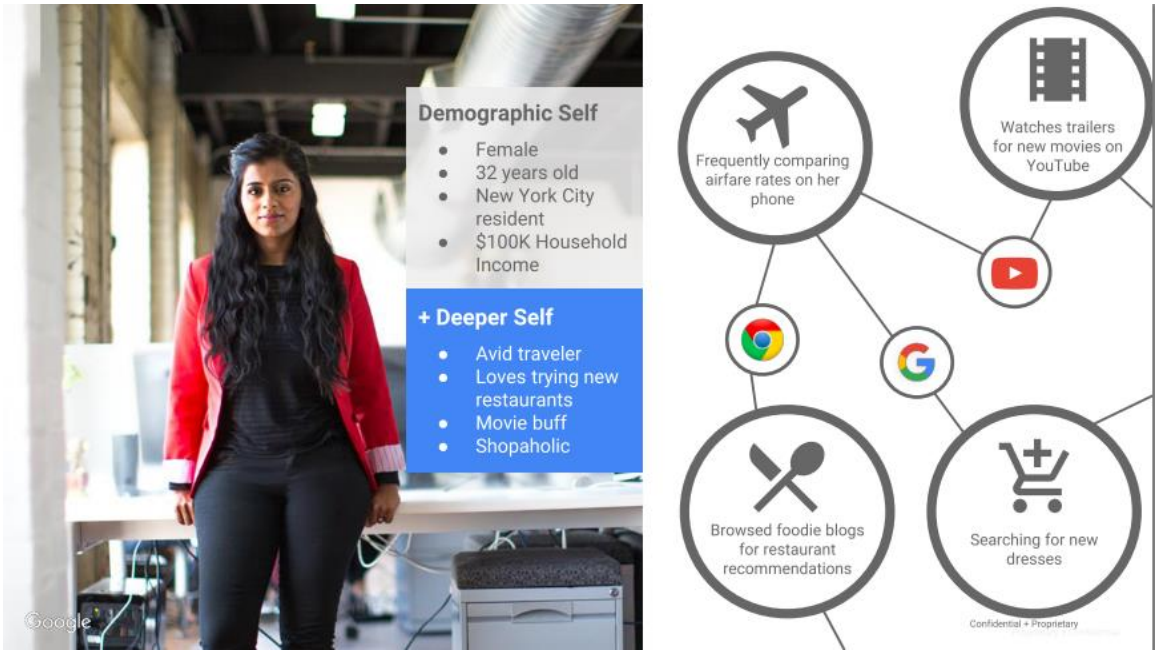
CTO turned a "profile into a reputation" (Turow, 2011, p. 97). In other words, these demographic markers (age, hobbies, income) become reified as *the* ideal tourist and skier. Additionally, those with high household incomes (HHI) and college education demographics are signified as "modern" and "down to earth," signifying correlations between reputations and demographic markers.

In another, more recent example, a presentation from advertising agency Booyah (a former contractor of the CTO) at the Colorado Governor's Conference on Tourism in 2017 argued that data mining allows advertisers to get to the "deeper selves" of audiences. Figure 6 is a slide from Booyah's presentation explaining the company's "audience framework."

IDEAL TOURIST

Figure 6.

Presentation graphic from Booyah presentation at Colorado Governor's Tourism Conference (Booyah Advertising, 2017)



In the image, a woman's "demographic self" (female, 32 years old, New York City resident, and $100K) transforms into her "deeper self" (avid traveler, loves trying new restaurants, movie buff, and shopaholic) after the advertiser gains more insight into her digital history. On the right side of the graphic is her Chrome, Google, and YouTube history. We're told this individual "frequently compared airfare rates on her phone," "watches trailers for new movies," "browsed foodie blogs for restaurant recommendation," and "search[ed] for new dresses." Here, the user's profile *and* digital searching history transforms into her reputation (Turow, 2011). Again, because the CTO does not disclose details of their strategy, we are left with cookie crumbs from Booyah's

presentation. Nonetheless, the presentation itself indicates the government's involvement in data mining and social profiling for tourism advertising. Why else would this presentation exist at the conference unless the CTO actively employs the methods described to conference goers?

While some may argue that data mining of this sort is good for consumers because they are shown relevant advertisements, critical media scholars and critics of mass personalization efforts have argued that privacy and discrimination through ad exposure outweigh the benefits (Turow, 2011; Speicher et al., 2018). In addition to problematic assumptions made by advertisers to profile audiences, social targeting can impact the audience themselves. For instance, as a college-educated woman in Minneapolis, I might encounter a Colorado winter tourism advertisement on Facebook whereas my high school educated neighbor may not, given that she is not in the target group identified as "college educated" for the CTO's advertising strategy. This has profound implications on how we view ourselves, as evidenced by the title of Turow's (2011) book, *The Daily You.* Which advertisements consumers see influences how they define and categorize themselves, and this results in social discrimination and reinforcement of social hierarchies.

Good Business Sense?

The information available on audience demographics is in line with other scholarly findings that push back against the dominant notion that marketing decisions are made according to "who wants the product" or to simply increasing profit. Instead, marketing and advertising decisions function as gatekeepers as to which social groups

should use certain products or travel to certain locations. Ideologies about race, gender, and class influence advertiser decisions and further expose how "following the money" is a superficial cover for marketers or governments. Instead, advertisers carefully select which type of consumers they prefer and place advertisements accordingly. To whom Colorado markets the state's tourism opportunities, therefore, is not based on economic gain but on which types of people the state wants to come visit and which types of people the Office assumes are the highest yield for tourism spending. When writing about how the "commodity audience" delivers the *type* of consumer an advertiser wants, Meehan (2012) explained:

> The logic of profit should drive advertisers to demand shoppers regardless of the gender, social status, race, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. of the particular people buying the bars of soap, rolls of toilet paper or cans of beans. Why, then, do such distinctions persist in the markets for commodity ratings and audiences – in markets where companies essentially trade in people? (p. 320)

The Office may try to de-politicize their strategy by framing it as a "good business sense" and act as if it has no responsibility for the political significance of audience segmentation; however, the Office plays a significant role in determining worth based on race, education, and income. When a government office engages in this audience segmentation process, it naturalizes power relations in the public realm (Gandy, 2007).

Measurement

Through ad placements, the CTO identifies its ideal audience as affluent, educated, and disproportionately White. In order to continue this strategy, the Office

must demonstrate results that prove a "return of investment" or ROI on the more than $5 million spent on the *Come to Life* campaign. As a government entity jockeying for taxpayer monies, the CTO is concerned with proving the effect, or "success," of their million-dollar tourism campaigns, and understandably so. In order to demonstrate an advertisement's effectiveness, the Office contracts with SMARI, a market-research company in Indiana that provides "consumer-driven insight grounded in data to our clients so that they may make innovative decisions that separates them from competition yet minimizes the risk of making bold decisions" (SMARI, 2019).

Although tourism is often heralded as the bread and butter of local economies, the specifics of "how the sausage is made" for tourism advertising measurements rarely appear, despite tourism offices' contracts with market research companies like SMARI. The CTO itself doesn't explain how it measures the success of campaigns, so when a researcher or news reporter asks the CTO about the impact of a tourism marketing campaign, they are forwarded to SMARI's research or representatives. For example, the popular news program *NEXT* with Kyle Clark ran a segment in 2017 on how Colorado markets itself to out-of-state visitors. When Clark asked CTO director Cathy Ritter specifically which age groups and income levels the *Come to Life* campaign targets, she would not specify. Then, when Clark asked about how the CTO calculates its $468 ROI for the $5,811,416 spent on advertising, they were led to SMARI. The company gave this response:

> the people [whom SMARI] surveys are shown the Colorado ads and then asked if they visited the state and if they saw the ad. In [their] example, 15 percent of

> people surveyed said they visited Colorado and saw on an ad about Colorado, 10 percent of the people surveyed said they visited Colorado, but were "ad unaware." The company takes the "ad unaware" people out of the equation, but subtracting the 10 percent from the 15 percent, leaving you with five percent who saw the ad. Then, they determine the population based on about 80 percent of the population who are able to travel on vacation, with some more specific criteria based on the target audience of the ads. (KUSA Staff, 2017)

After this explanation, Kyle Clark aptly called the Office's and SMARI's methodology a "hocus pocus" science. However, what SMARI did *not* disclose in the news segment was how survey participants are pre-qualified as the type of visitor the state wishes to attract. This shows that survey participants are not a representative sample of a general population or television market, but rather are already coded as desirable tourists and funneled accordingly. According to the SMARI methodology available on Colorado's Industry Partner Website, "in order to qualify for the survey, respondents had to be travelers who take overnight leisure trips and are travel decision-makers" (SMARI, 2020). The effectiveness of the campaign is not of the entire population, but of the population of ideal tourists. Therefore, the effectiveness of the survey is highly skewed to favor the continuation of the ideal tourist given that the entire study is done on an ideal tourist audience demographic.

Given the vagueness of the *NEXT* television segment's explanation of the CTO's market research, I was interested in how the office calculates marketing's effect on $2.72 billion in economic impact; I therefore reached out to the office for the original SMARI

report. “We don’t publicly share the SMARI data,” the CTO’s Director of US marketing told me. Presented with this roadblock, I decided to file a Colorado Open Records Act request for the SMARI report. I assumed that because the CTO was a state government office, it would be mandated to disclose the ways in which a private subcontractor—in this case SMARI—calculated the impact of tourism marketing, especially given that over $5 million taxpayer dollars had been spent on tourism advertising. However, this request was denied, and I was told by CTO Director Cathy Ritter that the Governor’s legal counsel considered the information proprietary. When I asked for further explanation, Ritter said the following in an email:

> Basically, our SMARI report falls under the trade secrets provision since it lays out our strategy, spending, markets and results in a way that other states could use to either duplicate or position themselves against us. (C. Ritter, personal communication, September 29, 2017)

The state’s argument that the SMARI report, which supposedly explains advertising effectiveness, is information that can position other states against Colorado points to the ways in which the CTO sees itself operating primarily as a private entity, not a governmental one tasked with spending taxpayer dollars responsibly. Competition and fear of losing a competitive edge over nearby states such as Utah outweighs transparency about where and how taxpayer monies are spent. Such a guiding neoliberal ideology discourages residents from investigating the Office as the Office continues to both contract and partner with private businesses and ensure third-party vendors to have access to the ideal tourist. This policy also obscures the methods by which the office delineates

and values those it considers to be ideal tourists. Given that the SMARI methodology focuses only on CTO's target audience, the proprietary protection afforded by the Governor's legal counsel authorizes private-sector marketing practices in a government office. The Colorado governor's office thus makes legal and legitimate the process of separating "targets" and "waste," and marketing tourism to the targets—offering state sanction to this type of social discrimination. This is yet again an example for the ways in which discrimination works systematically and quietly through multiple avenues, including tourism marketing.

The Green Rush

SMARI campaign also played a significant research role with the CTO following marijuana legalization in 2013. Concerned that legalization would damage the state's reputation, the CTO asked SMARI to conduct a study on how legalization impacted a potential traveler's desire to go to the state, arguing ultimately that despite legalization, the ideal tourist was intact. The study assured the CTO and concerned tourism operators that "only 4% of Colorado tourists came for legal weed" (Blevins, 2016b). The state's fear following legalization (as proven by the money spent on a SMARI study), demonstrate the way in which long-lasting stereotypes and policing of Black and brown marijuana users was given new life during this change to the tourist landscape.

Legalization did not exist in a vacuum. Although marijuana legalization took a promising step in decriminalizing possession of a drug that accounted for 42.6% of all drug arrests in 2005 and nearly half in 2016 (Alexander, 2012, p. 49, as cited by Rosenbaum, 2016), legalization at the state level and the cannabis tourism industry that

has blossomed alongside it has done little to redress—let alone give lip service to—the disproportionate burden that people and communities of color have shouldered from more than 100 years of racially prejudiced drug policies and enforcement by the U.S. government. While White cannabis tourism operators tap into the riches of the "green rush," those who have felon status from possession of marijuana face life in prison and generation-long discrimination in the form of voter disenfranchisement, exclusion from civic participation, employment and housing discrimination, public benefits that serve basic human rights, and lack of financial agency (Alexander, 2011).

The well-documented racist history surrounding marijuana's legal status and law enforcement in the United States, including the incarceration of primarily Black and brown folks for marijuana possession, did not evaporate upon Colorado's landmark legalization vote in 2013. The state and tourism office's response to legalization and the supposed dangers it proposed from users of color, allowed law enforcement to appear justified in a coordinated effort to place more Black and brown citizens behind bars. Hence, the communicative strategies of both the cannabis tourism industry and the state during Colorado's "green rush" exposes the way in which the ideal tourist embodies racist ideologies and White supremacy as well. Cannabis tourism demonstrates the perseverance of the ideal tourist by continuing racist tropes about marijuana usage while simultaneously rejecting efforts to use the CTO advertising platform by the new industry. Before detailing how the state did this in 2013, it is important to unpack the history of illegalization

Illegalization

It is negligent to talk about marijuana in Colorado without first explicating how illegalization was enacted in conjunction with segregationist Jim Crow laws and anti-immigration policies targeted at Mexican and Central American immigrants. Marijuana illegalization in 1937 was "rooted in racial stereotypes" about African-Americans and Mexicans threatening the public at large (Bender, 2016, p. 690). In the Southwest, Mexican laborers, who were "already viewed in demeaning terms as lazy, criminally minded, and of lesser intellect, became associated with marijuana smoking as a catalyst for their supposed bad behavior" (Bender, 2016, p. 361). In the South, African-American men were blamed for violent behavior, including raping White women after using the substance. Even films such as *Reefer Madness* (1936), which centered on the supposed dangers of White youth using marijuana, drew upon racial stereotypes by representing "marijuana as menace to upwardly mobile White youth using a drug society negatively associated with subordinate users within [B]lack and Mexican communities" (Bender, 2016, p. 361).

War on Drugs

The War on Drugs in the latter half of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries similarly targeted Black and Latinx communities in the United States through racially targeted policing and sentencing for drug possession, leading to mass incarnation of people of color and a new and invisible "racial caste system," as defined and documented in Alexander's (2012) *The New Jim Crow*. Mass incarceration created a new racial caste system in its ability to "denote a stigmatized racial group into an inferior position by law

and custom" (p. 15). Stereotyping was woven throughout the War on Drug narratives just as it was during illegalization. Alexander explained that to create even more social control and justify the War on Drugs, "the media was saturated with images of Black 'crack whores,' 'crack dealers,' and 'crack babies'—images that seemed to confirm the worst negative racial stereotypes about impoverished inner-city residents" (p. 6). Despite the myth that the War on Drugs was associated with dangerous "hard" drugs, "marijuana possession … accounted for nearly 80% of the growth in drug arrests in the 1990s" (Alexander, 2012, p. 76). Despite research that proved White youth use marijuana at the same frequency as youth of color (Alexander, 2012), arrests and incarnation for marijuana usage contributed to today's "staggeringly racialized prison population" (Bender, 2016, p. 361). For instance, the ACLU reported in 2013 (the same year that recreational marijuana was legalized Colorado) that Black users of marijuana were 3.73 times more likely to be arrested for possession than White users (ACLU, 2013). In Colorado, African Americans account for 22% of marijuana arrests despite comprising 4% of the state's population (Levi-Pounds, 2013, p. 563).

Only when White Coloradans decided they wanted to grow, sell, and smoke marijuana legally did legalization became a possibility. Bender noted that in the legalization campaigns in the 2010s, organizers focused on pro-social aspects of legalization such as the medicinal aspects of marijuana to alleviate chronic pain or cancer, revenue gains for the state, or marijuana's relative safety compared to alcohol and the individual liberty to choose marijuana over alcohol (Bender, 2016). These "whitewashed arguments," as Bender referred to them, rarely, if ever, mentioned the

"disproportionate burden of marijuana enforcement on racial minorities" (Bender, 2016, p. 693–694). As marijuana usage continued to grow from the 1960s to the mid 2010s on college campuses and "among middle-class Whites, the societal image of users shifted away from Mexican laborers and other lower-class groups, fear of axe-wielding marijuana smokers faded, and pressure mounted to decriminalize possession" (Bender, 2016, p. 368).

Whereas marijuana illegalization targeted people of color at the benefit of White Americans and conservatives (Alexander, 2012), marijuana *legalization* has centered around the needs of White marijuana users. The ease with which White business owners can obtain licenses to grow and sell marijuana for profit compared to people of color has further segregated the industry (Jan & Nirappil, 2017). While White business owners have commoditized marijuana since 2013 by representing nearly four out of five business owners, Black and brown Coloradans remain incarcerated for the very same activities that White business owners now attempt to advertise to tourists (Jagannathan, 2019).

Whitewashing Cannabis

Even though cannabis tourism operators strategically whitewash their message by calling attention to medicinal benefits, disrupting the ideal tourist image is nearly impossible. Colorado's cannabis tourism industry, in an attempt to gain recognition from the CTO and permission to advertise in the state's tourism advertising channels, has deployed the same whitewashed arguments from the legalization campaigns. In an attempt to win favor and recognition from the CTO, the cannabis tourism industry has strategically distanced itself from the racial stereotypes intentionally affixed to marijuana.

The *Roadmap* process demonstrates this sidestep move by the CTO as the cannabis industry attempted to integrate themselves into the CTO's promotional agenda.

The CTO's vision for *Roadmap* strategic planning process in 2016 was to create one unified voice of Colorado's tourism industry, outlining a plan that would continue Colorado's monetary success following the *Come to Life* campaign and the recession's waning influence on consumer spending. During the *Roadmap* second listening session in Summit County, one of the most vocal participants was a cannabis tourism operator and industry representative. This individual aimed to win the Office's ear by inserting cannabis tourism into the facilitators' questions about Colorado's critical issues, opportunities, and competition.

However, it was clear both verbally and nonverbally that the Office didn't want to entertain his ideas. The CTO Director and meeting facilitators completely ignored his ideas in the meeting. Therefore, after the failure at the second listening session and in an attempt to build a relationship with the CTO and be included in the "statewide" strategic plan, the cannabis industry held a strategic communication brainstorming meeting in Denver on June 23, 2016. This meeting and the adjoining "Proposal to Unify the Colorado and Cannabis Tourism Industries to Maximize State Revenues" document was entirely centered around their own messaging to the state and how the industry aimed to fit within the state's own "tourism story" through health arguments, economic imperative, competition, and strategic responses to sentiments of too much tourism. In this meeting, cannabis operators focused on the medical benefits of marijuana and relative safety compared to alcohol in a similar way that legalization efforts did in the

2010s (Bender, 2016). However, the cannabis operators also recognized the Office's stated purpose and goal to increase tourism spending and compete with other states. Operators wanted to make the argument to the CTO that Colorado could compete with California and increase cannabis tourism before "Napa becomes this big." In reference to complaints about too much tourism, the cannabis industry also tried to argue that cannabis tourism would alleviate traffic along I-70 and draw tourists to less popular destinations.

Despite attempts to fit their industry within the CTO's goals and challenges, the cannabis industry was ultimately unsuccessful in tapping into the CTO's advertising program by becoming "industry partners" and winning favor, or even recognition, with the CTO. Why? The cannabis industry was not aware of how the Office manages its brand and image in order to attract the most "desirable," (read non-controversial) tourists and win the favor of lawmakers and citizens from all political and social spectrums, despite the potential revenue the cannabis industry could bring. Interestingly, a former CTO employee was at this meeting in June of 2016. He explained to attendees how the marijuana industry would have a hard time fitting into the "family-friendly" branding strategy of the state. Despite whitewashing efforts, the cannabis industry still failed to insert themselves in the plan, paving the way for the Office to further uphold the ideal tourist and reframe cannabis tourism within public safety instead and continuing associations of cannabis usage with people of color.

Public Safety

The state, on the other hand, drew upon signifiers of marijuana's racist association with people of color by casting out and re-framing cannabis under a framework of public safety in 2016, thus continuing the War on Drugs drumbeat. At the 2016 Governor's Conference on Tourism in Breckenridge, Colorado, the most attended breakout session was "The Marijuana Message." Given the confusion surrounding where, how, and under what context visitors and residents could use marijuana (and whether marijuana was impacting tourism), conference goers were eager get answers from the state on how to comprehend marijuana legalization.

First, the CTO's contractor (SMARI) presented information on who marijuana users were and whether it was impacting tourism negatively. The entire marijuana survey conducted by SMARI was meant to paint a portrait of what a marijuana user visiting Colorado looked like, answering questions such as what they they, how they acted, where they spent their time, what age they were, and whether marijuana legalization impacted their desire to visit Colorado. In a sense, the presentation was an attempt to figure out how the marijuana tourist fit within the ideal tourist paradigm. To create a profile of "the marijuana user," the state essentially reassured conference goers that this fictitious visitor was not disrupting tourism or the (similarly fictious) ideal tourist. Marijuana has proven to be a prime example of the value-system enacted by the Office in relation to ideal tourists and preferred activities by tourists. It was clear in the presentation that marijuana users were "Othered" and understood in relation to stereotypes of lazy and uneducated individuals, the very same stereotypes used to make marijuana illegal in the 1930s. For

instance, when commenting on users' activities, the SMARI representative commented: "I had a feeling they might get their marijuana and sit somewhere and go 'wow look at this scenery,' but instead they are very active and do lots of things." SMARI continued to present information that assured audience members that marijuana legalization had no impact on tourism and that they users did not endanger the ideal tourist: visitors weren't influenced by it in their very small, pre-qualified sample of 400 (according to SMARI, only 4% of visitors came primarily for marijuana), and non-users weren't deterred by legalization.

Secondly, a speaker from the Colorado Health Department presented on law and health effects of marijuana usage by introducing the "Good to Know" campaign. This presentation framed marijuana under a public safety framework and eased participants' concerns about how marijuana legalization was a threat to public health and children. For instance, the speaker told a story about a non-English speaking staff member bringing home a cannabis candy bar and giving it to their child without knowing it was marijuana in order to express the dangers posed by legalization. These type of anecdotal stories (particularly ones about driving under the influence of marijuana) were expressed passionately from audience members as well. Further evidence of framing cannabis tourism under public safety was found on the state's tourist websites. At the time of legalization, and during the conference in 2016, all searches on Colorado.com's search bar for cannabis or related terms such as "weed" or "marijuana" automatically re-directed to the Colorado Department of Public Health.

IDEAL TOURIST

Framing cannabis tourism within a public safety framework reverberated a hundred years–long narrative about marijuana and "fear" from users largely *assumed* to be Black, brown, and/or uneducated. During the War on Drugs, public fear and safety were commonplace arguments for the incarceration and targeted policing of people of color for marijuana possession. The fact that marijuana drummed up so much fear in the state and in White tourism operators points to the ways in which marijuana usage, and legalization, is correlated directly with social identity and stereotypes constructed in conjunction with the drug over many years. Although more subtle, stereotyping and War on Drugs rhetoric permeated cannabis tourism rhetoric as well, showing the ways in which tourism intersects with mass incarceration. Alexander (2012) explained the racist discrepancy:

> In view of the nation's treatment of predominately White drunk drivers and drug offenders, it is extremely difficult to imagine that our nation would have declared all-out war on drug offenders if the enemy had been defined in the public imagination as White. It was the conflation of blackness and crime in the media and political discourse that made the drug war and the sudden, massive expansion of our prison system possible. White drug "criminals" are collateral damage in the War on Drugs because they have been harmed by a war declared with Blacks in mind. … For the first time in our nation's history, it may become readily apparent to Whites how they, too, can be harmed by antiblack racism—a fact that, until now, has been difficult for many to grasp. (p. 207)

In other words, the association between marijuana usage and Black and brown citizens did not disappear at legalization and resurfaced through public safety rhetoric *and* cannabis tourism operators' realization that they too face barriers because of racialized policies.

Both communication strategies by the industry and the state maintain whiteness in relation to marijuana usage, public safety, and tourism, further elevating the vision of the ideal tourist. The "green rush" perfectly encapsulates the primary findings of *The Ideal Tourist* and the ideal audience and proves the way in which the ideal tourist is not just applicable to the content of the *Come to Life* campaign, but to new changes in the tourist landscape as the Office continues to go after their imagined audience. Cannabis tourism further exposed the industries' whitewashing efforts *and* the CTO's investment in whiteness through tourism, just like the preceding case studies on representation and audience targeting did.

Conclusion

In the case of tourism advertising and the imagined tourism audience, Colorado government entities are actively constructing narratives of inclusion and exclusion. Although the CTO claims that tourism advertising functions as a type of "inspiration" campaign to funnel travelers to the state at large, it instead sifts audiences into *who* the state *wants* to visit. After defining primary and secondary audiences who are high-income, "down to earth," and affluent, the state targets whom they assume to be that audience through the *Come to Life* campaign placements and then measures the success of attracting these pre-qualified travelers. This might make good business sense

according to the state, but to "follow the money" in this way ignores the role that government entities play in discrimination through tourism and advertising. In the process of marketing Colorado to potential tourists, the Office intentionally *excludes* low-income and less educated audiences as well as audiences of color through their sports media placements, city-specific magazines, airline travel, and increasingly targeted digital media strategy.

In producing consumers of the state, Colorado constructs its vision of the ideal resident within its own boundaries (Butsch, 2008). Richard Butsch (2008) argued that "discourses on audiences can be understood as judgments of fitness of citizenship" (p. 4). Accordingly, the ideal audience—composed of those considered the most "fit" citizens—is White, affluent, and educated. In constructing the ideal audience, the CTO subscribes to the Colorado government reports on who should best be included and excluded within its own boundaries. Nationally as well, the imagined audience works alongside other discourses of inclusion and exclusion based on race, class, and education. In other words, the imagined audience can be understood as the imagined, ideal citizen, which has historically been "masculine, White, and bourgeois" (Butsch, 2008, p. 4). This ideal, "fit" citizen becomes even more clear in the Office's continuation of War on Drugs rhetoric that frames marijuana users as a threat to public safety.

What is equally troubling about how the CTO excludes certain tourists is the way in which they measure audiences through proprietary means. Media scholars argue that absence signifies something. In this case, the absence of information about the advertising program demonstrates how the government acts as a private company, further

transforming governmental spaces into corporate ones. Banet-Weiser (2012) explained that in a culture saturated by brands, spaces that we typically deem as "authentic" such as politics, creativity, and our own sense of self are increasing branded and "structured by brand logic and strategies, and understood and expressed through the language of branding" (p. 5). In the construction of the imagined audience, the CTO increasingly acts as a branded space, as opposed to a governmental one. What scholars have not detailed is the way in which this brand logic has allowed governmental offices free reign to act as private advertising firms, targeting audiences in a way that is shrouded in secrecy. The Office has argued that this is to protect Colorado's position as a popular tourist destination, but could it also be true that this approach protects the Office's own problematic value system for audiences that relies on assumptions of race, class, and gender? Although this may be "intentionally malicious [or] unintentionally ignorant" (Speicher, 2018, p. 2), the impact is the same: a taxpayer-supported government entity is acting as a private company and protecting its ability to continue to do so by categorizing its decision-making as proprietary information.

Chapter 4:

PANNING FOR RHETORICAL GOLD: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND THE GREEN TRAVELER

The Animas River in southwestern Colorado was an unusual mustard color in the summer of 2015. The Gold King Mine spill in Silverton was one of the most visible signs of the externalities of mining, infiltrating the river with toxic metals and social media feeds with imagery of the "toxic sublime" (Peeples, 2011). What had started as the activity of a few gold rush prospectors had become, over 100 years later, an industry that transformed the landscape, economy, and even public safety. The reality of toxic wastewater barreling downstream in the popular tourist destination and eventually feeding into Navajo Nation was a startling reminder of the dangerous externalities of resource extraction and under-regulated industry. The Gold King Mine is a ripe metaphor for mass tourism's environmental and social byproducts that are, likewise, barreling downstream.

Chapter Four explains how the CTO is contending with this environmental reality through a related metaphor of mining for gold. First, I'll name the critical issues facing tourism, as voiced by scholars and Colorado citizens. Then, I'll use the process of gold panning to describe how the Office has transformed these concerns into their existing marketing program that revolves around the ideal tourist. Finally, I'll return to the King Mine metaphor and explain how the CTO's response has contributed to downstream effects that ultimately protect the ideal tourist's ethos of Western individualism and capitalism.

Tourism's Critical Issues

Tourism has a large environmental footprint. Global tourism accounts for 8% of greenhouse gas emissions and is projected to grow by 3% annually if energy and travel emissions continue to be "business as usual" (Lenzen et al., 2018). Within its core business model, modern mass tourism relies on fossil fuels in order to transport travelers to and from vacation spots vis-à-vis automobiles, trains, and airplanes. Tourism also involves other carbon-intensive services such as food transport, infrastructure development, and the sale of manufactured goods (Lenzen et al., 2018). This creates a tension between the land that tourism relies on and the pollution tourism emits, which is drastically changing the landscape, resources, and weather patterns, threatening tourism's biggest "product" (to use the CTO's terminology). For instance, the viability of Colorado's most profitable tourism sector, resort skiing, is beginning to decline due to shifting and drastic weather patterns triggered by climate change (Steiger et al., 2019). In recent years, increasingly *visible* signs of climate change such as wildfires have heightened the pressure for the tourism Office, the tourism industry, and the state to face the growing environmental reality.

Furthermore, scholars and citizens have criticized the mass tourism industry in Colorado for its use of water, energy (Rhodium, 2019), intrusive roadways, and encroachment on cities and wildlife for massive, industrialized ski and golf resorts (Philpott, 2013; Stoddart, 2012). Population growth, traffic, housing affordability in popular tourist destinations, droughts, and wildfires have been added to the growing list of compounding intersections between travel and the environment. In regard to housing

in Summit County (where several of Colorado's most popular ski resorts reside), affordability, particularly for Hispanic and Latinx immigrant workers, is a major land-based issue. Immigrant families, for instance, earn below 80% of the annual median income (AMI) in Summit County, forcing families to travel on treacherous roads or inhabit underregulated and crowded mobile homes in order to continue to make a living and serve the needs of affluent tourists and residents in resort areas who use the land for leisure (Queen, 2018).[11] As this data shows, tourism's seemingly neutral and happy-go-lucky façade is hiding major current and future energy and social catastrophes. And some Coloradans know it.

Roadmap Listening Sessions

In the summer of 2016 the CTO and their contractor, the Radcliffe Company, kicked off a listening session tour around all four corners of Colorado. The tour was announced just days before the kickoff listening session in Denver, and local tourism workers, professionals, and other interested parties were invited to attend these public events. I attended two of these events in some of Colorado's most popular tourist destinations: Summit County and Telluride. At each listening session, participants (e.g., tourism industry professionals and/or workers and interested community members) trickled into hotel conference rooms dimly lit by a PowerPoint presentation. Finding seats at white cloth–covered round tables, hotel managers, park rangers, marijuana

[11] In 2016, Summit County approved a tax fund for affordable housing but little has been effective in the years since.

businessmen, and other tourism professionals awaited the CTO's plan to "listen" before creating a new 5-year strategic plan called *The Colorado Roadmap.*

The business-suit wearing Radcliffe Company employees began facilitating the 90-minute listening session, which was loosely structured around a problem/solution agenda. To kick off the meeting, participants were told about the strategic planning process and asked to identify customer and product "critical issues" facing Colorado tourism. Although the listening session facilitators created leading questions that prompted participants with answers that focused on Colorado's competitive advantages and disadvantages (e.g., "What product areas are other competitors becoming more aggressive in?") in the Summit County listening session, some participants articulated critical issues that fell outside of the questions' intended answers. For example, in both Summit County and Telluride responses such as "too many visitors," "unaffordable housing in popular tourist destinations," "traffic along I-70," and "climate change" were assertively vocalized by business owners and state park rangers. These issues were not directly market-oriented in the way that facilitators wanted (in that they did not mention competitors like Utah or offer up more aggressive "product areas"); however, these issues shed light on social and environmental "critical issues" that directly relate to tourism. The moment these issues were voiced in the CTO's listening sessions, they had to be incorporated in the *Roadmap* listening and strategic planning process if the CTO were to follow its commitment to listening and addressing the public as it pertains to tourism.

Gold Panning Metaphor

These listening sessions and the aforementioned studies on tourism's environmental and social impact are the instigators to what I call the CTO's process of panning for rhetorical gold:

Crouched along the banks of the river, a gaunt, scruffy man places a circular metal pan overstuffed with dirt and rocks into the water. With the sole purpose of separating desirable materials from the undesirable, he begins a familiar routine by shifting his pan left to right, dispersing pan-made ripples into the river's natural flow downstream. Occasionally tossing away large rocks, he gazes at the pan as the heavier material begins to settle downward. He slows, gingerly turning in the pan in a circular motion, careful to not let the black sand and potential gold specks spill into the river. Small amounts of water circulate from the palm of his hand into the pan as he catches a glimpse what he's looking for. After gathering his winnings, he gives the pan a final wash, erasing any persistent residue and begins again.

Just as gold miners pan for gold in the narrative above, the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) pans for rhetorical gold: when the CTO is confronted with mass tourism's environmental impact or concerns about climate change, it enacts a rhetorical panning process that filters out the core component of the critique, and instead fashions "rhetorical gold" in the form of consumer-friendly sustainability rhetoric that eases collective anxiety about crises such as climate change or severe draught. This "green" communication tactic maintains the Office's story and brand for an assumed audience of primarily White, affluent tourism professionals and citizens.

IDEAL TOURIST

Figure 7.

1857. "We have it rich." Washing and panning gold, Rockerville, Dak. Old timers Spriggs, Lamb, and Dillon at work. Photo and copyright by Crabitt, 1889. (copied from photo text)

In Chapter Five, I argue that Colorado's tourism story is maintained through the CTO's sifting, casting out, washing, and polishing of unmarketable or unseemly aspects of tourism to protect the ideal tourist and environmental privilege. Colorado uses rhetorical panning to protect its assertion that mass tourism and tourism marketing serves every citizen in the state in positive economic and cultural ways, despite environmental realities that might challenge this assertion.

Preview of Chapter

Three primary texts that relate to the Office's strategic listening sessions in 2016 informed my analysis: 1) the final *Roadmap* strategic plan, 2) CTO Director Kathy Ritter's keynote address about the strategic plan, and 3) the "Care For Colorado" campaign. All three texts tell a story of evolving discourse around sustainability by the Office from 2016 to 2018, and together, they demonstrate a developing tactic deployed by the state to protect Colorado's tourism story and the ideal tourist considering growing concerns of climate change, overpopulation, and other environmental crises in Colorado (CTO, 2017b).

First, I use the final *Roadmap* report to pinpoint a general turn to sustainability rhetoric by the CTO and draw upon scholars of sustainable tourism and greenwashing to anchor my analysis. The *Roadmap* is a particularly useful text for understanding rhetorical panning because it highlights the Office's own understanding and presentation of its purpose, obstacles, opportunities, and future. In a sense, the *Colorado Roadmap* is a state tourism manifesto that heralds the importance of tourism while setting a path forward to increase traveler spending, mobilize Coloradans as a "sales force" for the tourism office, justify state funding, and tenderly pacify concerns about overcrowding, highway traffic, and climate change. The tourism office's turn to sustainability discourse protects tourism's *funding* sustainability (a.k.a. economic growth) while engaging in practices that endanger the state's *environmental* sustainability by circumventing concerns surrounding climate change, resource extraction, and greenhouse gas emissions

—industries and byproducts that as of now are essential to serving the desirable ideal tourist. The *Roadmap* is also the impetus behind the second two documents.

Second, I document how CTO conjures up what I call "the green traveler," or an ideal tourist who acts in environment- and consumer-oriented ways in Colorado in response to the sustainability rhetoric in the *Roadmap.* The green traveler ideal first made an appearance in a keynote speech by the CTO Director in 2016 in which she mentioned an anecdote about hiking. This rhetorical gold makes the Office appear environmentally friendly and re-centers the ideal tourist as a traveler who exercises individualism through imagined behavioral actions that attempt to alleviate public anxieties about large-scale issues of too much tourism and climate change.

Thirdly, I demonstrate how the green traveler evolves vis-à-vis green marketing initiatives by the CTO through the "Care for Colorado" campaign and the associated brochure, jingle, and partnership with The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics. This campaign, full of singing bears and advice for travelers, is what is left when the Office sifts out more sustainable critiques of tourism's environmental and social impact.

To conclude, I discuss my findings within an environmental privilege framework and explain how the language used by the Office in the final *Roadmap* and other green messaging in the wake of the *Roadmap* publication sifts out affordability concerns of immigrant and low-income tourism workers. This language works alongside other discourses of overpopulation that target immigrants and marginalized populations in the name of environmentalism (Park & Pellow, 2011). By engaging in this rhetorical practice, the state and tourism industry maintain environmental privilege and whiteness in

relation to sustainable tourism both locally and globally. I argue that panning for rhetorical gold ultimately privileges the ideal tourist at the expense of the environment and minoritized groups globally as tourism's environmental and social waste barrels downstream, just like the Gold King Mine's orange sludge in 2015.

Analysis

The following analysis is organized into three thematic sections: 1) A Turn to Sustainability, 2) The Green Traveler, and 3) "Care for Colorado" Campaign.

A Turn to Sustainability

Prior to the *Roadmap* strategic plan, there was little to no mention of sustainable tourism on the CTO's "Industry Partner" website (a place where involved tourism professionals access information about the Office's activities). However, after the *Roadmap* listening sessions, the terms "sustainability" and "stewardship" started to surface in CTO communications with increasing frequency. The final *Colorado Roadmap* report in 2016 and 2017 marked the beginning of a sustainable tourism shift in Colorado's messaging to both the industry and visitors. The report, by the CTO's own admission, was sprinkled with green messaging through frequent terminology like "sustainable" and "stewardship" that changed the overall tone of the CTO's industry-facing and potential-visitor messaging. In the executive summary of the report the CTO wrote, "While a new focus on sustainable tourism practices is housed primarily in the Steward Pillar, this stated commitment to responsible tourism permeates the Roadmap (CTO, 2017b, p. 4). The stated mission of the report, "to drive traveler spending through promotion and development of compelling, sustainable travel experiences throughout our

four-corner state" highlights this newfound focus sustainability as well (CTO, 2017b, p. 2).

Elsewhere in the report, "sustainable" surfaces over and over again, particularly in relation to the CTO's 5-year goals and through repeated phrases such as "increase Colorado's visitor's embrace of sustainable practices" (CTO, 2017b, pp. 5, 18), "protect the integrity of Colorado resources through sustainable tourism (pp. 5, 14, 18), and "integrate sustainability concepts" (p. 10). The term "resources" also appears frequently in relation to stewardship and sustainability, particularly with the phrase "protecting the integrity of Colorado resources" (CTO, 2017b, pp. 2, 5, 14, 18).

The *Roadmap* process leading to the final also provides insight into how governmental tourism offices respond to these growing environmental issues. Information on how to attend the listening sessions was difficult to come by unless you were already "in the know" with the CTO, thus making attendance difficult. What's more, by naming these environmental and social concerns, listening session participants deviated from the *Roadmap* facilitators' desired responses for critical issues facing the tourism industry, thus creating a situation in which the Office had to enact its gold-panning process. The CTO sifted and modified environmental issues raised by using a formula invented by corporations: produce a simple, market-friendly and individual-oriented frivolous green messaging strategy that pacifies critiques and conveniently fails to address the issue(s) at hand. This formula has been well documented by scholars of sustainable tourism and green marketing.

The Veneer of Sustainable Rhetoric

To put it simply, scholars have argued that sustainable tourism rhetoric is all talk and no action. For instance, tourism scholar Brian Wheeller (1993) predicted—more than 20 years ago, when sustainable tourism rhetoric was gaining ground—the veneer created by sustainability rhetoric, claiming:

> Rather than effectively addressing the complexities of tourism impact, what [sustainable tourism] is actually achieving is the considerably easier task of answering the question—'How best can we cope with the criticism of tourism impact?'—as opposed to the impact itself. (p. 122)

In other words, tourism-governing bodies like the CTO tend to focus on responding to the *existence of critiques*, like those few raised in the listening sessions and through local journalism, rather than the *content* of the critiques. This enables the Office to deploy a gold-panning tactic that sifts or discards unfavorable *content* and seek gold nuggets for the tourism brand. In addition to the environmental issues outlined above, this has created the situation in which the CTO has turned to sustainability rhetoric, greenwashing, and the construction of the ideal "green traveler" in order to safeguard tourism's growth mandate.

Sustainability's Double Meaning

Colorado's sustainable tourism trend is challenged by a mountain of research that critiques sustainability rhetoric, showing it to be superficial and deceiving (Alaimo, 2013; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010; Wheeller, 1993). In this literature, scholars pointed to how sustainability in a capitalist system has a double meaning: first, as an environmentally-

oriented action (e.g. recycling), and second, as a continuation of capitalist growth (Alaimo, 2013). The term sustainable is used by the CTO both in relation to the environment—"Protect the integrity of Colorado's resources through sustainable tourism or" or "[inviting] travelers to embrace Coloradans' sustainability ethic while here"—and in relation to funding: "Develop sustainable funding to grow and protect Colorado's competitive position" (CTO, 2017b, pp. 2–4). The double use of the term points to the way in which sustainability in tourism communications is ultimately about "sustaining the tourism industry" (Higgins-Desbiolle, 2010, p. 117).

The term sustainability also works to alleviate growing concerns about the environment. According to Stacy Alaimo (2013), sustainability "may be serving a psychological function in the social consciousness" at a time when an environmental "apocalypse gallops towards us" (p. 559). Meaning, the term sustainability, whether used in economic or environmental contexts, may alleviate anxiety about the increasing effects of climate change and other environmental crises, while it does nothing to address these crises. With this double meaning in mind, the Office uses an iteration of the word sustainable more than 45 times in the 21-page *Roadmap* report, which protects the sustainability of tourism *funding* while giving lip service to sustainability as an environmental ideal, thus serving a "psychological function" for consumers and tourism industry professionals (CTO, 2017c). In so doing, the office uses sustainability rhetoric to build Colorado's brand in the name of tourism growth.

Mass Tourism

Several tourism scholars have pointed to the inability for mass or corporatized tourism to engage with sustainability without simultaneously contending with mass consumerism. Higgins-Desbiolles (2010), for instance, argued that sustainable tourism rhetoric is inoperable unless the "cultural ideology of consumerism," or the "consumerist 'worldview'" that permeates our global economy is similarly addressed (p. 119). In a consumerist culture in which identity is increasingly defined by our consumption habits (Banet-Weiser, 2013), tourism is beholden to "exploitation and commodification of all factors of production including people, cultures and environments" (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010, p. 120). For example, Philpott (2013) documented the transformation of Colorado's landscape into a product of the U.S.'s postwar consumer culture, arguing that Colorado's history is one of "how places themselves became products: manufactured, packaged, branded, and marketed like so many consumer goods" (p. 5). For instance, Colorado's main thoroughfare through the mountains, I-70, was designed and implemented, in part, to make a truly rugged landscape seem "like a natural place for an interstate" in postwar America (p. 103). Even the number of days of sunshine and the supposed medicinal benefits of the sun were used to embellish and construct notions of Colorado's landscape as one "naturally suited for leisure" (p. 68). This "consumerist worldview" of place that Philpott detailed is what makes sustainable tourism "elusive," to use Higgins-Debiolles's (2010) words. In other words, scholars would argue that "sustainable tourism" is not achievable given the historical and current environmental remodeling and energy-intensive activities required to make places sites of consumption for consumer desires.

IDEAL TOURIST

Like resource-based capitalism, the consumerism embedded in tourist travel activities (a.k.a. consumerism of resources and places) renders tourism incompatible—at this time—with decarbonization or other environmental actions in response to climate change.

Colorado's state government has even referenced the problematic dynamics between public and private/consumer interests in a 2009 audit, explaining that "because the tourism industry professionals are involved with Colorado tourism, there is a risk that conflicts between public duty and private interest could arise" (Colorado Legislative, 2009). Take, for instance, the airline industry. Although airline travel accounts for 2.5% of all CO_2 emissions globally (Tabuchi, 2019) and is expected take up a quarter of the world's "carbon budget" in 2050 (Carbon Brief, 2016), the CTO board is unlikely to include a "stewardship" objective of reducing airline travel. In fact, the state suggests the opposite in the *Roadmap* strategic plan under objective #3: "Advocate for air-service enhancements in partnership with Denver International Airport, as well as regional airports" (CTO, 2017c, p. 20). Reducing airline travel would effectively reduce the number of "high-yield" tourists, who have been targeted as long-haul tourists who stay in Colorado for longer periods of time, and spend more money on accommodations, activities, transportation, and food, which in turn increase the state's spending numbers and the campaign's ROI. Colorado, therefore, has a vested interest in encouraging airline travel, despite its large environmental footprint. Notwithstanding 2009 audit, the state continues to have private representation on the CTO's board of directors in 2017 from the

Colorado Flight Alliance and two ski resorts—industries that rely on the ideal tourist and their propensity to spend on airline travel and expensive ski-lift tickets.

For insider communication with industry professionals, the term sustainability functions as rhetorical gold because it assures tourism professionals that environmental concerns will not disrupt business as usual and the flow of money into the state. It also protects Colorado's brand. This image management strategy is, according to Wheeller (1993),

> one that satisfies the immediate short-term wishes of some of the main protagonists in tourism's impact debate, avoids sacrifices and enables behaviour in much the same way as before—but with the veneer of respectability and from a higher moral platform. (p. 122)

Whereas a term like climate change implies action, human's culpability, and changes to the status quo (e.g., questioning the leisure industry's environmental footprint through airlines, ski resort development, or water usage), sustainability terminology allows the office to continue its pursuit of economic growth and continue business as usual while lightly implying it is acting in "environmentally friendly" ways.

Greenwashing

Environmental communication scholars and environmental activists have long documented the use of environmental appeals by advertisers in order to placate consumers' growing concerns and knowledge about environmental issues such as climate change, waste, or clean fresh water (TerraChoice, 2007). Known as *greenwashing*, this advertising technique is duplicitous due to its inability to challenge the root causes of

environmental degradation: resource-based consumer capitalism and externalities in the form of CO_2 emissions and waste from the production and consumption of commodity goods (Cox, 2013). Greenwashing is an image-management strategy invented by corporations that wish to appeal to growing public concern about the environment; it foregrounds the individual as a site for environmental change, rather than advocating for institutional, systemic responses to environmental degradation and climate change. Greenwashing is prevalent in ostensibly environmentally friendly product advertising whose environmental appeals via imagery and taglines shield institutions from critiques of problematic behavior. For instance, Coca-Cola's Dasani "plant bottle" uses imagery of plants and greenery and the misleading messaging that plastic is made from plants on the bottle in order to circumvent the environmental waste and water overextraction caused by the product. Like other single-use water bottles, however, Dasani's are made from plastic.

Greenwashing is considered "rhetorical gold" within the context of tourism media for its ability to allow the Office to reference growing environmental concerns and appear socially and environmentally conscious while not directly addressing the root causes of environmental and social issues associated with tourism. Meaning, greenwashing allows institutions to appear green without taking any substantial action or addressing the systemic contributors to environmental degradation and housing inequality, namely, resource-based capitalism and consumerism. Despite the Office's assertion that tourism is vital to Colorado's economy and way of life, the Office is silent when it comes to the problems tourism causes (e.g., affordable housing) or problems associated with mass

tourism (e.g., greenhouse gas emissions). In this sense, either the Office overinflates its importance in Colorado, or it shirks its responsibilities to manage its own byproducts.

Greenwashing relies on the strategic use of environmentally-loaded terminology such as "sustainability," "plant material," "green," "clean," and "natural" that imply environmentally sound practices but are in fact empty, or even oxymoronic, in substance. For instance, the phrase "clean coal" may sound appealing, but is in reality more of an advertising campaign than "practical remedies to deal with coal's massive CO_2 emissions" (Conniff, 2008).

A *Plastic Signifier*

As previously mentioned, in the final *Roadmap* report, phrases such as "Colorado's sustainability ethic," "sustainable tourism," and "sustainable tourism practices" appear frequently and mainly without explanation. These terms function as what Alaimo (2012) would call "a plastic but potent signifier, meaning, roughly, the ability to somehow keep things going despite the economic and environmental crises that, we fear, may render this impossible" (p. 559). The *Roadmap's* final report similarly referenced sustainability while "[keeping] things going" (or maintaining the Office's commitment to increased tourism spending), thus proving sustainability's status in this context as a "plastic signifier" (Alaimo, 2012, p. 559). In the "Steward Pillar" of the report, which explained the Office's commitment to sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism was explained in three objectives: 1) dispersing visitors to "new", less-traveled places, 2) inviting visitors to embrace a sustainability ethic, and 3) creating alliances with organizations and governmental offices with a "sustainability theme."

Interestingly, the third objective for stewardship included a home school curriculum for students to appreciate "the many unique tourism-related assets in the state and show how a student and family could experience them" (CTO, 2017c, p. 18). Somehow marketing the state to its own citizens through the education system falls under sustainability. This example further demonstrates how the Office sifts environmental concerns by exposing a strategic message that focuses not on environmental sustainability, but on *tourism* sustainability by turning Colorado's school-age residents into a marketing arm of the state.

The Green Traveler

The increase in sustainability rhetoric was further evident during CTO Director Cathy Ritter's "Charting the Colorado Journey" keynote address at the 2016 Governor's Conference on Tourism. Throughout the conference, the CTO referenced the *Roadmap* listening session process (which had taken place the summer prior) and invited important stakeholders to give input on the process before the finalization of the strategic plan. A large majority of the conference, therefore, was about looking ahead and envisioning next steps for Colorado tourism, and this was evident in the keynote address as well. During her speech, Ritter spent significant time rallying audience members to call for more tourism funding. This was, after all, her first major conference as the CTO Director, and funding had been a hot-button issue for the CTO's existence since the early 2000s.

What was most pertinent to the evolution of sustainability rhetoric from the CTO was at the end of her speech when she made "a quick note on sustaining what we love." Using her own experience as a visitor at Rocky Mountain National Park, Ritter told

conference goers that she had witnessed travelers ignoring signs to stay on the hiking trails, and recalled how "people just would not stay on the path, despite all the signs telling them they would damage the alpine tundra if they stepped off the paths" (Ritter, 2016). After telling her story, she announced her new position as the head of a national taskforce composed of state tourism authorities to embrace a message of asking visitors to "respect the lands they're visiting." This brief anecdote and vague mention of a taskforce was in response to larger environmental anxieties expressed by Coloradans, particularly during the *Roadmap* listening sessions just a few months prior to the speech (e.g., too much tourism, climate change, traffic); however, Ritter offered only her own hiking experience as a poster example of of "sustaining what we love."

Ritter's reliance on anecdote and storytelling proved that the imagery of sustainability is more valuable than the actions it implies and functions as a tool of image management. In Ritter's speech, a trail-aware hiker signifies environmental action (e.g., don't disturb off-trail fauna), but does not achieve much of anything in solving large-scale environmental crises such as climate change. What's more, it allows the Office to continue business as usual by placing the responsibility of environmental action onto the traveler. The rhetorical moment in which Ritter distilled environmental concerns into a hiking-aware traveler was the first of many iterations of the "green traveler" ideal, in which systemic, large-scale environmental problems are reduced to individual behavioral issues like hiking, throwing away trash, or wearing sunscreen.

In the CTO's greenwashing and panning process, environmental byproducts of mass tourism become an *attitudinal* and individual issue. When Ritter provides hiking

etiquette as a solution to sustainable tourism, the individual hiker becomes the site at which environmental concerns are solved, thus protecting larger institutions from changing their own behavior. Although the sustainability section of Ritter's keynote was representative of a recent turn in the CTO towards sustainability rhetoric, this rhetoric was predictably heavy on wordsmithing and light on action, and smacked of neoliberal governance in which privatization and individualism reign supreme. The onus of "sustaining what we love" fell on the visitor. As Ritter stated in her speech, Colorado should become a national leader in "[inviting] them to respect the lands *they're* visiting" (Ritter, 2016; emphasis mine). The travel/consumer behavior that Ritter referenced in her speech deflected the solution from private industry and government agencies onto individuals, a common tactic used in corporate social responsibility branding. The CTO's green messaging strategy centered the individual, or consumer, by asking travelers to shoulder sustainability by following hiking etiquette, engaging in what the final *Roadmap* called "smart" consumption, "embracing Colorado's sustainability ethic," and "voluntourism" (CTO, 2017c). In so doing, the office conjures an image of an ideal green traveler: an imaginary tourist whose minute actions and attitudes reduce environmental crises. The "green traveler" becomes a neoliberal "message of hope and redemption, but without a change in policy direction" (Park & Pellow, 2011, p. 201).

The explanation of "Stewardship Pillar" in the *Roadmap Report* exemplifies the strategy of the green traveler and the expectations placed on them:

> [The Stewardship] Pillar aims at evolving the state's conversation around travelers, to guide travelers in meaningful ways to reduce their impact on precious

> resources and even help protect them through "voluntourism," both volunteering and giving. (CTO, 2017c, p. 4)

Here, stewardship becomes a responsibility of the traveler (e.g. unpaid labor in the form of voluntourism), thus absolving the state of taking any political and active role in protecting the state from imminent climate and environmental threats such as water, wildfires, and pollution. This allows the Office to use the "potent" signifier of sustainability and stewardship without taking action of its own. The commitment to inaction in relation to the environment is most evident in the report's "Advocate Pillar" (which follows the "Stewardship" pillar). Here, the state claims it will become an advocate, but not for the issues raised in relation to land stewardship. Instead, its advocacy:

> taps the power of the tourism industry itself, one of Colorado's most important industry sectors, to push for needed improvements in transportation infrastructure and sustained funding that will build and protect Colorado's competitive edge. (CTO, 2017c, p. 4)

This statement of intent is telling because it reveals that the Office is willing to take on the role of an advocate with state lawmakers, but only in relation to maintaining its "competitive edge" and continuing to develop infrastructure that transforms the landscape into one of leisure that attracts high-yield tourists (Philpott, 2013). Given that the state measures success by tourism dollars spent in the state, maintaining the competitive edge means more spending and more successful marketing campaigns, two line items that have nothing to do with the environment or tourism's byproducts.

Care for Colorado Campaign

As part of the sustainability evolution in the past several years, the "green traveler" evolved further when the Office partnered with the organization Leave No Trace in 2019 and created a "Care for Colorado" manifesto and associated campaign (Leave No Trace, 2020). The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics in Boulder, Colorado, aims to educate outdoor enthusiasts on responsibly minimizing humans' impact on the planet through research, youth programs, and strategic partnerships, often with capitalist-driven entities like Subaru. The seven principals for the CTO's partnership with Leave No Trace include: 1) know before you go, 2) stick to the trails, 3) leave it as you find it, 4) trash the trash, 5) be careful with fire, 6) keep wildlife wild, and 7) share our trails and parks (Leave No Trace, 2020).

In an even more individual consumer–focused strategy, the CTO used the seven principals to anchor the "Are You Colo-Ready?" campaign. The brochure begins by telling readers and visitors that "with a little preparation, a spirit of adventure, and a soft spot for nature and the past, you'll be on the trail to exploring Colorado like a local." This mission also draws upon notions of untouched wilderness, Manifest Destiny, and the Euro-American Western explorer. Phrases such as "spirit of adventure" and "a soft spot for nature and the past" function not only as a green marketing strategy, but as a settler rhetoric that erases Indigenous peoples' past and present existence in Colorado.

The brochure is divided three sections: Leave No Trace ethics, a Colorado packing list, and "how to act like a local." The Leave No Trace principals include advice like "stick to the trails, "be careful with fire," and "keep wildlife wild"—standard advice

for anyone headed into the outdoors, echoing Ritter's individually focused hiking anecdote presented at the conference (CTO, 2018). The pamphlet sleeve adjacent to the principals is an itemed list with 12 pieces of clothing visitors are advised to bring, such as rain jackets, beanies, day packs, and bathing suits, with accompanying copy explaining the items. For instance, the brochure tells visitors to "relax. Denim is acceptable attire nearly everywhere, but hiking pants or leggings are great for a day out exploring our wilds" (CTO, 2018). Sustainability here becomes entirely consumer-focused by giving travelers insight into local slang and a packing list with swimsuit, footwear, and vest recommendations. Finally, the brochure tells visitors that "now you're dressed like a local[,] here's what you need to pass for one," with terms like "fourteener" (a term used for mountains over 14,000 peaks), "power day" (days following big snow storms), and gentrification-influenced names of Denver's most popular neighborhoods like "RiNo" (River North Art District) and "LoHi" (Lower Highlands) (CTO, 2018). The placement of Leave No Trace next to clothing and lingo recommendations is almost like an advice brochure on how to be in the "tourist cool crowd" more than a serious solution to the environmental impacts posed by tourism. In fact, the entire brochure is situated on how to make the visitor feel comfortable and fit in while traveling through proper language, clothing, and etiquette.

Jingle

An accompanying musical number and video to the Colo-Ready campaign, "Care for Colorado – Are you Colo-Ready?" (Figures 7 and 8) sift environmental concerns, like panning gold, into a catchy public service announcement with an animated moose asking

potential visitors—via a song—to "respect the place and leave no trace" by silencing outdoor speakers, using reusable water bottles, properly disposing of cigarettes, and leaving wildlife alone. As Figure 8 shows, the video is animated like a Saturday morning children's cartoon with a guitar and singing moose with a drumming purple bear.

Figure 8.

"Care for Colorado – Are you Colo-Ready" video screenshot of animated moose and bear singing "respect the place, leave no trace" (CTO, 2018b)

The folksy singer begins the sequence singing the chorus: "*Care for Colorado, it's the only one we got. Respect the place, leave no trace, you'll really help a lot.*" The song goes on to turn the seven Leave No Trace Principals into a sing-song format with cartoon images. During each principal, a White male cartoon figure with large sunglasses and a backwards hat enacts one of the faux pas that the principals aim to address. For example, in "*One: know before you go and go where fewer people go and keep yourself*

hydrated. Disposables are overrated," the video depicts a cartoon water bottle bouncing around hiker's shoes before the White male in sunglasses tosses the bottle into a mountain of disposable water bottles. The singer continues with "*Two: stick to the trails, the Rocky Mountains don't have rails. That path may seem fun, but it causes lots of erosion*" as the same male figure tumbles down a mountainside after taking a selfie on a cliff that buckles under his weight. During the third principal "leave it as you found it," cartoon images of hearts, names, and dates appear on the tree as the singer remarks, "*We don't need to know who you dated in 1983*." During the chorus, a moose is shown walking upright (like the pigs from *Animal Farm)* and picking up bottles with a recycling bag (CTO, 2018b).

During the lyrics for principal four, "trash the trash," the singer is interrupted by the moose guitarist who remarks in a monotone voice that breaks the fourth wall saying: "*Do we really need to write a clever lyric about putting your trash in the trash can?*" To this moose's question, I would argue my research says "no." According to the listening sessions and research from the *Roadmap* report, "trash" or as the song says, "*a domestic critter's leave behind*" (a.k.a dog poop) was not one of the major critical issues vocalized by the public. In fact, the entire "Care for Colorado" jingle is a confusingly paternalistic response to climate change and overpopulation that is seemingly geared towards children and effectively displaces institutional responses to major issues like climate change. For instance, it's hard to not see a major disconnect between individual actions and major systemic causes of climate change and its impact on worsening forest fires when the

moose sings that "*even a little cigarette haze could cause a major forest blaze*" with cartoon images of houses engulfed by flames.

During principal seven, "share our trails and parks," the song's image, shown in Figure 9, of the White male blasting music and disturbing a bear feels more like one person's annoyance with overcrowding on trails and younger hikers playing music than a required state-funded response to over-tourism, especially considering it is unclear how and where the "Care for Colorado – Are you Colo-Ready" campaign was distributed to potential visitors. The cartoonification of sustainability rhetoric is a strikingly juvenile response to a state that has seen historic droughts and wildfires due to climate change. At the very least, it is surprising given tourism's reliance on a physical landscape that is threatened by environmental issues.

Figure 9.

"Care for Colorado – Are you Colo-Ready" video screenshot of cartoon tourist blasting music near a sleeping bear (CTO, 2018b)

Leave No Trace principles are certainly important to minimizing humans' impact on the landscape and visitor infrastructures put in place by state and national parks; however, the underlying message centers individual travelers' actions as those responsible for environmental change. This move suggests that large issues—infrastructure, resources, wildfires, space—can be fully remedied by individual tourists staying on hiking trails and leaving the land as they found it. I do not dispute that Leave No Trace principles are vitally important to protecting over-visited sites, especially considering the devastation that individual acts can have on the land (e.g., wildfires caused by unattended campfires); however, individual, consumer-based acts have little—if nothing at all—to do with the *Roadmap* listening session mentions of climate change or journalistic accounts of housing affordability issues related to tourism. Banning outdoor speakers on a hike does not address the resource-intensive industry that contributes 8% of all greenhouse gas emissions globally (Lenzen et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the Office has trivialized listening-tour participants' concerns about climate change and traffic along I-70—the state's main thoroughfare to several ski resort and mountain destinations—by directing tourists to engage in "environmentally friendly" behavior, thus failing to directly address the larger issues currently facing Colorado's environment and the role that tourism might play in perpetuating these issues. Environmental concerns such as these have been continually sifted until only consumer behavior such as wearing sunscreen remains in the pan as the solution to environmental problems. The Colo-Ready campaign reads more like a knee-jerk reaction to over-tourism rather than a serious consideration of the way in which over-tourism might

contradict the CTO's other marketing material (e.g., *Come to Life)* aimed at increasing travel numbers. Colorado's response to the concerns raised in the listening sessions appears thin at best and non-existent at worst. Thus, the panning process was successful in maintaining the gold standard for tourism: increasing tourism profit.

Environmental Privilege

The evolution of the environmental issues presented at the *Roadmap* listening sessions in the summer of 2016, from hiking trail etiquette in the fall of 2016, to the "Care for Colorado" campaign and jingle three years later, demonstrates the way in which the Office operates as a consumer-focused, market-driven entity that defines success in relation to product development, consumption, competition, and growth. When it comes to public interest, the effects of climate change and environmental are becoming increasingly significant. As the Colorado state audit pointed out, the question remains whether the tourism office is in the best position to attend to the public interest when it contains board members and advertisers whose bottom line depends on more traveling, more CO_2 emissions, and more tourism. One way the office sifts out the private/public conflict of interest is by equating sustainability to environmental privilege, drawing upon anxieties about overpopulation, NIMBYism (Not in My Back Yard), and sentiments about "the way things used to be." As explained in Chapter 1, environmental privilege is a term used by Park and Pellow (2011) to describe the cultural, political, and economic power deployed by certain groups to gain and maintain access to popular outdoor areas such as mountains, rivers, and coastal properties. In the previous chapters, I explained the way in which environmental privilege is exercised through representation and advertising

placements. Advertisements disproportionality feature White, affluent tourists in ski resort destinations and are placed in media outlets that similarly target affluent, educated, and often White potential tourists. However, environmental privilege is also exercised within the state itself when concerns about tourism are raised by citizens or tourism industry members.

Environmental privilege was enacted at every stage of the *Roadmap* process, beginning with who was encouraged to attending the listening sessions that kicked off the entire strategic planning process. The *Roadmap* was intended to be a statewide, "industry-driven," plan; however, many of the voices speaking at the listening sessions were those of tourism professionals. Here I draw a distinction between tourism *professionals* and tourism *workers*: professionals are those with full-time, secure, typically well-paying jobs in the tourism industry who have the time and job capacity to participate in the CTO's programs. Tourism *workers* are those with seasonal, low-paying, service-oriented jobs that are frequently held by immigrants and less affluent workers without economic safety nets (Park & Pellow, 2011). From what I could gather during my ethnographic research at listening sessions, tourism professionals were well-represented while tourism workers were largely absent. Therefore, though the CTO claimed that the *Roadmap* was an industry-driven document, it should be noted that tourism workers' voices are almost entirely absent. Furthermore, the dates for the listening sessions were released only days before the events, making it difficult for the general public (whose daily lives in mountain areas are influenced by tourism) to attend.

However, it is in the Office's interest to suggest that these listening sessions were attended by a diverse set of "voices of more than 1,000 industry professionals, elected leaders, and Coloradans" in order to give credibility to the final *Roadmap* strategic plan (CTO, 2017c, p. 3). In the Summit County and Telluride listening sessions, the lack of representation from non-tourism-associated Coloradans or tourism workers demonstrated the Office's desire to act as a gatekeeper and echo chamber for privileged tourism professionals. In this way, the Office sidestepped or completely ignored concerns more closely associated with working-class tourism employees. These issues might not seem "environmental" at face value but are a consistent undercurrent in the "mountain playgrounds," where the biggest portion of the state's tourism revenue is generated (Philpott, 2013).

Conservationism

The CTO's "sustainable growth" plan mirrors the conservation movement in the United States at the turn of the 20th century in "its tendency to render the lively world a storehouse of supplies for the elite" (Alaimo, 2012, p. 558–559). Conservation and sustainability became strategies in maintaining privilege. A newspaper article by the *Denver Post* published shortly after the *Colorado Roadmap* was approved by the CTO explained to readers how the Office exemplifies this: the tourism Office will be "[focusing] on the right *types* of visitors into the right places" (Blevins, 2017). As my research has suggested, the "right types" of visitors as understood by the office are high spending, highly educated, highly affluent, and disproportionately White tourists. Put in the context of sustainable growth, the argument is that sustainable tourism can only occur

by the exclusion of certain social groups' access to places such as Rocky Mountain National Park. Sustainable tourism and the rhetoric surrounding sustainability becomes a smokescreen for value-based tourism marketing in which certain social groups maintain the privilege to access to desirable outdoor areas. In order to protect Colorado's resources, the state argues, we must limit travelers. However, in order to push profit growth, the state attempts to limit visits from undesirable, low-spending travelers and instead encourage high-yield, affluent travelers. The roadmap reads:

> while many of the objectives and strategies in the Roadmap promote growth in visitation from high-value travelers and traveler spending, the Roadmap does not offer a prescription for unbridled growth. Rather, it aims to create conditions that drive the right kind of growth, with maximum benefit and minimal impact (CTO, 2017c, p. 3).

This enacts a system in which only the "right kind" of affluent visitors are invited to travel to Colorado and to argue against this assertion would be counter to the state's "sustainability" ethic. Essentially, this line of logic pits environmentalism against social equity in the travel sector. In order to care about the environment, says the CTO, we must limit travel to elite, privileged visitors. In an industry that already caters to the affluent, this logic only serves to further entrench the "haves and have nots" of leisure.

Nativism

The way in which the state implicitly blames certain social groups (in this case anyone who does not fit the ideal prototype) for environmental degradation is not new. For instance, Park and Pellow (2011), in *The Slums of Aspen*, explained how, in Aspen,

environmentalism functioned as nativism by placing blame for overcrowding and environmental degradation on immigrant populations working at elite hotels and resorts, thereby protecting the interests and rights of "native-born" Aspenites. Park and Pellow used one of the country's most elite vacation spots to demonstrate how environmentalism and nativism are synergistic (as it has been in numerous other instances such as governmental displacement of Native American tribes, the creation of the National Park system, and now, popular tourist destinations such as Colorado); they call this the "Aspen Logic." The Aspen Logic is driven by so-called green capitalism, which has a goal of

> maintain[ing] the current social order and perhaps appeas[ing] and co-opt[ing] some of its liberal critics. Many progressive and liberal individuals would recoil at the idea of green racism. But that is exactly what nativist environmentalism is: a political ideology that seeks to subvert ecosystems to the needs of certain people while punishing others. (Park & Pellow, 2011, p. 15)

At the same time the *Roadmap* process was fully underway (2016–2017), anti-immigration sentiments were gaining new political platforms nationally thanks to the resurgence of conservative, nationalist, and racist ideologies. Although the Office does not do so explicitly, it implicitly frames sustainability as a system in which certain visitors are valued over others and therefore draws on the same value system of anti-immigration ideology. Therefore, "the current mushrooming of the term sustainability may also be fueled by anti-immigration fervor," according to Alaimo (2012, p. 559). When the Office deploys sustainability rhetoric, greenwash, and the "green traveler," what it is really doing is state-sanctioned preservation of certain destinations for specific

groups: tourism professionals and the ideal tourist that they rely on. Alaimo (2012) warned that "fear lurks behind the proliferating, sanitized term sustainability, as news reports worry that economies, national debts, personal debts, the housing market, food systems, the Euro zone, and all manner of more trivial matters are not sustainable" (p. 559). As the CTO has initiated various stewardship and sustainability campaigns found in the *Roadmap*, keeping a keen eye on who is, and is not, included in the vision is crucial. This is particularly important as climate change inevitably harms societies' most vulnerable populations. The "green turn" in tourism is just another iteration of environmental privilege, as conservation was more than 100 years ago (Alaimo, 2012).

Global Impacts

When it comes to the issue of climate change specifically, environmental privilege is also exercised globally by affluent citizens in affluent countries. Alaimo (2012) has argued that sustainability discourses ultimately label "resources as belonging to some groups and not others" (p. 559). In a similar fashion, the CTO successfully pans for a rhetorical strategy that draws upon privileged citizens' notions of entitlement to outdoor space, or as the *Roadmap* report puts it, "lifestyle benefits" (CTO, 2017c, p. 19). Colorado's rhetoric is part and parcel of a global travel pattern that is situated around the needs of high-income travelers, and greenwashing is a strategy to deflect attention from countries and peoples who contribute the most to greenhouse gas emissions. According to Lenzen et al. (2018), "the map of global carbon movements shows that traveling is largely a high-income affair, and as a result carbon embodied in tourism flows mainly between high-income countries" (p. 523). Part of this, the authors argue, is because high-

income travelers, like those from the United States, require a lot of air travel transport, goods for consumption (e.g. shopping), and hotels and amenities "that reflect their travel expectations" (Lenzen, 2018, p. 524). By comparison, travelers from low-income countries require much less carbon-intensive experiences. As the authors put it, "the desire for exotic travel experiences and an increasing reliance on aviation and luxury amenities, affluence has turned tourism into a carbon-intensive consumption category" (Lenzen, 2018, p. 525). The correlation between income and greenhouse output prompts a consideration of the ways in which social class, nationality, and other socioeconomic and cultural markers influence where the responsibility exists for both contributing to and acting upon environmental crises. Although nascent in travel discourses, discussions about socioeconomic class and power have gained significant ground in scholarship on humanity's influence on the planet.

Travel and tourism contribute significantly to global greenhouse gas emissions, but taken at face value, this claim obscures the specific actors who produce the most emissions. The gold-panning process and resulting greenwashing narrative by the CTO also rhetorically protects the United States from culpability as the number one contributor to tourism-related greenhouse gas emissions, for both travelers within the country and to other international destinations. Environmental privilege within tourism, therefore, works on a local *and* global scale. Resources, outdoor spaces, and the privilege of travel remain as a "storehouse of supplies for the elite," while the most disadvantaged groups in Colorado and the world more broadly will continue to face the worst consequences of climate change (Alaimo, 2012, p. 558).

Conclusion

Assumptions and amplified stories about what tourism does, economically and culturally speaking, override problems that tourism might create or be well positioned to remedy. For instance, when it comes to climate change, the tourism office is well positioned to call for increased regulation of the oil and gas industry, drawing upon the argument that both extraction and CO_2 emissions endanger the lands and weather patterns tourism relies on. However, under tourism marketization, the CTO is more interested in measuring how much tourism profits the state and its private industries, thus ignoring ways in which tourism might promote public interest. For instance, the Office measures how much money is spent in the state but fails to address or even acknowledge the housing affordability and homelessness epidemic in popular tourist destinations (Lofholm, 2018). This is not the Office's stated mandate, but given how tourism intersects with issues such as housing affordability, it is pertinent to mention the insular nature of the tourism Office and imagine a scenario in which the Office *does* engage with public interest beyond the health of the economy. This suggests that although tourism relies on public lands and public funds, the Office does not serve public interests, but instead serves private, capitalist-consumerist interests that rely on carbon-emitting practices.

I have argued that the CTO's continued rhetorical mining of environmental crises has a grim future. The effects of CO_2 emissions, which are the bedrock of the "long-haul" tourism industry in Colorado, have yet to be fully realized, though the signs are visceral: water depletion, wildfires, oil and gas explosions, and worsening air quality. How the

CTO pans, greenwashes, and frames environmental crises under a consumerist, ideal "green traveler" paradigm hides, and actively contributes to, the ecological disaster in Colorado, the West, and the globe in the same way that the Gold King Mine's unregulated mining and disastrous spill impacted residents of the West, particularly in the Navajo Nation. The way in which the Office casts off tourism worker perspectives in popular tourist destinations will continue to contribute to a growing wealth and travel disparity that disproportionately affects immigrants in the name of leisure and outdoor recreation. As other state governments begin to pick up the slack of the federal government's elimination of climate protection policies, the CTO should join the ranks. This case study demonstrates the way in which the panning for rhetorical gold strategy is counterproductive to mitigating Colorado's growing list of environmental and social crises, despite its usefulness as a capitalist tool. The CTO's use of corporate greenwashing strategies is ill-suited for a representational government and serves the industries, rather than the people, of Colorado. Rather than sifting and casting concerns about climate change and land-based social issues such as affordability, the Colorado Tourism Office should begin drawing correlations and connections between their business model (increased tourism) and resource-based capitalism. Our social and environmental future depend on it.

Chapter 5:

New Directions in Tourism Media

"Without the glue of public funds for tourism promotion, the industry would not be able to coordinate and deliver a clear message to the traveling public."

—Bill Siegel (2009) "The Rise and Fall of Colorado Tourism"

In popular imagination, the gold rush(es) of the 1800s in the Western United States began from "the accidental discovery of gold in nature (Curtis, 2009, p. 275). These rags-to-riches stories, steeped in the American Dream mythos, depict White, raggedy men seeking to strike it rich with only their own two hands in a vast, untamed, wild landscape ripe for extraction and promises of upward mobility. In this telling, gold was hidden within Earth's folds, men discovered it, and major boom towns and cities flourished in the West. However, as historian Curtis (2009) pointed out, the popular retelling of the gold rush inaccurately implies that nature *caused* the gold rush. Rather, the gold rush was much more complex and problematic than popular imagination would like to believe, both in its beginnings and subsequent externalities. The "gold discovery myth" ignores the creation of "appropriate social and economic space" that *produced* the gold rush (Curtis, 2009, p. 294).

The gold rush as a complex historical process points to the ways in which historical events occur at confluence of cultural, economic, and political actions. The gold rush was impossible without infrastructural development, the creation of services for long-term residents, territory acquisition, and the systemic violence and political and economic disenfranchisement against Native Americans. It was not, in other words, an

"unproblematic bounteous phenomenon absent of culture and history" (Curtis, 2009, p. 297).[12] Curtis explained:

> Stories deserve more research and closer attention. … The common sense narrative that begins with the discovery of gold in nature in fact masks a much more complicated relationship among people and between people and the natural world. Mining frontiers must be produced before gold can be discovered. (p. 296)

In the case of the gold rush, the *production* of the gold rush has been augmented and simplified in order to create a story of gold *discovery* in nature. Curtis's research juxtaposed the messy political and economic realities of the gold rush with the romanticized, clean gold rush *story.* Exposing the behind-the-scenes components of the gold rush allows for a more critical understanding of not just the rush, but the powerful role that storytelling plays in our culture. Like the way the Gold Rush told a story of opportunity and growth in the West, the CTO has produced a "tourism rush" story by filtering out the messy aspects of the tourism industry and instead focusing on the economic benefits of mass tourism.

Preview of Chapter

In the pages that follow, I revisit the storytelling and neoliberal economic logics that undergird the ideal tourist. By revisiting the tourism story and justifications for the

[12] The gold rush was a myriad of actions taken by "national boosters and the expensive work of expansionism" (p. 295). For instance, in Colorado, the gold rush was only made possible by the violent economic, political, and social suppression of the Cheyenne Nation in the front range region of the state. Once the "threat" of contesting claims to the land had been weakened or eliminated, activities for the extraction of precious metals could flourish (Curtis, 2009). The "story" of the gold rush conveniently de-contextualizes the event from violence, treaties, and the process of White settler colonialism, creating a romanticized narrative that fits the larger United States project of national building.

tourism marketing, I argue that Colorado's tourism rush is one that is produced by and disproportionately benefits White tourists, private entities, and elites. First, I demystify the CTO's tourism story through relevant research on tourism economic impact studies and tourism advertising. In so doing, I highlight a clear conflict of interest between the CTO and the companies with whom they contract to conduct research. Second, I explain how the major findings of *The Ideal Tourist* fit within a neoliberal governance that values private-public relationships and peddles individualism and whiteness rather than governance to solve major societal and environmental issues. I point to gaps in my own research and suggest new avenues for the tourism industry and academic scholarship. Lastly, I revisit the *Ideal Tourist*'s major findings and question whether tourism promotion is a viable economic and social activity worthy of taxpayer money.

Demystifying the Tourism Rush

Like the Gold Rush, the tourism economy in Colorado should be understood as a complex social, political, and place-based phenomenon that does not just "happen" naturally. Rather, it is produced by a mix of industrial factors, from the transportation infrastructure to corporate advertising and marketing firms, and is carefully curated by the CTO and sympathetic state officials to justify the use of taxpayer monies. The dominant tourism story prompted by the CTO and news media outlets is that state-funded tourism advertising results in a large economic benefit for the state. The CTO and news outlets continually repeat the notion that advertising generates lucrative return on investment (ROI), much in the same way that cities argue tax incentives given to team owners to build sports stadiums will result in a greater return in overall economic activity

and job creation (Crompton, 2006). For instance, in 2017, the Office wrote the following based on research conducted by SMARI:

> The [*Come to Life*] campaign generated significant incremental travel, driving more than 2.6 million additional trips to Colorado with a total impact of $4.2 billion. Based on a media spend of $7.86 million, Colorado's marketing campaign also created an outstanding return on investment (ROI) for the state's investment in tourism promotion. (CTO, 2017d)

In another example, Dean Runyan's "Colorado Travel Impacts: 1996–2016" report claimed that in 2016, tourism resulted in $19.7 billion spent in Colorado, created 165,000 jobs, and generated $5.8 billion in earnings (Dean Runyan, 2017). Note here the lack of details on whether the ideal, out-of-state affluent tourists to whom CTO ads have been targeted caused this growth. The implication from this and other similar reports is that one can draw a direct line from CTO's "investments" to "returns" that benefit the public at large with jobs and earnings increases. But, as the studies I summarize below reveal, the research is not so clear that any state tourism spending brings back more than what is spent.

Tourism Research

Critical research on economic impact claims of tourism offices and relatedly, sports stadiums, demonstrate that in the tourism rush (like the gold rush) it is more about the *story* that is told. The data and figures in tourism impact reports are curated with the primary goal of continuing funds for tourism promotion and funds for market companies invested in the continued contracts from state-run tourism offices. However, when a

microscope is put to these reports, it becomes increasingly clear that tourism marketing and its ROI numbers are *produced* as part of the tourism story.

The argument that tourism advertising generates astronomical economic impact in the billions is taken from three market research reports from Longwoods International, SMARI, and Dean Runyan. These private research companies are contracted with the CTO (and many other state-run tourism authorities) for yearly reports or on special research reports such as SMARI's report on the economic impact of marijuana legalization on tourism in 2016 (Blevins, 2016b). Data are injected directly into news reports about the CTO, creating a linear line of communication from private research firms to the public. After research is conducted, the CTO publishes a press release with the data, and then news outlets like the *Denver Post* report on the CTO's reporting. For instance, in July of 2016, the *Denver Post* wrote that "the Colorado Tourism Office reported on Wednesday that visitors to the state in 2015 spent an all-time high of $19.1 billion, generating $1.13 billion in state and local taxes, an increase of almost seven percent from 2014" (Blevins, 2016). Later, the author mentioned that this data came from

> a trio of state-commissioned annual surveys of Colorado visitors: Longwoods International counts the total visitors and analyzes the types of travelers Colorado attracts; Dean Runyan Associates gauges the economic impact of those travelers; and the Strategic Marketing & Research Insights group measures the effectiveness of the state's marketing efforts. (Blevins 2016)

Nowhere in the cycle (market research to CTO to news coverage) is a critical eye, or even question, taken to the data provided.

#PureMichigan

Tourism authorities love to "ooh and ahh" about competing states' branding campaigns. During my time as a contractor with CTO and as a researcher there was no question that the *Pure Michigan* campaign was one of the most popular and supposedly successful campaigns of the 2010s, and it generated quite the jealous buzz in industry. The #PureMichigan campaign, which began in 2006 (and is still running today), has roughly followed the *Come to Life* timeline and is similar in tone and messaging, with references to "breathtaking views," "the greatest star shows in the continental United States," and "pristine rivers or blazing fall foliage" (Bach 2018; Michigan Economic Development Corporation). Just as Colorado grapples with the whipsaw effect of boom/bust cycles with energy extraction in mountain towns and the region becomes more and more dependent on tourism, in the years surrounding the beginning of Michigan's campaign, the state was going through what many in the Rust Belt did with the loss of manufacturing jobs and bleak economic situations. Michigan had lost more than 300,000 jobs, Detroit was struggling amidst automotive closures, and "state leaders saw hope in a new tourism and branding campaign highlighting Michigan's natural, seasonal beauty" (Bach, 2018).

Yet, despite *Pure Michigan*'s pristine messaging, some critics weren't so convinced of its economic impact claims. Two economists published a competing report, "An Analysis of State-Funded Tourism Promotion," in response to Michigan's own tourism story with the conclusion "that state-funded tourism promotion is a net loser for states" (Hicks & LaFive, 2016). Gains from state-funded promotion were minimal: the

authors concluded that "for every additional $1 million spent on tourism promotion about $20,000 in extra income was generated for the hotel and motel industry" (Hicks & LaFive, 2016, p. 11). The authors argued that the money might "be better spent elsewhere" to support the overall well-being of citizens (Hicks & LaFive, 2016, p. 12). A few more critics started to question the veracity of state tourism reports. In a 2018 article, Bach (2018) questioned both the value of the Michigan campaign to state wealth and the CTO's claim that "our numbers are so high that a lot of times people have a hard time believing how effective our campaign is."

The Office and other tourism authorities uses the largeness of economic return (which for the most part goes to resort owners and not employees) to obfuscate the particularities of tourism promotional funds, investment costs, and costs associated with the byproducts of mass tourism. The tourism story and consumer model of tourism often disregard the negative impacts of tourism, such as increased pollution, traffic, housing affordability, and other concerns that were touched upon during the *Colorado Roadmap* listening sessions. The social and ecological damage impacts everyone; however, the solution is framed as a private, market-oriented one in which "savvy" green travelers with money to afford vacations stay on hiking trails and clean up after themselves.

Conflict of Interest

Research about research helps contextualize the tourism story and showcase the way in which it is largely a story that is produced. A few years before the *Come to Life* campaign, Crompton (2006) published an article in *Journal of Travel Research* similarly criticizing economic impact studies by companies like Longwood International and Dean

Runyan—both companies contracted by Colorado and Michigan—arguing that in economic impact studies, "the motives of a study's sponsor invariably dictate the study's outcome." Every study that comes out of the CTO should be suspect, given that "the very survival of the department — and the jobs of its employees — relies on the appearance that its efforts create more employment and wealth for Coloradans" (Hicks & LaFive, 2016). Longwoods International CEO Bill Siegel gave a speech warning of the dangers of eliminating state tourism budgets: "without the glue of public funds for tourism promotion," Siegel (2009) argued, "the industry would not be able to coordinate and deliver a clear message to the traveling public" (p. 9). Realistically, it is not the clear message Siegel is worried about (his income is not dependent on a traveling public like a hotel operator's is), but rather the glue of public funds. This "glue of public funds for tourism promotion" ensures the vitality of Longwoods International, Dean Runyan, SMARI, and the advertising agency for *Come to Life*, Karsh Hagan.

Hicks and LaFive (2016) contend that "it would be [hard] for … tourism offices to engage in 'budget justification' if their own consultants demonstrate a failure to produce positive returns, and consultants know that" (p. 3). In other words, Longwoods, Dean Runyan, and SMARI rely on tourism budgets, so to say that tourism budgets do not make massive impacts could potentially risk their own businesses. Their business models depend on positive returns, and the ways in which they do so require the careful selection and narration of tourism's role in society. Although they "appear to be both expert and neutral" in CTO press release and news media, Curtis (1993) likened these reports to expert witnesses in a court trial, pre-disposed to provide expertise that supports their side.

Tactics of Obfuscation

In addition to a clear conflict of interest, there are several tactics of obfuscation present in reports produced by the tourism office: 1) economic activity data that does not distinguish between local and visitor spending; 2) job numbers that do not specify type and quality of jobs; 3) lack of specificity on direct impact to citizens in regards to spending; 4) lack of output costs and larger economic context; 5) off-site costs to climate, housing, and other byproducts of tourism spending; and 6) a methodological "black box" concerning how studies for the CTO are conducted. I explain each of these six tactics below.

Economic Activity

Because of this incentive problem, Crompton (2006) pointed to "mischievous practices" that have been deployed in reports. One of the biggest issues is clearly determining which economic activities are from tourism and which are from locals and the "re-cycling of money that already existed there" (Crompton, 2006, p. 70). Crompton wrote: "Unfortunately, the widespread admonition from economists to disregard locals' expenditures is ignored frequently, because when expenditures by local residents are omitted, the economic-impact numbers often become too small to be politically useful" (p. 70). In other words, economic impact numbers do not distinguish between local, day-to-day activities, such as going to a local restaurant on a Friday night after work, and a family of four visiting out of state and therefore are misleading.

Jobs

Jobs are another rhetorical "win" in the eyes of tourism boosters and Coloradans; however, they are often cited without proper context. In Colorado's Dean Runyan report, the researchers claimed that "direct travel spending directly supported over 165,000 jobs"; however, they fail to distinguish between full and part-time jobs and include both in their numbers (Dean Runyan, 2017, p. 58). Tourism jobs are notoriously low-paying and without benefits. For instance, 2016 average weekly earnings in the leisure and hospitality category for the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment were $422.00, and hourly wages were $16 (Colorado Department, 2017). Out of all the categories the Department of Labor and Employment tracks, leisure and hospitality is the lowest. Trade transportation and utilities, the next highest category, is at $768.00, indicating that the leisure and hospitality industry is one of low wages and most certainly dismal benefits, if any, given the seasonal, part-time nature of the work, with the average work week being just 25 hours (Colorado Department, 2017). While tourism certainly may provide jobs, the quality of the vast majority of tourism-related jobs tells a different story. This is not a living wage industry to replace industrial-sector jobs that dwindled in the 1980s.

Inflated Spending

Spending numbers and costs are also fudged. Direct spending often does not account for individual income increase (Crompton, 2006). This means that numbers such as the "$19.7 billion" in direct travel spending referenced in the Dean Runyan (2017) report implies direct deposits into locals' bank accounts but does not actually represent

the impact on individuals. Crompton (2006) explained that "because sales measures of economic impact are generally two or more times larger than personal-income indicators, sponsors of economic-impact studies invariably report economic impact in terms of sales outputs rather than personal income" (p. 74). Therefore, how direct spending numbers influence locals' income or the larger benefit of the town, county, or state is largely unknown.

Output Costs

Reports also do not include initial costs to taxpayers to create and distribute campaigns or for building tourism infrastructure. A more accurate report would take into account the output costs to maintain the tourism promotion and infrastructure. Additionally, the wider economic health of region and country should be accounted for in the measure of increased tourism. Rather than equating increased direct spending to the *Come to Life* creative genius, the rebound from the recession should be equally attributed as reasons for increased tourism economic activity. When this is not done, overblown assumptions about the role of tourism advertising are circulated, and the myth that tourism depends on advertising is maintained.

Off-Site Costs

Even more troubling, reports avoid detailing "off-site social costs borne by a community" such as traffic, affordability, or environmental degradation (Crompton, 2006, p. 6). Jobs, economic impact, and aspirational living are all aspects that are highlighted in Colorado's tourism story, whereas climate change, type of employment, affordable housing, and immigrant labor and labor conditions are not. The social and

environmental impacts of tourism are never reported, bringing into question once again the incentive and political purpose of such studies.

A Black Box

The fudged numbers and secrecy equate to what Hicks and LaFive (2016) called a "methodological black box" in tourism economic impact reports. The lack of detail about how economic impact studies are done is exasperated by a "lack of third-party validation" on the studies themselves (Hicks & LaFive, 2016, p. iii). Chapter Three, on the CTO's audience, highlighted an exchange I had with CTO director, Cathy Ritter, on obtaining the SMARI report about the *Come to Life*'s effectiveness following the rejection of my Colorado Open Records Act request. Ritter explained the denial of my open records request by claiming that the report is proprietary information, and to disclose it to me would give a competitive edge to states such as Utah. What the CTO did not mention, however, was the way in which companies like SMARI, Dean Runyan, and Longwoods International have depended on proprietary covers to avoid public scrutiny of their questionable methods and claims. The rush, in other words, is one that is produced for the continued existence of the tourism Office and the private companies it contracts with. What is clear, however, is that these studies, and the findings in the *Ideal Tourist,* support an increased melding of private-public governance.

Tourism: A Neoliberal Gold Rush

Before explaining how tourism functions as a neoliberal gold rush, I review Chapters Two through Four, in which I discussed the stage in which the ideal tourist performs, the ideal audience of the Office, and the turn to green tourism marketing.

Stage

State-funded tourism research and advertising campaigns from the years 2012 to 2017 serve as evidence of how the CTO tells a story first and foremost about place. Colorado, or the "stage" in which tourism occurs, draws upon wilderness and nature-based imagery within the context of White, Euro-American settler ideology. The *Come to Life* campaign's wilderness-heavy imagery frames Colorado's outdoor tourist destinations as anecdotes to modernity and city life, echoing White flight rhetoric from the 1950s in which some White Americans migrated from cities. What's more, the romanticized wilderness imagery and narration erases the significant amount of political, economic, and cultural processes that have created a "landscape of leisure" (Philpott, 2013), including the violent and systemic removal of Native Americans within Colorado's borders.

Audience

The placement and measurement of the *Come to Life* campaign further solidifies the Office's desire to funnel affluent White tourists into the state. By targeting college football and city-specific magazine audiences, the CTO has disproportionately favored wealthy, highly educated, and White tourists. Despite assumptions that audiences are valued only according to income, the CTO's advertising strategy exposes that audiences are also valued and judged according to their race. By intentionally avoiding sporting events in which audiences of color reside, like the NBA, the CTO engages in audience segmentation and continues to do so through their digital advertising efforts. Potential tourists are segmented and valued according to age, race, income, browser history, and

other behavioral markers. Given that the CTO refuses to disclose specific information on how they define and measure the success of "targets" and "wastes" in their advertising placement, the Office acts more like a corporate brand than a government office. This raises important questions about the role governmental offices play in maintaining or contesting inequality, even in realms such a tourism.

Green Tourism

The turn to sustainable tourism in Colorado highlights the way in which concerns about mass tourism, climate change, and affordable housing are watered down, or "panned," until they become the responsibility of the tourist, not the Office. In constructing what I call the "green traveler," the Office asks tourists to stay on hiking trails and dress for the weather. What's more, in light of calls for decreased tourism in popular areas, the Office has further entrenched the desire for the ideal tourist and further makes attractive outdoor locations available to an increasingly limited pool of visitors who are "high yield." As climate change and other ecological realities come to bear, the Office has chosen to engage more fully in environmental privilege and continue making Colorado's landscape one for the elite. The rhetoric surrounding "too much tourism" aligns with White supremacist attacks on non-White residents and immigrants in Colorado. History has taught us this. Conservation rhetoric often breeds hate towards "foreigners."

Neoliberalism

The content of the *Come to Life* campaign, the desired audience, and sustainable tourism rhetoric discussed in proceeding chapters reveals how government-run tourism

offices become an enactment of neoliberal visions of public-private partnerships and individualism as a mode of governance and social change. I use McChesney's (2015) characterization of neoliberalism as "policies that maximize the role of markets and profit-making and minimize the role of nonmarket institutions" to understand how the CTO functions as a market entity, rather than a governmental one (p. 6).

In order to attract and obtain the ideal tourist, who ensures increased spending in the state due to their affluence, the CTO spends a majority of its funds on contracting with a private advertising agencies such as Karsh Hagan and thus deploying private advertising methodologies and tactics that place value on certain demographic groups and enforce preexisting disparities and assumptions based on race, class, and education. Additionally, the CTO Board of Directors is composed of many private industry interests, such as the airline industry, that are major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. In this sense, the Office's board acts like shareholders, ensuring that the Office's functions benefit their own profit incentives rather than the public good. Tourism media, therefore, should be scrutinized alongside other corporate advertising practices, doubly so given that it is supported through taxpayer monies.

Individualism

With Colorado's population boom in the Front Range since roughly 2012 and increased traffic at popular tourism destinations along Interstate 70, the CTO has adopted a similar outlook as New Zealand's and encourages "travelers to sample lesser-traveled, yet uniquely Colorado destinations rather than highly visited, well-known destinations…." (CTO, 2017b, p. 15). Colorado's interest in dealing with a boom in

population growth is transferred to the tourist, who becomes a vehicle for solving a problem that, one could argue, the tourism advertising industry helped create. In this sense, the onus is shifted from the government to the individual and is done so through advertising campaigns and communications strategies commonplace in private corporations. This focus on individuals is a symptom of neoliberalism.

In a neoliberal society, individuals, not governments, become the main site of social change. What I found in my research of the CTO resonates with Werry's (2011) study on tourism in New Zealand. Werry argued that in a neoliberal system, "tourism conjured the subject it imagined as a citizen: the White, wealthy, cosmopolitan witness to and consumer of the self-enunciation of a nation" (2011, p. xx). The ideal tourist, therefore, is a vessel in which ideal citizenship is expected. In Werry's study, the ideal tourist, or the "Free Independent Traveler," is educated, wealthy, independent, White, and an English speaker (p. 148); however, who the ideal tourist is and what they do shifts in response to policy, drawing attention to the role that governmental principles and actions play in assembling and maintaining tourist identities for specific ends. New Zealand's ideal tourist, for instance, is also one who does not travel to popular, mass tourism destinations; rather, this tourist fits a need for the national economy by repeatedly visiting multiple regions and areas in order to fill an economic gap left by struggling industries such as agriculture. In New Zealand, tourism was considered the savior to more remote destinations where the local economy traditionally relied on agriculture; therefore, tourists are praised by the government for being adventurous, mobile, and exploring sites outside of mass tourism destinations to fill the gap in the economy.

Werry (2011) also explained that the neoliberal apparatus obfuscates systematic disenfranchisement of immigrant populations, Indigenous peoples, and others who are less privileged in the tourist landscape. This was clear in the cannabis tourism example and *The Ideal Tourist* as a whole: a government-run tourism entity explicitly, or ignorantly, upholds White tourists and by extension perpetuates White supremacy in tourism, outdoor recreation, and political and cultural life in Colorado. In line with Park and Pellow's (2011) assertation that environmental privilege protects certain locations for elites, the *Ideal Tourist* proves that when it comes to tourism, money and whiteness talks.

Future Directions in Tourism Media

The state-run tourism authority operates to privilege White, affluent tourists and professional tourism operators. Entire tourism populations, such as immigrant workers, are missing from the Office's mandate. In this section, I highlight a few organizations that represent counter-narratives to the CTO's ideal tourist and further highlight productive ways to facilitate tourism. I then point to future directions for scholarly research.

Organizations like Outdoor Afro, Natives Outdoors, and social media campaigns like the Tumblr @BrownPeopleCamping all work to contest the idea of wilderness and nature as a White space and address the lack of representation of people of color in outdoor and environmental representations and organizations. Their missions directly counteract the lack of diversity in the *Come to Life* campaign and placement. For instance, @BrownPeopleCamping works to "reflect more openly on the role privilege plays in enabling us to enjoy the outdoors; and to promote more passionately for

everyone to experience and enjoy the outdoors in their own authentic ways" (Brown People Camping, 2020). Latino Outdoors (2020) contends that "the Latino population is the fastest growing demographic in the United States. They are also among the most underrepresented groups in conservation, outdoor recreation, and environmental education organizations." Similarly, Natives Outdoors (2020) aims to "highlight the stories and photos of Native people in outdoor recreation to address the lack of representation of indigenous people in the outdoor industry." Through geotagging on social media sites such as Instagram, they aim to "[educate] the outdoor community about the sacrifices generations before us made to protect these lands" (Natives Outdoors, 2020).

These groups actively work to contest White settler ideologies that permeate outdoor recreation and tourism and as a governmental entity. Natives Outdoors in particular is based in the Office's backyard in Denver. Their work is far more equitable than the CTO's worship of the ideal tourist. In addition to these organizations, ecologists, credible economists, and other researchers who question the "natural position" of tourism as a necessity for governmental funding are pertinent to crafting a new direction for tourism in Colorado.

Gaps

The *Ideal Tourist* is lacking, like all academic studies, in its scope and depth. My research necessarily focused on the CTO due to accessibility to their materials and doings; however, tourism media should also be analyzed through non-state actants and organizations. Also missing was a clear perspective from the research subjects

themselves. Although the *Ideal Tourist* articulates the perspective of the CTO through research, news releases, and presentations, there is much to be desired for even more analysis on what they do, why they do it, and what effects it has. Additional research should also focus on the working-class communities that make tourism possible in Colorado. New perspectives from frontline workers in tourist towns and adjacent bedroom communities would provide new, grounded insights into the way in which the CTO and Colorado government is, or is not, supporting these workers.

I urge media scholars interested in tourism to fill these gaps. Although tourism media is a seemingly niche area of research, the prominence of tourism in local, state, and national economies and the growing crises due to climate change and the income wealth is a warning call to researchers and locals alike that tourism will play a much prominent role in the future to come. Although tourism offices view their work as essential to Colorado's economy, the *Ideal Tourist* reveals that tourism media exercise political power by focusing on small niches of elite travelers to the exclusion of other potential tourists and relying on problematic stereotypes in their pursuit of the ideal tourist. Many states in the U.S. are employing private-sector advertising methods to attract wealthy travelers; however, this case study focused only on Colorado to uncover and scrutinize the content and circulation of tourism media by public-private partnerships. In Colorado and other Mountain West states, tourism is increasingly supplanting extractive industries as the primary economic activity (Philpott 2013); therefore, Colorado as a case study is both timely and relevant to other cities and towns nationwide grappling with this transition and the long-term implications.

A focus on governmental tourism also points to the limits of a tourism Office whose budget is nearly entirely pointed to advertising. When tourism inevitably runs up against issues that are not related to advertising, such as tourism's relationship to climate change, the limits of the Office's singular role in advertising are exposed. Given the lack of local reporting on tourism authorities, researchers should carry the torch to hold government entities accountable with their tourism media practices. And, they should pass the torch to local residents who are impacted by the jockeying of state monies, often with little to no transparency on the results of tourism promotional spending.

Does Colorado Need a Tourism Office?

Tourism and leisure activities are often marginalized in political discussions about inequity, but the rapid growth and centrality of domestic tourism in the U.S. since WWII has raised new, complex questions about who benefits from tourism and what role tourism plays in shifting or maintaining larger systems of power and inequality. Scholars have researched the ways in which tourism contributes to racial segregation (Harrison, 2013), ideal forms of citizenship (Werry, 2011), and local economies and workers that were formerly dependent on extractive industries such as coal mining (Philpott, 2013). The *Ideal Tourist* continues these examinations of tourism's political capacity by detailing the practices that constitute tourism marketing and advertising in Colorado's government. Here, tourism is increasingly defined as advertising given the large line items for promotion, advertising, and public relations; thus, concerns arise about the use of private advertising practices in a public agency.

Tourism Overhaul

This study exposed the public-private partnerships that make up modern tourism, inspiring the question, who does tourism marketing serve and privilege and for what purposes? Who does it ignore and discriminate against? By identifying the CTO's ideal tourist, answers to this question become clear. Tourism advertising is an identity-based value system that Colorado's state government produces in their appeals to the ideal tourist. Shrouded in secrecy, this tourism promotional strategy disproportionately privileges White, educated, and affluent tourists while rendering low-income and tourists of color invisible and unworthy of receiving invitations to visit the state. Given my findings, I conclude by suggesting a complete overhaul of the government-supported tourism industry in Colorado. I suggest the multi-million-dollar tourism budget be reallocated in ways that do not essentially do the advertising work of private resorts. I argue that Colorado should defund all taxpayer supported tourism marketing campaigns. Instead, I suggest that tourism-related government spending be aimed in the following directions:

a) Timely policies to address housing affordability crisis in popular tourist destinations
b) Third-party research to identify the true environmental impact of tourism industries
c) Quality green jobs that support affordable housing, public transportation, and other infrastructural solutions to the housing and climate crisis

d) Reparations to support tribal conservation efforts, such as those from the Denver Parks and Recreation bison program (Sirianni, 2021)
e) Grants to support Black, Indigenous, and other people of color–led environmental stewardship and outdoor recreational organizations
f) Increased tax on ski resort corporations to help fund affordable housing, education, national forest management, infrastructure development, and climate change mitigation

In closing, I hope the findings in the *Ideal Tourist* encourage Colorado and other government-run tourism authorities to blaze a new, equitable path in tourism promotion in the years to come.

REFERENCES

Alaimo, S. (2012). Sustainable this, sustainable that: New materialisms, posthumanism, and unknown futures. *PMLA, 127*(3), 558–564.

Alexander, M. (2011). The new Jim Crow. *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law, 9*(1), 7–26.

Alexander, M. (2012). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. The New Press.

American Civil Liberties Union. (2013). *The war on marijuana in Black and White*. https://www.aclu.org/report/report-war-marijuana-black-and-white?redirect=criminal-law-reform/war-marijuana-black-and-white

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso Books.

Bach, T. (2018, October). Is "Pure Michigan" a clear success? *U.S. News.* https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2018-10-22/the-impact-of-the-pure-michigan-tourism-campaign

Bane, C. (2012, April 4). Filmmaker Anson Fogel on Colorado's stunning new tourism campaign. *Westword.* https://www.westword.com/arts/filmmaker-anson-fogel-on-colorados-stunning-new-tourism-campaign-5782701

Banet-Weiser, S. (2013). Authentic: The politics of ambivalence in a brand culture. *Canadian Journal of Communication, 38,* 443–454.

Baynes, L. M. (2003). White out: The absence and stereotyping of people of color by the broadcast networks in prime time entertainment programming. *Arizona Law Review, 45,* 293.

Bender, S. W. (2016). The colors of cannabis: Race and marijuana. *University of California, Davis, Law Review, 50,* 689.

Black/Land project. (2020). *About*. http://www.blacklandproject.org/about-us

Blau, J. A. (2013). "Progress fell upon us:" ecotourism, culture, and performance in the Peruvian Amazon. In R. D. Besel & J. A. Blau (Eds.) *Performance on behalf of the environment* (pp. 115–146). Lexington Books.

Blevins, J. (2015, May 5). Colorado can track ROI for big tourism marketing budget, governor says. *Denver Post.* https://www.denverpost.com/2015/05/05/colorado-can-track-roi-for-big-tourism-marketing-budget-governor-says/

Blevins, J. (2016, July 21). Colorado breaks tourism record with 77.7 million visitors spending 19.1 billion. *Denver Post.* https://www.denverpost.com/2016/07/20/record-colorado-tourism-2015/

Blevins, J. (2016b, July 20). Only 4% of Colorado tourists came for the legal weed in 2015, survey says. *Denver Post.* https://www.denverpost.com/2016/07/20/colorado-tourism-legal-marijuana-2015/

Blevins, J. (2016c, November 9). Need for workforce housing big, but high-country counties split on taxes to build it. *Denver Post.* https://www.denverpost.com/2016/11/09/workforce-housing-high-country-taxes/

Blevins, J. (2017, March 15). Colorado Tourism Office unveils strategy for sustainable growth. *The Denver Post.* https://www.denverpost.com/2017/03/15/colorado-tourism-office-sustainable-growth/

Booyah Advertising. (2017). *Top marketing tactics to engage your customers.* Presentation at Colorado Governor's Conference on Tourism, Grand Junction, Colorado. October 25 – 27, 2017.

Borko, S. (2018, September 14). 10 years later: How the travel industry came back from the financial crisis. *Skift Corporate.* https://skift.com/2018/09/14/10-years-later-how-the-travel-industry-came-back-from-the-financial-crisis/

Boylorn, R. M. (2008). As seen on TV: An autoethnographic reflection on race and reality television. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *25*(4), 413-433.

Brennen, B. S. (2013). *Qualitative research methods for media studies*. Routledge.

Brown People Camping. (2020). *About Us.* Tumblr. https://brownpeoplecamping.tumblr.com/about

Butsch, R. (2008). *The citizen audience: Crowds, publics, and individuals*. Routledge.

Carbon Brief. (2016, August 8). Analysis: Aviation could consume a quarter of 1.5C carbon budget by 2050. *Carbon Brief.* https://www.carbonbrief.org/aviation-consume-quarter-carbon-budget

Calhoun, P. (2010, January 25). Wake-up call: Naptime in a land called Colorado. *Westword.* https://www.westword.com/news/wake-up-call-naptime-in-a-land-called-colorado-5855656

Calhoun, P. (2012, April 5). Colorado tourism office budget comes back to life. *Westword.* https://www.westword.com/news/colorado-tourism-budget-comes-back-to-life-5865275

Carey, J. (2002). A cultural approach to communication. In McQuail, D. (Ed.). *McQuail's reader in mass communication theory*. (pp. 36–45). Sage.

Chomsky, N. H., & Herman, E. E.(1988) Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media. *Pantheon, New York.*

Coleman, A. G. (1996). The unbearable whiteness of skiing. *Pacific Historical Review*, *65*(4), 583-614.

Coleman, A. G, (2004). *Ski style: Sport and culture in the Rockies*. University Press of Kansas.

Coleman, R. R. M. (2013). *Say it loud!: African American audiences, media and identity*. Routledge.

Colorado College. (2019). Conservation in the West poll. Climate change. Colorado College state of the Rockies project. New Bridge Strategy and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates. https://www.coloradocollege.edu/other/stateoftherockies/documents/Climate%20Change%202019%20D1c.pdf

Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (2017). 2016 current employment statistics (CES) data for all workers, not seasonally adjusted, in Colorado. *CES File Transfer.*

Colorado Office of the State Auditor. (2009). Colorado Tourism Office Governor's Office performance audit. https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/documents/audits/1974_tourism_perf_gov_office_5_09.pdf

Colorado Office of the State Auditor. (2012). Colorado Tourism Office. Agreed upon procedures report. Fiscal years ended June 30, 2012 and 2011. Denver, CO: BKD, LLC.

Colorado Office of the State Auditor. (2017). Colorado Tourism Office. Agreed upon procedures report. Fiscal years ended June 30, 2017. Denver, CO: BDK, LLC.

Colorado Tourism Office. (2012a). *Colorado tourism: awake* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghSwrWqIOOo&index=9&list=PLF6B1428FE8C7D1A2

Colorado Tourism Office. (2012b). *Colorado tourism: awe* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHPgsxZT7Iw

Colorado Tourism Office. (2012c). *Colorado tourism: beyond* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrckY7uea_c&index=1&list=PLsePj6PBibplYR_oh6hyJjz1rU-KH2QAa

Colorado Tourism Office (2012d). *Colorado tourism: No waiting - :60s.* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsvFuuIduoY

Colorado Tourism Office. (2012e). *The making of the 2012 Colorado tourism campaign* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jg_0DYo8xnc

Colorado Tourism Office. (2012f). *FY13 winter media overview.* Denver, CO: U.S.

Colorado Tourism Office. (2012g). *What should we say?* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZid_W3JZRw&list=PLF6B1428FE8C7D1A2&index=10

Colorado Tourism Office. (2013). *Colorado tourism commercial: Anticipation.* [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KgL_Y0CnEs&index=17&list=PLF6B1428FE8C7D1A2

Colorado Tourism Office. (2015). *Colorado travel year 2014 final Report*. Longwoods International.

Colorado Tourism Office. (2017). *Colorado tourism sets all -time records for sixth consecutive year*. https://www.colorado.com/news/colorado-tourism-sets-all-time-records-sixth-consecutive-year

Colorado Tourism Office. (2017b). *Colorado tourism roadmap: Moving the state forward through a statewide strategic initiative.* Nichols Nichols Tourism Group. The Radcliffe Company. National Laboratory for Tourism and e-Commerce. https://www.colorado.com/sites/default/master/files/2017CTORoadmap_FINAL.pdf

Colorado Tourism Office. (2017d). Colorado Tourism Sets All-Time Records for Sixth Consecutive Year. https://www.colorado.com/news/colorado-tourism-sets-all-time-records-sixth-consecutive-year

Colorado Tourism Office. (2018). *Are you colo-ready?*. Colorado.com. https://www.colorado.com/are-you-colo-ready

Colorado Tourism Office. (2018b, October, 17). *Care for Colorado – are you colo-ready?*. [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcY73nUhaQs

Conniff, R. (2008, June 2). The myth of clean coal. *Yale Environment 360.* https://e360.yale.edu/features/the_myth_of_clean_coal

Conquergood, D. (1995). Of caravans and carnivals: Performance studies in motion. *TDR (1988-)*, *39*(4), 137-141.

Cox, R. (2013). *Environmental communication and the public sphere*. Sage.

Cronon, W. (1995). The trouble with wilderness. *Environmental history*, *1*(1), 20-25.

Crutzen, P. J., & Stoermer, E. F. (2000). The Anthropocene, global change newsletter. 41, 17-18. *International Geosphere–Biosphere Programme (IGBP)*.

D Magazine. (2017, July 1). *D magazine demographics.* https://www.dmagazine.com/info/media-kits/d-magazine/

Davidson, K. (2005). Alternative India: transgressive spaces. In In Jaworski, A., & Pritchard, A. (Eds.), *Discourse, communication and tourism* (pp. 28-52). Channel View Publications.

Dean Runyan. (2017). Colorado Travel Impacts 1996-2016p. Colorado Tourism Office.

Durham, M. G. (2015). Scene of the crime: News discourse of rape in India and the geopolitics of sexual assault. *Feminist Media Studies*, *15*(2), 175-191.

Ewen, S. (1996). *PR!: a social history of spin*. New York: Basic Books.

Flaherty, C. (2020, June 5). Birding while Black. *Inside Higher Ed.* https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/06/05/black-birders-wee

Flick, U., von Kardoff, E., & Steinke, I. (Eds.). (2004). *A companion to qualitative research*. Sage.

Frank, J. (2017, December 24). Colorado's growing political divide leaves rural communities feeling forgotten and voiceless. *The Denver Post.* https://www.denverpost.com/2017/12/24/colorado-politics-divide-rural-urban-communities-donald-trump/

Funk, C., Kennedy, B. (2019, April 19). How Americans see climate change in 5 charts. *Pew Research Center*. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/19/how-americans-see-climate-change-in-5-charts/

Geertz, C. (2008). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In Oakes, T., & Price, P. L. (Eds.), *The cultural geography reader* (pp. 41-51). Routledge.

Giantasio, D. (2007, March 15). MMG "talks up" Colorado in tourism push. *AdWeek.* https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/mmg-talks-colorado-tourism-push-88295/

Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). The work of representation. *Representation:Cultural representations and signifying practices*, *2*, 13-74.

Hanc, J. (2016). Denver's appeal to millennials? Jobs, mountains and, yes, weed. *New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/21/us/denvers-appeal-to-millennials-jobs-mountains-and-yes-weed.html

Harrison, A. K. (2013). Black skiing, everyday racism, and the racial spatiality of whiteness. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, *37*(4), 315-339.

Heimtun, B., & Morgan, N. (2012). Proposing paradigm peace: Mixed methods in feminist tourism research. *Tourist Studies*, *12*(3), 287–304. http://doi.org/10.1177/1468797612461088

Hickenlooper, John. (September 2016). General session: Welcome. *Governor's Conference on Tourism.* Keynote presented at the 2016 Colorado Governor's Tourism Conference, Breckenridge, Colorado

Higgins-Desbiolles, F. (2010). The elusiveness of sustainability in tourism: The culture-ideology of consumerism and its implications. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, *10*(2), 116-129.

Huberman, M., & Miles, M. B. (2002). *The qualitative researcher's companion.* Sage.

Jan, T. and Nirappil, F. (2017, June 11). Battling the racial roadblocks to joining the legalized marijuana trade. *Washington Post.* https://www.denverpost.com/2017/06/11/legalized-marijuana-trade-race/

Jaworski, A., & Pritchard, A. (Eds.). (2005). *Discourse, communication, and tourism*. Channel View Publications.

Karsh Hagan. (2014, January 8). *Colorado tourism come to life campaign* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ash9H6bBVD0

Kellner, D. (1995). Cultural studies, multiculturalism, and media studies. In Kellner, D., Dines, G., & Humez, J. (Eds.), *Gender, race, and class in media*, (pp. 5-22).

Kollin, S. (2001). *Nature's state: imagining Alaska as the last frontier*. UNC Press Books.

Kimmel, M. S. (1995). *Manhood in America.* New York: Free Press.

KUSA Staff. (2017, June 19). This is how Colorado's tourism office markets the state to attract visitors. *KUSA/KTVD. NEXT With Kyle Clark*. https://www.9news.com/article/news/local/next/this-is-how-colorados-tourism-office-markets-the-state-to-attract-visitors/450465395

Latino Outdoors. (2020). *About Us.* Latinoourdoors.org. https://latinooutdoors.org/about-us/

Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics. (2020, January). Leave No Trace – Care for Colorado. Colorado Tourism Office. https://www.colorado.com/articles/leave-no-trace-care-colorado

Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., Rosenthal, S., Kotcher, J., Ballew, M., Goldberg, M., & Gustafson, A. (2018). *Climate change in the American mind: December 2018*. Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

LeMenager, S. (2013). *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century*. Oxford University Press.

LeMenager, S. (2014). A Poetics of infrastructure: Interview with Matt Coolidge. *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*, *1*(1).

LeMenager, S., & Foote, S. (2012). The sustainable humanities. *PMLA,127*(3), 572-578.

Lenzen, M., Sun, Y. Y., Faturay, F., Ting, Y. P., Geschke, A., & Malik, A. (2018). The carbon footprint of global tourism. *Nature Climate Change*, *8*(6), 522-528.

Levy-Pounds, N. (2013). Going up in smoke: The impacts of the drug war on young Black men. *Alb. Gov't L. Rev.*, *6*, 563.

Lewis, A. C. (2016, March). America's whites-only weed boom. *BuzzFeed News*. https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/amandachicagolewis/americas-white-only-weed-boom

Löfgren, O. (2002). *On holiday: A history of vacationing* (No. 6). University of California Press.

Lofholm, Nancy. (2018, September 10). High-country Colorado towns wrangle big-city problems with homelessness. *The Colorado Sun.* https://coloradosun.com/2018/09/10/high-country-colorado-towns-wrangle-big-city-problems-with-homelessness/

Longwoods International. (2017, June). *Colorado Travel Year 2016 Draft Report.* Colorado Tourism Office. https://www.colorado.com/sites/default/master/files/ColoradoLongwoodsReport2016.pdf

Longwoods International. (2019, January 1). *About Longwoods.* https://longwoods-intl.com/about-longwoods

Lutz, C. A., & Collins, J. L. (1993). *Reading national geographic* (Vol. 59). University of Chicago Press.

MacCannell, D. (2011). *The ethics of sightseeing*. University of California Press.

Malm, A., & Hornborg, A. (2014). The geology of mankind? A critique of the Anthropocene narrative. *The Anthropocene Review*, *1*(1), 62-69.

Marshall, L. (2019). Is Colorado really blue? Not necessarily a new survey shows. *CU Boulder Today.* University of Colorado-Boulder.

https://www.colorado.edu/today/2019/01/24/colorado-really-blue-not-necessarily-new-survey-shows

Marwick, A. E., & Boyd, D. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New media & society, 13(1),* 114-133.

McChesney, R. W. (2015). *Rich media, poor democracy: Communication politics in dubious times*. The New Press.

McNiel, J. N., Harris, D. A., & Fondren, K. M. (2012). Women and the wild: Gender socialization in wilderness recreation advertising. *Gender Issues*, *29(1)*, 39-55.

Meehan, E. R. (2002). Gendering the commodity audience. In Meehan, E. R., & Riordan, E (Eds.), *Sex and Money: Feminism and Political Economy in Media Studies*, 281-299. University of Minnesota Press.

Mertens, D. M. (2007). Transformative paradigm: Mixed methods and social justice. *Journal of mixed methods research*, *1*(3), 212-225.

Michigan Economic Development Corporation. (n.d.). *Pure Michigan ads*. https://www.michigan.org/pure-michigan-ads

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., Huberman, M. A., & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook.* Sage.

Milstein, T. (2011). Nature identification: The power of pointing and naming. *Environmental communication*, 5(1), 3-24.

Moore, D. S., Kosek, J., & Pandian, A. (Eds.). (2003). *Race, nature, and the politics of difference*. Duke University Press.

Moore, J. W. (2017). The Capitalocene, Part I: on the nature and origins of our ecological crisis. *The Journal of peasant studies*, *44*(3), 594-630.

Moufakkir, O. (2011). The role of cultural distance in mediating the host gaze. *Tourist Studies*, *11(1),* 73-89.

Mpls.St.Paul Magazine (2017). *Media kit.* http://mspmag.com/company-info/about-us/media-kit

Mullen, M. (2019, January, 28). Must of mountain west region doesn't believe in climate change. *KRCC.* https://www.krcc.org/post/much-mountain-west-region-doesnt-believe-climate-change

Natives Outdoors. (2020). *About.* Natives-Outdoors.org. https://www.natives-outdoors.org/about/

Nielsen Company, The. (2014). Year in sports media report 2013. Nielsen Holdings, N.V. New York: U.S.

National Park Service. (2019). *Annual park recreation visitation*. Rocky Mountain National Park. https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/Park%20Specific%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Recreation%20Visitation%20(1904%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year)?Park=ROMO

Noss, Amanda. (2014). *American Household Income: 2013.* American Community Survey Briefs. U.S. Census Bureau. https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/2014/acs/acsbr13-02.pdf

Outdoor Afro. (2020). *Who we are.* OutdoorAfro.com. https://outdoorafro.com/about/

O'Reilly, C. C. (2005). Tourist or traveller? Narrating backpacker identity. In Jaworski, A., & Pritchard, A. (Eds.), *Discourse, communication and tourism* (pp. 150-170). Channel View Publications.

Page, D. (2016, March, 24). The quiet force: How immigrants are changing America's ski towns. *Powder*. https://www.powder.com/the-quiet-force/

Park, L. S. H., & Pellow, D. N. (2011). *The slums of Aspen: Immigrants vs. the environment in America's Eden*. NYU Press.

Peeples, J. (2011). Toxic sublime: Imaging contaminated landscapes. *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture*, *5*(4), 373-392.

Peltier, D. (2015, September). The U.S. states seeing the largest increase to their tourism budgets. *Skift*. https://skift.com/2015/09/22/the-u-s-states-seeing-largest-increases-to-their-tourism-budgets/

Peltier, D. (2018, July). State tourism budget growth slows ahead of Governors' races in midterms. *Skift.* https://skift.com/2018/07/23/state-tourism-budget-growth-slows-ahead-of-governors-races-in-midterms/

Pew (2005). African-American youth and alcohol advertising. The Pew Charitable Trusts. https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/fact-sheets/2005/07/01/africanamerican-youth-and-alcohol-advertising

Pezzullo, P. C. (2009). *Toxic tourism: Rhetorics of pollution, travel, and environmental justice*. University of Alabama Press.

Philpott, W. (2013). *Vacationland: Tourism and environment in the Colorado high country*. University of Washington Press.

Pritchard, A., & Morgan, N. I. G. E. L. (2005). Representations of 'ethnographic knowledge': Early comic postcards of Wales. In In Jaworski, A., & Pritchard, A. (Eds.), *Discourse, communication and tourism*, 53-75.

Queen, J. (2018, May 31). Priced out: Affordable housing out of reach for Summit County's low-income immigrants. *Summit Daily.* https://www.summitdaily.com/news/priced-out-affordable-housing-out-of-reach-for-summit-countys-low-income-immigrants/

Radway, J. A. (1983). Women read the romance: The interaction of text and context. *Feminist studies*, *9*(1), 53-78.

Ray, Sarah J. (2015). Nature Writing and the American West. In Kollin, Susan (Ed.), *A History of Western American Literature*. Cambridge University Press.

Rhodium Group (2019, January). Preliminary US Emissions Estimates for 2018. https://rhg.com/research/preliminary-us-emissions-estimates-for-2018/

Rogers, R. A. (2008). Beasts, burgers, and hummers: Meat and the crisis of masculinity in contemporary television advertisements. *Environmental Communication*, *2*(3), 281-301.

Ritter, C. (2016, September). Keynote. *Governor's conference on tourism.* Opening keynote presented at 2016 Colorado Governor's Conference on Tourism Conference, Breckenridge, Colorado.

Rosenbaum, C. (2015). What (and whom) state marijuana reformers forgot: Immigration law and noncitizens. *DePaul J. Soc. Just.*, *9*, 1.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2011). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Sage.

Ryan, Camille, L., Bauman, Kurt. (2016, March). Educational attainment in the United States: 2015. U.S. Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p20-578.pdf

Said, E. (1978). Introduction to Orientalism. *Media Studies: A Reader*, 111-23.

Sigel, Bill (2009). What happens when you stop marketing? The rise and fall of Colorado Tourism. *Nevada Tourism Summit.* Nevada.

Sirianni, A. (2021, April). Denver returns 14 bison to tribal land in reparations, conservation effort. *NPR.* https://www.npr.org/2021/04/14/986908147/denver-returns-14-bison-to-tribal-land-in-reparations-conservation-effort

Smith, M. (2017). Wild Black margins. In Van Horn, G., & Hausdoerffer, J. (Eds.), *Wildness: Relations of people and place*. University of Chicago Press.

SMARI. (2019). About SMARI. https://smari.com/about/.

SMARI. (2020). Methodology. Colorado Tourism Office. https://industry.colorado.com/sites/default/files/SMARI%20Methodology.pdf

Speicher, T., Ali, M., Venkatadri, G., Ribeiro, F., Arvanitakis, G., Benevenuto, F., Mislove, A. (2018). Potential for discrimination in online targeted advertising. *FAT 2018 - Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency, 81,* 1-15.

Steiger, R., Scott, D., Abegg, B., Pons, M., & Aall, C. (2019). A critical review of climate change risk for ski tourism. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *22*(11), 1343-1379.

Stewart, K. (1996). *A space on the side of the road: cultural poetics in an" other" America*. Princeton University Press.

Stoddart, M. C. (2012). *Making meaning out of mountains: The political ecology of skiing*. UBC Press.

Squires, C. R. (2000). Black talk radio: Defining community needs and identity. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, *5*(2), 73-95.

Svaldi, A. (2016, March 29). Denver home prices continue streak of double-digit increases in 2016. *Denver Post.* https://www.denverpost.com/2016/03/29/denver-home-prices-continue-streak-of-double-digit-increases-in-2016/

Svaldi, A. (2018, February 14). Three Colorado mountain towns rank in top five in U.S. for growth in senior population. *Denver Post.* https://www.denverpost.com/2018/02/14/colorado-mountain-towns-senior-citizen-population/

Tang, N. (2002). Interviewer and interviewee relationships between women. *Sociology 36*(3), 703-721.

Tabuchi, H. (2019, September, 19). “Worse than anyone expected”: Air travel emissions vastly outpace predictions. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/19/climate/air-travel-emissions.html

TerraChoice. (2007). The Six Sins of Greenwashing. A study of environmental claims in North American Consumer Markets. TerraChoice Environmental Marketing Inc.

Texas Monthly. (2017, July 1). *Subscriber Demographics.* https://www.texasmonthly.com/about/media-kit/

Todd, A. M. (2010). Anthropocentric distance in National Geographic's environmental aesthetic. *Environmental Communication,* 4(2), 206-224.

Townsend, W. W. (1924). *Bond salesmanship*. H. Holt.

Turner, G. (2005). *British cultural studies*. Routledge.

United Continental Holdings, Inc. (2017). *Hemispheres for United.* 2018 Media Kit. United Hemispheres Magazine.

University of Colorado Boulder. (2018). *Colorado business economic outlook 2019.* Leeds School of Business. Business Research Division. https://www.colorado.edu/business/sites/default/files/attached-files/2019_colorado_business_economic_outlook_011719.pdf

Urry, J. (1992). The tourist gaze "revisited". *American Behavioral Scientist*, *36*(2), 172-186.

Urry, J., & Larsen, J. (2011). *The tourist gaze 3.0*. Sage.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & society*, *4*(2), 249-283.

Vasan, T. (2015, April 29). *CFI Report: Immigrant workers critical to Colorado economy*. Colorado Fiscal Institute. https://www.coloradofiscal.org/2015/04/cfi-report-immigrant-workers-critical-to-colorado-economy/

Von Glahn, D. (2011). American women and the nature of identity. *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, *64*(2), 399-403.

Wenzel, J. (2018, June 28). Colorado's record tourism growth hits new milestone: 86 million visitors, $1.28 billion in tax revenue. *Denver Post.* https://www.denverpost.com/2018/06/28/colorado-tourism-record-2017/

Werry, M. (2011). *The tourist state: Performing leisure, liberalism, and race in New Zealand*. University of Minnesota Press.

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & society*, *1*(2), 125-151.

Wheeller, B. (1993). Sustaining the ego. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, *1*(2), 121-129.

Wilcox, M. (2010). Marketing conquest and the vanishing Indian: An indigenous response to Jared Diamond's Guns, germs, and steel and Collapse. *Journal of Social Archaeology*, *10*(1), 92-117.

Williams, R. (2011). Culture is ordinary (1958). *Cultural theory: An anthology*, 53-59.

Willouhby, T. (2008, January 31). Manifest destiny in the mountains. *The Aspen Times.* https://www.aspentimes.com/news/manifest-destiny-in-the-mountains/

Wolf, S. (2018, January). Gentrification critics demand to be heard as Denver developers ride the boom. *Colorado Public Radio.* https://www.cpr.org/show-segment/gentrification-critics-demand-to-be-heard-as-denver-developers-ride-the-boom/

New Zealand Tourism. (2015). How do insights help inform our activity?. https://www.tourismnewzealand.com/media/2135/tnz-insights-webinar-29-september-2015.pdf