

The Analysis of Barriers to Regional Park Use for Black Individuals Who Were Born in the United States

A Study Focused on Regional Parks in Washington County, Minnesota



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Abstract:

Washington County, Minnesota is home to seven regional parks and two regional trails. Recent visitor surveys show discrepancies in regional park usage for communities of color in the county compared to White park users. Literature on minority populations and regional park use has gaps in regard to Black people born in the United States. This literature specifically leaves out regional park usage, and the barriers that are keeping them from regional park use, and park programming that may attract those individuals to regional parks. Because the minority population is expected to continue to rise and Black people comprise the second largest minority population within Washington County, we wish to understand what barriers may exist for Black Americans' use of Washington County regional parks for Black Americans born in the United States. To do this, we interviewed seven Black individuals from the greater Washington County and Twin Cities area to discover what barriers and what attractions are keeping them from going to parks and what could be done to change that.

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1. Introduction

Washington County, Minnesota is on the eastern edge of the Twin Cities Metropolitan area. It is home to seven regional parks and two regional trails. However, visitor surveys and research by the Metropolitan Council Regional Parks division have shown discrepancies in regional park use among communities of color relative to regional park use among white people. For our Qualitative Methods class, the Washington County Parks Division approached us to conduct research on what is keeping the discrepancies of attendance at their parks between the white population and Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) so significantly high. We wish to examine what barriers to park use exist for U.S. born Black Americans and how to increase regional park usage and participation in Washington County for this population. As minority populations continue to grow in Washington County (“Washington County Population” 2020), and Black individuals are the second largest minority population in the county (“U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts” 2022) we see that it is important to examine what is keeping them away from park use. Since there are gaps in the literature around barriers for Black individuals born in the U.S. in regard to regional park use, this project aims to serve the Washington County Parks Division in their efforts to attract more members of the BIPOC community to their regional parks. *Due to cultural differences, this study focuses solely on Americans who identify as Black and who were born in the United States, as opposed to Black Americans who immigrated to the country.*

1.1 Background Literature

Research on park use in the United States is broad. In particular, there is a bevy of research on general barriers to park usage in the United States. Through examining the literature, information shows that park accessibility is the top barrier to park use. While not every piece of literature examined the same characteristics of park accessibility, we define accessibility as: awareness (Penbrooke 2019, “Regional Park Use Among Select Communities of Color” 2014, Rushing et al. 2019), time (Rushing et al. 2019, Mowen et al. 2016, “Washington County, MN: 2019 Resident Survey” 2019), transportation (“Regional Park Use Among Select Communities of Color” 2014, Hamstead et al. 2018), cost (Das et al. 2017, Mowen et al. 2016, “Washington County, MN: 2019 Resident Survey” 2019), racial/ethnic barriers (“Regional Park Use Among Select Communities of Color” 2014, Hamstead et al. 2018), and safety (Rushing et al. 2019, Mowen et al. 2016, “Washington County, MN: 2019 Resident Survey” 2019). Literature does not further define certain characteristics that need to be expanded on, such as awareness, cost, safety, and transportation. However, we have defined these terms for the scope of our research. Awareness is further defined as one’s knowledge of a park’s existence, its features, or other general information about a park. Cost is defined as costs associated with getting to a park, entrance into a park, or any other costs that may be associated with recreating in a park, such as renting a kayak for example. Safety is defined as safety from other humans in a park, animals in a park, and safety from a park’s features, such as bodies of water or rocks. Transportation is defined as any mode of commuting to and from a park.

Additionally, literature shows that the ways in which men and women use parks is different and that many of the differences are gendered, such as more men playing sports and more women taking children to parks (Evansen et al. 2019, Marquette et al 2019). Research also shows that men tend to use park systems more than women (Evansen et al. 2019, Marquette et al 2019).

Furthermore, non-White Americans have historically underutilized parks in the United States. (Gosalvez, 2020) Literature shows that this, too, appears to be the case for parks of all kinds: national parks, (Ebbs and Dwyer 2020) state parks, (Robinson and Gozali-Lee 2020, “Results of 2017 Minnesota State Park Visitor Survey” 2018) and local parks (Cheng and Dirtzu 2020, “2016 Regional Parks System Visitor Study” 2016). While there is no singular explanation for the discrepancy to park use, evidence suggests historical and structural racism may enhance real and perceived barriers to park access, particularly because historical lack of park use may perpetuate cultural norms of not using parks as well as fear of discrimination in public spaces (Gosalvez 2020, Scott and Lee 2018).

However, gaps in knowledge remain about barriers that Black Americans face to regional park use. We define a regional park as a park that is not a national park and not urban, meaning that the park is not encompassed in any city or town of any size. Barriers are defined as anything that prevents regional park usage. Additionally, we define a park as a designated nature space and its structures and features within it set aside specifically for recreational use. Additionally, gaps in the literature remain about shared or different barriers to park usage in general for Black American men and women. Lastly, there is little literature on regional parks as we have defined them, especially in Minnesota.

1.2 Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine barriers to regional park use for Black individuals born in the U.S. in Washington County, MN and explore how facilitators and programming may promote regional park use in Washington County for that community. In turn, this prompts the following questions for this study: **1.) *What barriers to park accessibility exist for Black people born in the U.S.?*** 1a.) What has stopped them in the past from using regional parks? More specifically we will ask Black men and women born in the U.S. to tell us about their experiences using regional parks. **2.) *How can the Washington Parks Division increase regional park usage and participation in Washington County for Black individuals born in the US.*** Also, 2a.) What facilitators and programming may promote regional park usage for Black Americans in regard to Washington County? We will answer these questions by asking participants their experiences with parks. We will identify whether men and women have different or similar barriers.

2. Methodology

To answer the research questions, we interviewed Black Americans born in the United States about barriers to regional park use in Washington County, Minnesota and park use in general.

2.1 Study Design and Sampling

For this study, we initially set specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. For our inclusion criteria, participants needed to self-identify as Black and also have been born in the United States. They had to be 18 years or older. They also needed to have used a Washington County park at some point in their lifetime. Our exclusion criteria was anyone who did not identify as Black, was not born in the United States, was under 18 years old, and who had never used a Washington County Park.

In creating our research design, we intended to interview and gather data from participants who matched our inclusion criteria. Our goal was to interview eight participants. We had initially decided on this intended number of participants in order for each group member to interview two participants to learn how to interview for our Qualitative Methods course. Additionally, we hoped to have an equal number of men and women (four men and four women). Furthermore, we intended for the recruited participants to reside in Washington County in order to gather the most pertinent data about Washington County regional parks, as we perceived these residents to have the most familiarity with those parks.

When thinking of reflexivity in our research design, we were primarily concerned with gender. Because part of our research focuses on gendered park usage, we aimed to gather perspectives from both identified men and women. In response to this, and with reflexivity in mind, interviews were to be conducted on a gendered basis: the group members who identified as women were to interview the participants who identified as women, and the group members who identified as men were to interview the participants who identified as men. In interviewing, one group member would conduct the interview while the other took notes. Interviews were semi-structured with an interview guide. Both men and women were asked the same questions, except in how their gender affected each barrier and their park experience.

2.2 Recruitment Strategy

Recruitment strategies were implemented to recruit participants based on our inclusion criteria. We first asked Washington County if they had community connections to local Black-focused community groups in the area. Additionally, fliers with group member contact information were made and the Washington County Parks Division displayed them throughout Washington County parks. Washington County Parks Division liaison, Connor Schaefer, was responsible to relay potential participant information back to us so we could proceed with further contact.

To recruit within Washington County, group members recruited in-person at local Washington County businesses and establishments in the cities of Oakdale and Woodbury, Minnesota. Additionally, phone calls were made to Washington County businesses that we were unable to go to in-person.

In order to expand the search for participants, our group utilized social media. Specifically, this study was advertised on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. On Facebook, group members posted in Facebook groups that are dedicated to BIPOC outdoor activities in Minnesota.

To aid in recruitment efforts, the Washington County Parks Division had approved an incentive in the form of a \$10 Amazon gift card to give to eligible participants.

2.3 Limitations to Study Design and Sampling

We experienced significant limitations in our recruitment efforts which, in turn, affected our study design, sampling, and data collection. It was challenging to recruit participants that matched our inclusion criteria in Washington County due to the low Black population present. This resulted in our group expanding our research design to include those who reside in the Twin Cities metropolitan area rather than explicitly recruiting those who reside in Washington County. Because of this limitation, we expanded our recruitment efforts. We recruited in-person at the Mall of America and were open to speaking and screening those who contacted us in our virtual and social media recruitment efforts even if they did not reside in Washington County. As we began recruiting participants, we found it extremely difficult to recruit men. We found that women were generally more open and optimistic to participating in our study, whereas men were more pessimistic about the study impact and were closed off to participating. Because of this, our study had six participants who identified as women, and one participant that identified as a man. Due to time constraints for this research, we accepted the gender imbalance of participants and were not able to recruit more men.

2.4 Data Collection

Nine interviews were conducted. However, only seven interviews were viable and used for the analysis of this study. These interviews took place on the video conferencing platform Zoom. There were two group members that conducted each interview. One person interviewed the participant, while the other group member took notes. These interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The interviewer asked pre-determined questions about pre-identified barriers to park usage, specifically about whether they perceive said barrier to be a barrier, and if so, to what extent. Additionally, interviewers asked any other questions they felt pertinent to the conversation in the moment that were not predetermined. All questions were open-ended in nature, except for yes-or-no questions about if the participant knew of the specific Washington County regional parks at the focus of this study. We also opened the interview questions and asked

interviewees to identify any additional perceived barriers to park usage that may not have been covered. Lastly, although the scope of our research did not specifically include questions about facilitators to park use and park programming, those topics were briefly explored with a participant if the nature of the conversation led down either of those paths.

We collected the first and last names of all participants, as well as their phone numbers and/or email address. This was done in order to schedule an interview with them as well as to discuss how they would like to receive their incentive of the Amazon gift card. We then collected their gender because that was a major factor in our analysis criteria. Due to time constraints of this class, we were not able to solely have the group members who identified as women interview the participants who identified as women and the group members who identified as men interview the participants who identified as men. This was due to time restraints and scheduling conflicts. Rather, in half of our interviews, one woman and one man interviewed the participant. It was important to have at least one group member be of the same gender as the participant to bring a level of comfort between the interviewee and the interviewers. Furthermore, because two of our group members were BIPOC individuals, we were very intentional about having at least one BIPOC group member in each interview. However, this was not possible for two of the interviews due to time constraints and scheduling conflicts.

Our notes were written on a word software that was not connected to the Cloud or internet storage software. These notes were then transferred to the secure T-drive service at the University of Minnesota. In the coding software, Atlas.ti, we then reduced the names of the participants to interview numbers to follow confidentiality guidelines. After all data was logged, the word documents were destroyed when all the data collection was completed. Considering confidentiality guidelines, the faces and audio of interviewees were not recorded on Zoom. Instead, only audio from the interviews were recorded on a recording device such as a cell phone through the Otter.ai software. Once the interview was over, all audio was uploaded immediately to the secure T-drive at the University of Minnesota. Once the audio was securely uploaded, all recordings were deleted from the recording devices. We kept all information on the T-drive until the end of the class, when the project was concluded.

2.5 Research Ethics

To ensure informed consent and uphold the “do no harm” principle, we started each interview by providing a digital copy of the consent form (Appendix 3), verbally read the full text, asked the subject if they had any questions, and then asked them to verbally consent to their participation in the study. As previously mentioned, we offered a \$10 Amazon gift card for participants, a small enough amount that we did not believe it would influence their decision to participate. Although this was our initial belief, we determined that we were not able to use two interviews that were conducted because we believed the participants were influenced to participate because of the Amazon gift card incentive.

Confidentiality of data is important in the context of potentially sensitive conversations regarding race. To keep data confidential, we numbered our interviews by chronological order when they took place. After our interviews were transcribed, we made identities unidentifiable through our numbering of the interviews when putting together our contact notes. We maintained digital data as audio files of voice recorded interviews and Microsoft Word documents of typed contact notes. Data was stored in a secure server at the University of Minnesota. The key was stored in an encrypted file on the T-drive that was then deleted at the end of the semester when the class concluded.

To minimize discomfort or stigma around race, we phrased interview questions as open-ended, allowing participants to disclose as much or as little as they preferred. By also having both a man and woman of color in our interview team, we hoped that would take away some discomfort from them expressing possible opinions on how their race and gender affect their park use. Because of time constraints, this was not always possible during our interview process. Depending on the answer we got for one question, it helped us decide possible follow-up questions. Additionally, we consulted with Dr. Greta Friedemann-Sánchez for feedback on our interview questions to ensure they were posed in a neutral, non-judgmental manner.

2.6 Data Analysis

Interview data was stored in the T-drive software and transcribed using Otter.ai, a voice recording software that transcribes while the interview is being conducted. Transcript text and interview notes were analyzed for key themes that emerged around barriers, and, where present, facilitators, and programming for park use. We identified concepts, categories, and relationships in the data which were then coded (Appendix 5), analyzed patterns in recurrence, distribution and relationships of concepts and categories. We used this coding alongside the Atlas.ti software to review similarities and differences in the responses of the different interviews.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Race

After analyzing park usage of these participants, racial identity had an effect on how the participants felt and conducted themselves in park spaces. Considering the racial makeup of not only Washington County but Minnesota in general, all of the participants described an increase in anxiety when in racially white-dominated park spaces. All interviewees either explicitly mentioned or alluded to how their race affected their perceived safety in park spaces. For many, their feeling of safety was tied into the attention they received while in park spaces. Visibility was an important factor that contributed to the anxiousness and caution the female participants in this study felt. It was revealed that dense tree coverage and non-open spaces made some of the participants feel

unsafe due to a lack of witnesses if a negative situation occurred. In relation to the topic of attention, a participant of this study described their preference of attention in certain situations, specifically if they were on a hiking trail or a more secluded area. When hiking, they mentioned trail etiquette that one should follow, which includes saying hello and acknowledging the presence of those they pass by. Trail etiquette is an interaction that makes this participant feel safe. However, there are instances where they do not receive it. The participant detailed, “I have found that majority of the time when I go out, people don’t say anything to me, unless I’m with one of my white friends, and then they do. That is something that I notice when I’m by myself.”

On the flip side, unwanted attention was a concern for other participants. In an interview, a participant described that when they use parks, they notice that other park users tend to stare at them which makes them feel uncomfortable. The participant shared, “Maybe it is because I’m Black and a woman, but I feel like I have to be doing something. Like if I’m on a run, I’m running. I try not to take a break and just stand there. I feel like everyone thinks everything looks suspicious.” The goal of enjoying parks for these participants transitions to anxiety concerning intrusive attention encountered in public parks.

Other participants mentioned instances regarding safety which revealed an underlying perspective that people who identify as Black always have to be vigilant and protect themselves. One participant gave insight with the following: “..[I] feel like a lot of Black people are taught that they’re responsible for their own safety and that you can’t rely on the external environments around you to naturally be safe for you.” This sense of having to protect one’s self can deter many potential park-goers from actually using parks. In relation to the aspect of self-protection, when asked the question, “What does safety mean to you?” one participant responded, “License to carry,” meaning to carry a gun. In referencing a particular incident at a park-space in Washington County, this participant gave context as to why they felt they needed to carry a gun:

“We notice these people who were just like looking at us. I asked ‘Is there a problem? Why are you staring at us?’ [Other group asks] ‘What are you doing here?’ [Participant responds] ‘This is a park, we are enjoying it.’ [Other group responds] ‘You are not from here, you don’t belong.’”

A few sentences later, in reflection of this incident, the participant, when asked what safety meant to them, said:

“License to carry. Literally these days you have to be to put more comfort into it because going to a park should be a comfort zone with safety and all of that. These days with all the stuff that has been going on and how people are reacting to people for doing simple things, like you never know. We do have firearms and we do bring them with us just in case.”

3.2 Safety

The participants identified other important safety barriers to park use. For some of the participants, there was an association of safety with accurate park maps and trail markers. One participant in this study shared that any resources used to make the layout of a park clearer, makes them feel safer in that environment. When asked about safety when it comes to the presence of animals, all participants concluded that they appreciate nature and its inhabitants, however, they tend to stay away from wild animals as much as possible. Additionally, participants noted how the presence of park staff and other park structures, like a bathroom or other physical shelter enhanced their perception of safety.

3.3 Awareness

Awareness of Washington County regional parks was a significant barrier. The knowledge of specific regional parks was low among respondents. Of the seven interviews conducted, Lake Elmo Park Reserve and the St Croix Bluffs Regional Park were the most known regional parks to these participants, but even then four participants knew of either park. One respondent described St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park as “everyone’s favorite park” and that it was a park popular with young kids. One respondent had been to the Big Marine Park Reserve, and another respondent had heard of Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park, but had never been there. Two respondents said that they had heard of Point Douglas Park, and one of them had been there and stated “I just cannot place it in my mind.” Vaguely knowing about a park’s existence but not knowing anything else about the park was a common theme, both for participants who were residents of Washington County and for those who were not. When one respondent was asked if they had heard of Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park, they could not point to the city it is located in, and stated “I think it has a splash pad.” Another responded to the same question asked about knowledge of Point Douglas Park, stating that they only “know of it, but nothing else.” With these insights we can see the ways in which lack of awareness amongst respondents is a barrier to park use. The more participants are aware of parks the more likely they are to use them.

3.4 Time

Time was another commonly discussed barrier, and on the flip-side, facilitator among the participants. Every single interviewee mentioned, in some capacity, that they felt the most inclined to visit any park was when the weather was during the warmer and sunnier seasons in Minnesota. This included the late spring, summer, and early fall. Conversely, most participants said that they either would not or did not prefer visiting parks during the colder, winter months. Only two participants noted that they had or would be willing to visit a park in the winter, but that it was not a priority nor a favorite time to do so. Participants also noted how they were more apt to visit a park when they had greater amounts of consecutive time available to visit a park, such as visiting a park when they had multiple hours in a row to visit rather than simply an hour or two. This was particularly the case for parks that were further away from their place of residence. For many, this

meant that weekends were the most ideal time to visit parks. Additionally, participants felt that they did not have enough time to visit parks.

3.5 Cost

Cost was a minor barrier among the participants that were interviewed. Willingness to pay for aspects related to travel to a park, entrance to a park, and recreating in the park varied. Three participants who were avid park-goers were willing to spend their money on travel, access, and recreating in the park. The other four, who were not avid park-goers, mentioned that they would be willing to spend money on gas to get to a park. This same group also mentioned that they would be willing to pay for parking, any other entrance fees, and recreating in a park, (such as renting a kayak) but only if it was a rare or special occasion. This includes buying parking passes and renting recreational equipment. One respondent expressed that they would only utilize recreational activities that require payment, if they had “bulletproof plans with friends.” Another respondent saw the cost to use parks as a necessary donation because it helps the operation of the parks system.

3.6 Transportation

Transportation was not a barrier for these participants. Most participants had access to cars, therefore could access parks. All of them mentioned that they felt that Washington County lacked public transportation to access the parks, however, each mentioned that they would still prefer to take their car.

3.7 Programming

While the scope of this project did not explicitly inquire about programming or facilitators that may attract Black Americans born in the United States to Washington County regional parks, or parks in general, some ideas and themes around programming did naturally emerge. One reemerging theme was the idea of representation. In one capacity or another, various interviewees noted how they felt that park spaces were white-dominated spaces, and, therefore, a place more welcoming to White people. One mentioned how most park advertising, regardless of the park, features primarily White families/people. This is to say, they felt parks are marketed towards White people. Another participant noted how they felt it was important for there to be “ethnic representation in parks” as a way to facilitate park-going by non-white individuals, not just Black people. In this instance, this meant park-goers and park personnel, too. Another participant noted that they felt more inclined to visit a park that they knew might have a more diverse makeup of park-goers rather than one that was dominated by primarily white park-goers. This information suggests that any park, not just a regional park, may facilitate more Black park-goers if they felt that there would be more Black or even non-white park-goers in that space. However, when talking about programming specifically, none mentioned or could recall any specific programming that got them to attend a park space.

3.8 Discussion

In all, our findings mostly matched the information we gathered in our literature review. Race was a large barrier, as many participants felt that their race made park spaces more uncomfortable, anxiety-inducing, and unsafe for them. Additionally, race tied in with gender seemed to amplify

these safety concerns for women, although gendered differences in park-usage for Black Americans born in the United States would need further research, as our study was heavily woman-dominated. Safety not related specifically to race or gender was a common barrier, particularly when it came to animals. Park awareness was another large barrier, as most participants did not know any more than one or two regional parks in Washington County. We also found time to be a barrier, as the participants noted how they felt they did not have enough of it to visit parks, at least to the degree they wished. Cost was a minimal barrier. Participants that were avid park-goers did not perceive cost to be a barrier at all. Participants that did not frequent parks as often said that they would be willing to spend money on gas and any park-entrance fees (such as parking), if going to the park was a special event or a rare occurrence rather than a recurring one. Lastly, transportation was not a barrier to any participants, as each noted that they had a car and that their car was their preferred mode of transportation. Rather, the time it took to get to a park that was further away from their residence was a bigger barrier than the mode of getting there.

4. Conclusion

We found there to be many barriers to using Washington County's regional parks for Black Americans who were born in the United States. Race, safety, awareness, time, and cost were all real and perceived barriers for not just Black American's regional park usage for Washington County regional parks, but more broadly, park usage in general. All of these barriers are in line with the literature reviewed for this study. In synthesizing the information gathered, we found race, gender, safety, and awareness to be the biggest barriers. Additionally, transportation was not a barrier for our particular sample like the literature suggested.

4.1 Recommendations

In an effort to attract more Black Americans to Washington County regional parks, we suggest the following recommendations to increase Black American park usage:

- 1.) Centered advertising that represents communities of color. By putting images on advertised spaces that look like the growing racial and ethnic communities in Washington County, it will show residents and non-residents that Washington County regional parks are inclusive spaces for everyone.
- 2.) Developing community partnerships with organizations that serve Black individuals. Creating these partnerships will establish not only a new sense of community but also a sense of belonging in Washington County regional parks.
- 3.) Hiring more employees of color that promote multicultural programming in the Washington County area. Hiring more staff of color will help ease uncomfortability and bring diverse perspectives to park programming.
 - a.) Participants from this study have mentioned hosting a multicultural market, creating outdoor cooking activities, yoga, mud races, and environmental learning courses.
- 4.) Creating an internal task force that is focused on eliminating park usage inequities for ethnic and racial minorities. Creation of this task force will allow the Washington County

Parks Division personnel to have a space to look more intentionally and in-depth at solutions for promoting diversity in their parks.

4.2 Reflection

In reflection of the study, more information about how personal identity affects park usage for Black Americans, particularly race and gender, would be helpful as the participants spoke at great lengths about how their personal identities affected their park usage more than most other barriers. Furthermore, because personal identity was such a large factor and barrier to park usage, this may suggest that attracting Black Americans to Washington County regional parks may be a task that, in some senses, may be out of Washington County's control. This is due to the evidence that suggests there may be a broader *culture* or notion that park spaces are not "meant" or "designed" for Black people, which contributes to the historical under-utilization of park spaces of any kind by Black people. This, however, would need to be a subject explored in a different study.

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Appendix 1: Recruitment Scripts

Email format to send to potential CANDIDATES

Dear [Subject Name]

My name is [Insert Name] and I am a graduate student at The Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.

I am in a qualitative methods course, and in the course my group and I are conducting a research study that is focused on understanding what barriers prevent Black American from using regional parks in Washington County. We are working with the Washington County Parks Division to conduct this research because they have found that there is a lack of Black Americans' use of their regional park system, and they want to address this issue.

I am reaching out to you because you identify as a Black American in the community. Our group wants to learn more about your experiences with the regional park system in Washington County. We are interested in hearing about your park experiences for our study because what you have to say can help the Washington County Parks Division create more inclusive and diverse regional parks. The regional parks in Washington County have a lot to offer, and we want to make sure that as many Black Americans as possible can experience them.

If you are interested and able to help us, we would love to schedule a 45 minute to one hour interview with you. The interview would be over Zoom or Skype with two members of the team. Your participation in this study would remain confidential, and your identity would remain anonymous in the final paper. [Additionally, for participating in this study, you would receive a \$10 Amazon gift card.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions, or if I can provide additional information and context. I hope we can find time to speak soon. Additionally, if you have any questions for our supervisor, her name is Greta Friedemann-Sánchez and can be reached via frie0013@umn.edu.

If you don't want to participate, that is okay. If you know anyone who might be interested in participating in this study, please let us know and we can reach out to them!

Thank you for your time,

[Insert Name].

Email format to send to potential ORGANIZATIONS

Dear [Subject Name]

My name is [Insert Name] and I am a graduate student at The Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. You have been referred to us as someone who may be interested in a study that is being conducted.

I am in a qualitative methods course, and in the course my group and I are conducting a research study that is focused on understanding what barriers prevent Black American from using regional parks in Washington County. We are working with the Washington County Parks Division to conduct this research because they have found that there is a lack of Black Americans' use of their regional park system, and they want to address this issue.

I am reaching out to you because we know that your organization serves Black individuals. It is our hope that you can connect us with Black individuals who may want to take part in this study. We are interested in hearing about their regional park experiences because what they have to say can help the Washington County Parks Division create more inclusive and diverse parks. The regional parks in Washington County have a lot to offer, and we want to make sure that as many Black Americans as possible can experience them.

We are asking potential participants to be part of a 45 minute to one hour interview. This interview will be over Zoom or Skype with two members of the team. Their participation in this study would remain confidential, and their identity would remain anonymous in our final paper. Additionally, for participating in this study, participants would receive a \$10 Amazon gift card.

If your organization is interested and able to help us, please do not hesitate to let me know. I would be more than happy to answer any questions and provide additional information and context. Additionally, if you have any questions for our supervisor, her name is Greta Friedemann-Sánchez and can be reached via frie0013@umn.edu.

If your organization does not wish, nor is able to find individuals who may be able to participate in this study, that is okay. If you know of other organizations that might be able to connect us to individuals to participate in this study, please let us know!

Thank you for your time,

[Insert Name].

Email template to participant that was referred to us

Dear [Subject Name]

My name is [Insert Name] and I am a graduate student at The Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. You have been referred to us as someone who may be interested in a study that is being conducted.

I am in a qualitative methods course, and in the course my group and I are conducting a research study that is focused on understanding what barriers prevent Black American from using regional parks in Washington County. We are working with the Washington County Parks Division to conduct this research because they have found that there is a lack of Black Americans' use of their regional park system, and they want to address this issue.

I am reaching out to you because you identify as a Black American in the community. Our group wants to learn more about your experiences with the regional park system in Washington County. We are interested in hearing about your park experiences because what you have to say can help the Washington County Parks division create more inclusive and diverse parks. The regional parks in Washington County have a lot to offer, and we want to make sure that as many Black Americans as possible can experience them.

If you are interested and able to help us, we would love to have a 45 minute to one hour interview with you. The interview would be over Zoom or Skype with two members of the team. Your participation in this study would remain confidential, and your identity would remain anonymous in the final paper. Additionally, for participating in this study, you would receive a \$10 Amazon gift card.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions, or if I can provide additional information and context. I hope we can find time to speak soon. Additionally, if you have any questions for our supervisor, her name is Greta Friedemann-Sánchez and can be reached via frie0013@umn.edu.

If you don't want to participate, that is okay. If you know anyone who might be interested in participating in this study, please let us know and we can reach out to them!

Thank you for your time,

[Insert Name]

IN PERSON SCRIPT

Hi,

My name is [Insert Name] and I am a graduate student at the University of Minnesota. I'm currently trying to recruit participants for a study in my qualitative methods class. Do you have a minute to learn more about the study to see if you are interested in participating?

My group and I were contacted by the Washington County Parks Division to conduct a study to understand what barriers prevent Black Americans from using regional parks in Washington County, such as lack of time or transportation as an example. We are working with the Washington County Parks Division to conduct this research because they have found that there is a lack of Black Americans' use of their regional park system, and they want to address this issue.

If you are interested and able to help us, we would love to have a 45 minute to one hour interview with you. The interview would be over Zoom or Skype with two members of the team. Your participation in this study would remain confidential, and your identity would remain anonymous in the final paper. Additionally, for participating in this study, you would receive a \$10 Amazon gift card.

Is this something you would like to participate in? (Depending on their answer, continue)

Great! Can we please get your contact information so we can schedule an initial call to go through the consent process of this study? From there we will schedule a 45 minute to one hour long interview.

Do you have any questions or concerns? [Answer any questions they may have]

Thank you for your time!

Based on Response in Email or Phone Format****If they are willing to be interviewed****

Hello,

Thank you for wanting to participate!

We look forward to talking to you about your park-use experience. We are asking for your availability to go over the consent forms for this study. What are some days and times that generally work for you?

Please keep in mind, you have the right to not answer any question for whatever reason during the interview and also withdraw your participation from the study at any time.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon,

[Insert Name]

****If they are not willing to be interviewed****

Hello,

Thank you for taking the time to respond to me! I completely understand.

If for any reason you change your mind, please let me know.

[Insert Name]

Appendix 2: Verbal Informed Consent for Participants

Background and purpose of the Study

We (Samuel Benda, Zoe Betancourt, Hannah Dalsheim, and Caleb Sebor) are students at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs in Minneapolis, Minnesota. We are in a Qualitative Methods course learning how to design a research project, recruit, and interview participants, and analyze responses. We are interested in understanding barriers to regional park use for Black Americans in Washington County, Minnesota, as well as, understanding which facilitators and programming may promote regional park usage for this population in Washington County.

Procedures

We will interview you for no more than one hour about your observations and opinions of barriers, facilitators, and programming that affect Black Americans' regional park use in Washington County.

You may choose to refrain from answering any questions you wish. Additionally, if there is anything you wish to speak about that does not pertain to any of the questions we ask or discuss, but that you feel is relevant to talk about, please feel free to do so.

We will be interviewing between seven to twelve Black Americans. Interviews will be anonymous. Records of interviews will be kept on a secure T-Drive at the Humphrey School and will be deleted once our Qualitative Methods class is over. All identities will remain anonymous and not attributed to any information gathered in our final analysis. When we are finished, we will send you a final paper so that you may see the conclusions we have come to.

Confidentiality

This interview, and any other information we gather about you, will remain confidential. We will not reveal your identity to anyone, nor will any information about you appear in our final analysis. We will record our conversations on our phones to later transcribe so we can read the interview. Once transcribed, we will remove your name and any other information that may identify you from our notes. Both audio recording and transcripts of those recordings will be kept on a secure server at the Humphrey School and will be deleted at the end of the class in May. Your information and participation in this study will remain confidential.

Risk and benefits of participation

There are minimal risks for participating in this study. There is potential you may feel uncomfortable while addressing questions and topics about race and its implications around park use. Questions will vary in type from direct and pointed, such as asking you yes or no questions, to open-ended. No matter the question type, you are free to decline answering the question or may share as little as you wish. We respect the voluntary nature of your participation and any boundaries you may wish to set with it.

As a benefit of participating in this study, you will receive a Visa gift card. Additionally, we hope to make this experience a positive and pleasant one for you and will provide you with a copy of our final research paper.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are able to answer or not answer any question you wish and are able to answer any question to any extent you are comfortable sharing. You are able to stop the conversation at any time and are also able to change your mind and not participate in the conversation/study at any time.

Questions

What questions are we able to answer for you, either about this study or about ourselves? Do you have any thoughts or comments about this study that you wish to share? Is there anything you wish for us to talk about or go over again? We are more than happy to answer any questions you have.

Who to contact

Samuel Benda: benda070@umn.edu | 651-274-6393
Zoe Betancourt: betan043@umn.edu | 414-213-1319
Hannah Dalsheim: dalsh002@umn.edu | 703-254-9200
Caleb Sebor: sebor001@umn.edu | 320-510-5916

You may also contact our supervisor, Greta Friedemann-Sánchez, with any questions.
Greta Friedemann-Sánchez: frie0013@umn.edu

Statement of Consent

Are you willing to participate in this study?

Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Interview guide can be organized by aspects of accessibility. Ask questions on safety. Then ask questions on proximity, etc. Add probes (follow up questions) to keep them talking jog memory etc.

Washington County Parks Questions

Question 1: Tell us about your experiences in Washington County regional parks.

Question 2: Can you tell us the last time that you used a park?

a.) Who do you normally go to parks with?

Question 3 : Tell us, what parks do you know of in Washington County?

a.) Do you know:

- 1.) Big Marine Park Reserve
- 2.) Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park
- 3.) Hardwood Creek Regional Trail
- 4.) Lake Elmo Park Reserve
- 5.) Pine Point Regional Park
- 6.) Point Douglas Park
- 7.) Point Douglas Regional Trail
- 8.) St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park
- 9.) Square Lake Park

b.) Tell us what you know about that specific park (if they answer)

c.) Tell us what you like about that park

Question 4: Which regional parks do you utilize more?

Accessibility

Question 5: When you think of park accessibility, what comes to mind?

a.) How does transportation affect your ability to use parks?

1.) How does being Black affect your transportation needs?

a.) Tell us about your experiences with transportation as a woman

b.) Tell us about your experiences with transportation as a man

b.) How does cost affect your ability to use parks?

1.) How have costs associated with getting to a park affected your ability to use parks?

- 2.) How have costs associated with entering a park affected your ability to use that park?
- 3.) How have costs associated with recreating in a park, such as renting a kayak for example, affected how you use parks?

Question 6: How does being Black affect your ability to use parks?

- a.) How does being a Black woman affect your ability to use parks?
- b.) How does being a Black man affect your ability to use parks?

Question 7: In what ways does time affect your ability to use parks?

Safety Questions

Question 8: When you think about safety in a park, what comes to mind?

Question 9: Tell us about an experience in a park where you didn't feel safe.

- a) Why didn't you feel safe in that situation?
 - i) As a Black woman, what is your view of safety in parks?
 - ii) As a Black man, what is your view of safety in parks?
- b) How have humans made you feel unsafe in the past?
- c) How have animals made you feel unsafe in the past?
- d) How have park facilities/resources made you feel unsafe in the past?
- e) How have park features, such as trails, rocks, or water for example, made you feel unsafe?

Question 10: In your past experiences, how have parks made you feel safe?

Question 11: In your opinion, what actions need to be implemented in order to make parks safer?

Ending Questions

Question 12: Is there anything that wasn't brought up that you would like to talk about?

- a.) Do you have any questions for us?

Appendix 4: Verbal Informed Consent for Participants

Background and purpose of the Study

We (Samuel Benda, Zoe Betancourt, Hannah Dalsheim, and Caleb Sebor) are students at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs in Minneapolis, Minnesota. We are in a Qualitative Methods course learning how to design a research project, recruit, and interview participants, and analyze responses. We are interested in understanding barriers to regional park use for Black Americans in Washington County, Minnesota, as well as, understanding which facilitators and programming may promote regional park usage for this population in Washington County.

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You may choose to refrain from answering any questions you wish. Additionally, if there is anything you wish to speak about that does not pertain to any of the questions we ask or discuss, but that you feel is relevant to talk about, please feel free to do so.

We will be interviewing between seven to twelve Black Americans. Interviews will be anonymous. Records of interviews will be kept on a secure T-Drive at the Humphrey School and will be deleted once our Qualitative Methods class is over. All identities will remain anonymous and not attributed to any information gathered in our final analysis. When we are finished, we will send you a final paper so that you may see the conclusions we have come to.

Confidentiality

This interview, and any other information we gather about you, will remain confidential. We will not reveal your identity to anyone, nor will any information about you appear in our final analysis. We will record our conversations on our phones to later transcribe so we can read the interview. Once transcribed, we will remove your name and any other information that may identify you from our notes. Both audio recording and transcripts of those recordings will be kept on a secure server at the Humphrey School and will be deleted at the end of the class in May. Your information and participation in this study will remain confidential.

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There are minimal risks for participating in this study. There is potential you may feel uncomfortable while addressing questions and topics about race and its implications around park use. Questions will vary in type from direct and pointed, such as asking you yes or no questions, to open-ended. No matter the question type, you are free to decline answering the question or

may share as little as you wish. We respect the voluntary nature of your participation and any boundaries you may wish to set with it.

As a benefit of participating in this study, you will receive an Amazon gift card. Additionally, we hope to make this experience a positive and pleasant one for you and will provide you with a copy of our final research paper.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are able to answer or not answer any question you wish and are able to answer any question to any extent you are comfortable sharing. You are able to stop the conversation at any time and are also able to change your mind and not participate in the conversation/study at any time.

Questions

What questions are we able to answer for you, either about this study or about ourselves? Do you have any thoughts or comments about this study that you wish to share? Is there anything you wish for us to talk about or go over again? We are more than happy to answer any questions you have.

Who to contact

Samuel Benda: benda070@umn.edu | 651-274-6393

Zoe Betancourt: betan043@umn.edu | 414-213-1319

Hannah Dalsheim: dalsh002@umn.edu | 703-254-9200

Caleb Sebor: sebor001@umn.edu | 320-510-5916

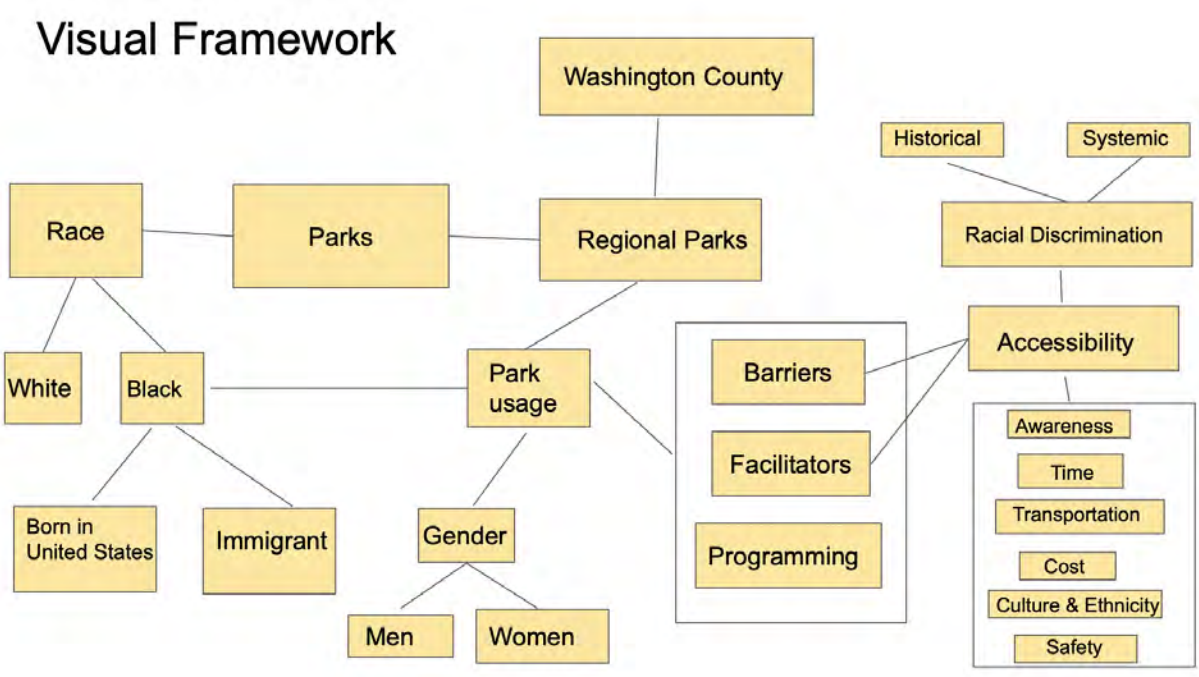
You may also contact our supervisor, Greta Friedemann-Sánchez, with any questions.

Greta Friedemann-Sánchez: frie0013@umn.edu

Statement of Consent

Are you willing to participate in this study?

Appendix 5: Visual Framework



Appendix 6: Atlas Codebook

Code Groups:

Barriers

Definition: A circumstance or obstacle that keeps people from utilizing parks.

Ex: Transportation, Time, Safety, Awareness, Cost, and Culture/Race/Ethnicity

****Barrier Sub-Group Definitions****

- **Transportation**
 - *Definition:* Depicts what kind of transportation the participants use, and instances in which transportation was a factor in park use.
- **Time**
 - *Definition:* Displays instances where time was a factor in park use. Could include a participant's reference in time of day, or analyze why time is an issue for park use.
- **Safety**
 - *Definition:* Describes a participant's thoughts towards safety concerns. Could include a discussion of what makes participants feel safe and unsafe in parks.
- **Awareness**
 - *Definition:* Describes a participant's sense of awareness within parks.
- **Cost**
 - *Definition:* Describes instances where cost was a factor in the participant's park usage. Includes discussions of costs pertaining to recreational activities and parking.

Washington County Parks

Definition: Parks that are of the responsibility of the Washington County Parks Division, and that have been used by the participants of this study.

Ex: Lake Elmo, Big Marine Park Reserve, St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park, ect.

****Washington County Parks Sub-Groups****

- **Big Marine Park Reserve**
 - *Definition:* Indicates that a participant has either used or heard of this park.
- **Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park**
 - *Definition:* Indicates that a participant has either used or heard of this park.
- **Hardwood Creek Regional Trail**
 - *Definition:* Indicates that a participant has either used or heard of this park.
- **Lake Elmo Park Reserve**
 - *Definition:* Indicates that a participant has either used or heard of this park.
- **Pine Point Regional Park**
 - *Definition:* Indicates that a participant has either used or heard of this park.

- **Point Douglas Park**
 - *Definition:* Indicates that a participant has either used or heard of this park.
- **Point Douglas Regional Trail**
 - *Definition:* Indicates that a participant has either used or heard of this park.
- **St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park**
 - *Definition:* Indicates that a participant has either used or heard of this park.
- **Square Lake Park**
 - *Definition:* Indicates that a participant has either used or heard of this park.

Parks

Definition: The concept of what parks contain. *Ex: Trails, parking, animals, programming, and facilitators*

****Parks Sub-Group Definitions****

- **Features**
 - *Definition:* Describes elements that a park usually has such as trails, natural water, and rocks. Indicates discussions based on the features previously mentioned.
- **Parking**
 - *Definition:* Identifies discussions with participants regarding parking in Washington County parks.
- **Animals**
 - *Definition:* Identifies discussions in regard to the participant's opinion of animals or any encounters they may have had with animals.
- **Programming**
 - *Definition:* Describes the participants' experience with Washington County park programming, as well as, what programming they would like to see in the future.
- **Facilitators**
 - *Definition:* Identifies discussions where participants discuss facilitators in Washington County parks.

Advice for Washington County

Definition: Indicates recommendations from the participants of this study for the Washington County Parks Division in regard to BIPOC park improvement.

Great Quote

Definition: Indicates a quote from a participant that is very useful in this research study.

Future Research

Definition: Indicates a point of interest that could be a focus of future research projects