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# Health Equity Through Spatial Justice: A Critical Phenomenology of Urban Trail Makers

Arvin Simon

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HEALTH EQUITY THROUGH SPATIAL JUSTICE:  
A CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF URBAN TRAIL MAKERS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Arvin Simon

December 2018

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Arvin Simon

2018

HEALTH EQUITY THROUGH SPATIAL JUSTICE:  
A CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF URBAN TRAIL MAKERS

By

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Approved May 10, 2018

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## ABSTRACT

### HEALTH EQUITY THROUGH SPATIAL JUSTICE: A CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF URBAN TRAIL MAKERS

By

Arvin Simon

December 2018

Dissertation supervised by Eva-Maria Simms, Ph.D.

Research has increasingly demonstrated that race, class and place are powerful predictors of health and social justice. This study was conducted to identify the lived experiences of individuals who were hired and trained as part of a green job program that created trails within a city park in Pittsburgh's Mount Washington Community. This program has historically hired individuals who were formerly incarcerated, many of whom identify as African American. We explored the personal and social experiences of working in nature to better appreciate the intersections of race, class and environment in an urban community. This current study is based on a four-month ethnography exploring the relationships between nature, work and identity in a field setting. In addition to ethnographic observations, data was acquired through individual interviews with program participants (n=5) and staff (n=4). This study uses a phenomenological perspective to understand crew members' lived experiences of nature, work and identity. The

research is contextualized within an extensive literature review in which we adopt a broader, systemic perspective to consider the complex relationships between place, race, class, community and self-identity. Recognizing the need for health care professionals to attend to social/economic/environmental justice, this study will be presented as parts of a clinical picture: Part I, Gathering a History; Part II, Sorting the Data and Part III, Summary and Recommendations.

This study combines the methodologies of phenomenology and critical thematic analysis. It integrates insights and research from philosophy, history, critical race theory, epidemiology, anthropology, and urban studies to explore the matrix of personal, social and cultural interactions between people and places. This work is therefore concerned with how places are stratified or layered according to practices that ascribe privilege to some persons while marginalizing others. In other words, we critically examine the social fabric of American society to understand how health and justice are impacted by place and race. In so doing, we advance the novel concept of a ‘spatial epidermal schema’ to understand how places become racialized and shape our encounters with others.

The data is presented in three separate chapters on the respective themes of nature, work and identity. Our analysis concentrates on a phenomenological exploration of how program participants experienced nature, work and their sense of self and others. A critical thematic analysis of both program participants and staff was also conducted to identify interpretive repertoires that structure relationships between staff, workers and the community. The results demonstrate that individuals are highly attuned to their physical and social environments as well as power structures that shape their roles and identities in relation to each other. This study can be used by community action researchers, program developers and community planners to

understand the therapeutic benefits of nature as well as the developmental trajectory that participants navigate when learning job skills and forming meaningful social connections with others. Furthermore, this study highlights the complexities of identity (particularly being African American) in an urban environment divided by race and social status.

As a commitment to community action research, the findings of this study will also be translated into a textual resource or presentation that can be provided to Mount Washington and other communities for future training and program development towards working within urban green spaces. This research is intended to be read by a lay audience with broad interest in the themes of nature, work and social justice. It may also be used by those who are interested in community development and social solutions to unemployment. Furthermore, this research may be useful to psychological researchers who are interested in critically foregrounding thematic elements (i.e. interpretive repertoires) that structure social relations. It is my hope that this research will also inspire clinicians to consider how social and environmental issues impact health and wellbeing.

*For Sandra and Felix Simon*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Stand still/ The trees ahead and the bushes beside you are not lost./The forest knows where you are./ You must let it find you.

– “Lost” by David Whyte

As Emmanuel Levinas, that incomparable philosopher of ethics, had said of desire, we too can say of gratitude. It can never express itself to satiation. This is because an expression of gratitude [PIE root: *gwerə-*, meaning both “to favor” and also “heavy”] is more than a sentiment or memorial; it is simultaneously a recognition of what is bestowed upon one (i.e. grace) as well as a reckoning with the substantiality (i.e. gravity) of that which one is bestowed. Thus the expression of gratitude is also an *impression*—and the more grateful I am, the deeper in grace I find myself; thus my path is made firmer and I am all the more compelled to venture further. What I mean to say is that a thanks is a necessary way to begin this journey but it can never be enough, there is always more to come.

More of a process than a product—a journey or trail. Without arrival or ending, I find myself here, at another beginning. I would surely be lost were it not for those loved ones, kindred spirits and guardians that have made my path hospitable.

It has been my honor and privilege to work with the Mount Washington Community Development Corporation and the employees that develop and run programs such as the Emerald Trail Corps. A special thanks to Kathryn Hunninen, Thomas Guentner, Shawn Taylor, Laura Bohachyk, and Judith Koch for showing me the ropes and welcoming me into the team with curiosity, generosity and hospitality.

Without doubt, my greatest privilege was in being able to work alongside the 2015 crewmembers of the Emerald Trail Corps. For the better part of that spring and summer, these men were my participants, guides, trail makers, teachers and peers. I came to them as a somewhat shy and quiet outsider and they all made me feel like I had always belonged. From them, I was inspired to develop this research into a much more detailed investigation on the intersectionality of health, race and place. I hope they are all proud of the immense contributions they had accomplished during that year. I have endeavored to present some of their stories here and I hope that those of them who read this will do so with pride. So thank you Shawn (again), Riddles, Mike, Jim, Markus and the others who wished to remain anonymous.

As a scholar, I had the fortune of working with a very gifted committee of people who had immeasurably enhanced this project through their gifts of patience, encouragement, experience and wisdom. I can think of no better readers than Dr. Ilyssa Manspeizer, who brought to this project her attention to details and nuanced experience working with vulnerable communities, and Dr. Derek Hook, who contributed with theoretical knowledge and stressed methodological rigor. But this project would not be possible without Dr. Eva Simms. Her leadership, academic work, nurturing guidance and pioneering community work have enabled scholars such as myself and many, many others to pursue psychological research that interpellates philosophy, environment, and justice. More than this, Eva has given me the gift of self-belief. I can only hope to pay this forward in my future clinical and academic endeavors.

Of course, there were several other faculty members from Duquesne's Psychology Department who also helped me develop into the practitioner-scholar that I needed to be for this project. I am massively grateful to Drs. Leswin Laubscher, Roger Brooke, Will Adams, Jessie Goicoechea, Daniel Burston and Melissa Kalarchian. It is my incredibly good fortune to have

studied at the preeminent department for integrating clinical psychology with continental philosophy and post-structural studies. Duquesne is a place that I am proud and privileged to carry with me, into all the other places of my lifeworld. I must also mention two other people who kept this place running—Marilyn Henline and Linda Pasqualino—who have done so much for me and for scores of students that came before and will come after.

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Outside the department, I worked with several individuals who, in their own ways, have contributed to this project. Firstly my research assistant, Jenna Marsh, did an amazing job going through each interview and coding it for themes. Her work, included in Appendix D added a valuable measure of reliability to my findings. I hope our collaboration has been mutually enriching. Through working at the Center for Teaching Excellence, Drs. Laurel Willingham-McLain, Steve Hansen, and Erin Rentschler instilled in me a deep appreciation for making scholarly ideas teachable and accessible to a multidisciplinary audience. I am also indebted to Dr. Anita Zuberi (Department of Sociology) for her helpful conversations and for pointing me in the right direction when I was looking for big sets of local data on race and environment.

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My gratitude extends deeply to those elders whom I have had the good fortune of meeting and learning from. Living at a time when more than just ideas were on the line, their lives are a testament to the tenacity, resilience and audacity of many others who lost theirs fighting for truth, justice and freedom. Thank you, Dr. Claudia Kregg-Byers, for helping me recognize the central place of community in research. Thank you, Dr. Joyce James and Windy Hill, for teaching me so much more than I had ever imagined learning about racial equity. Your teachings are strongly reflected in these first few chapters. Thank you, Dr. Curtiss Porter, for your seminars to the youth at Boom Concepts. And thanks to you, Dr. Shadrach Moon, a living historian who chronicled the lives of African Americans in Pittsburgh during and after the civil rights era. I so fondly remember our weekly conversations and time we spent looking through the books you had written about Pittsburgh's African Americans and your own genealogy.

I am so blessed to count the following individuals as friends and allies: Joe, Teresa, Julia, Sara, Mario, Dani, Alyssa, Colin, Marywren, Adam, James, Connor, Gunter, David, Lamar and so much more. Thank you for the adventures, community dinners, and painful, painful stair workouts! Thank you Open House PGH for empowering everyday people and giving us the tools to fight for social justice and be better people to each other. Thank you Socialist Pittsburgh for

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The limitations of words to express gratitude are nowhere more apparent than here: Rita, my wife, you have been with me from the first step and I look forward to us making new trails together. It is time. A

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## PART I. GATHERING A HISTORY

## CHAPTER 1. MAKING TRAILS

There are, forever, swamps to be drained, cities to be created, mines to be exploited, children to be fed. None of these things can be done alone. But the conquest of the physical world is not man's only duty. He is also enjoined to conquer the great wilderness of himself. The precise role of the artist, then, is to illuminate that darkness, blaze roads through that vast forest, so that we will not, in all our doing, lose sight of its purpose, which is, after all, to make the world a more human dwelling place.

– James Baldwin, *The Creative Process*

What we need is more people who specialize in the impossible.

– Theodore Roethke

### **On Why This Research Matters To Me**

I<sup>1</sup> (the author) was first compelled to this research because of my fondness for nature and the outdoors. However, I also began to realize the economic and social barriers that prevent

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout parts of this dissertation, the use of the plural, institutional referent, “we”, will be suspended (or used with discretion) in order to foreground the author as an individual with declared personal assumptions and biases. Already, the functional aspects of language become apparent in this research. For behind the “we” is conveyed the legitimacy of an institution (i.e. Duquesne University and the Department of Psychology). Moreover, the “we” functions to absolve the author—me—of personal biases and assumptions; after all, it is the institution that is speaking. Of course, the “we” *does* have its function—that is, to displace the author and foreground more objective facts and histories—and “we” will be deployed when describing the literature and when discussing the conclusions of the study. However, writing from the personal pronoun “I” allows me much greater latitude in discussing my personal history, biases and experiences with this study's participants/stakeholders. It seems highly artificial to speak from the impersonal we, or “the author”, when describing events and processes that I not only witnessed but

many from accessing the resources that I had seemingly taken for granted. These realizations coincided with my learning that on a population scale, physical and mental health was, to a large extent, socially determined. I believe that research in clinical psychology should not only concern itself with treating illness, but also with the conditions that contribute to individual and social wellness. Because health inequities are pandemic we can no longer think of research as simply an academic exercise or clinical supplement—health and justice research should be a priority directly tied to national and economic security. I want to develop research that is local, pedagogical and empowering; I believe that clinical psychology researchers have unique training (in interventions, education and research) and a skillset that allows us to work with individuals, communities and institutions. It is as ‘trail makers’ that psychological researchers can be meaningfully involved in research on health and equity.

As to this study, I believe that the impact of place-making—particularly concerning urban green space—has been largely overlooked in developing public health initiatives. Now that more attention is shifting towards these areas (i.e. in policies, community-based agreements and health impact assessments) we need psychological research on the lived experiences of everyday people who live and work in urban places. This research involves participants in a personal, (and hopefully) empowering way. Too often, participants who are considered vulnerable—or here, doubly vulnerable (i.e. African American and formerly incarcerated)—to unemployment and other social and environmental risk factors are mainly studied in ways that confirm their vulnerability and sense of lack. I hoped to listen and learn from my participants/stakeholders. Though this research fulfills the requirements for a doctoral degree, I

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participated in. Moreover, I have my own personal interests, goals and assumptions which I disclose here in order to foreground or “bracket” (e.g. Fischer, 2006) them so they do not unduly influence the analysis of the data.



hope that my participants can read this and realize—through re-visiting the trails of their stories—that they can be vital change agents in their communities.

### **Introduction**

Mount Washington is a neighborhood in Pittsburgh, PA, USA with a population of approximately 9000 residents (Zuberi, Hopkinson, Gradeck, & Duck, 2015). It is also a mainly White neighborhood (86%) with African Americans making up another 10 percent. Surrounding its 1.2 square miles is the horseshoe-shaped Emerald View Park (Figure 1.1) which, between 2007 and 2016<sup>2</sup>, had been maintained through a co-stewardship between the city of Pittsburgh and the Mount Washington Community Development Corporation (MWCDC). Incorporated in 1990, the MWCDC is a participant-driven community development organization. Its mission is to bring its 13000 residents and business owners from Mount Washington and Duquesne Heights together “to cultivate growth, development and investment towards an even stronger and more livable community” ([www.mwcddc.org](http://www.mwcddc.org)). The MWCDC has committed to working with the community—as both a people and a place—to make Emerald View Park accessible to all residents.

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<sup>2</sup> In 2016 the MWCDC asked the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy to take over the co-stewardship on its behalf.

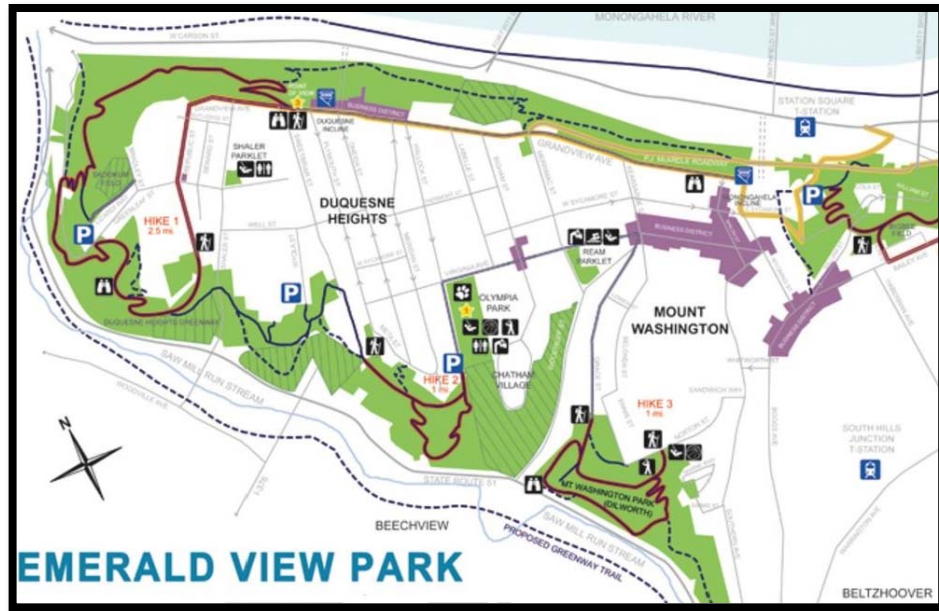


Figure 1.1. Map of Mount Washington's Emerald View Park. (Retrieved from <http://mwcdc.org/park/>)

Recognizing that Mount Washington and its surrounding neighborhoods bear racial disparities in wealth and employment, the MWDC saw habitat restoration and trail building as a means to both develop their park and also strengthen the African American workforce (Manspeizer, 2015). In 2011, through a partnership with the Breaking the Chains of Poverty program of the A. Phillip Randolph Institute, the MWDC created the Emerald Trail Corps (ETC), a ‘green jobs’ training program (Manspeizer, 2013). Since its inception, the ETC hired underemployed and formerly incarcerated individuals who had graduated from the APRI’s ‘green jobs’ training (i.e. maintaining and restoring habitats as well as organic infrastructure) to work in Emerald View Park. In addition to paid job experience, the ETC crew members were also provided with basic vocational training and job seeking opportunities through an employment specialist (called a ‘talent development specialist’). By focusing on increasing public access to the park while developing a disenfranchised workforce, the ETC program can be considered a wellness initiative in its attention to social factors that have a powerful impact on

health and wellbeing. However, there have been no formal evaluations of the program's impact on participants.

In the spring of 2015, I proposed a research project to the MWCDC that would examine the experiences of the ETC crew. This current study is based on a four-month ethnography I completed with the crew—as a participant-observer—to better understand the relationships between nature, work and identity in a field setting. In addition to ethnographic observations, data was acquired through individual interviews with crew members (n=5) and MWCDC staff (n=4). We consider these participants—especially the crew members—to be stakeholders in this research. This study uses a phenomenological perspective to understand crew members' lived experiences of nature, work and identity. The research is contextualized within an extensive literature review in which we adopt a broader, systemic perspective to consider the complex relationships between place, race, class, community and self-identity. Recognizing the need for health care professionals to attend to social/economic/environmental justice, this study will be presented as parts of a clinical picture: Part I, Gathering a History; Part II, Sorting the Data and Part III, Summary and Recommendations.

### **Gathering a History**

Like a clinical case, our work is guided by a referral question. In this case, our research question is: **What is the impact of working in urban green spaces?** Before we can answer this question however, we must gather and interpret social and historical evidence (Nilson, 2016). In these first five chapters, we will review the philosophy, social-historical context and previous programmatic research to better contextualize the focus and methodologies used in the present study. In this sense, we are compiling a multi-part case that we will then look to support with evidence from our own data.

“Our own body is in the world”, said the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964), “as the heart is in the organism” (p. 203). Just as the heart may be congested, overworked, troubled and torn by sudden shocks and chronic stress within the body so too can people react to the conditions of their environment. Yet it is also true that the heart is responsive to the body; together they suffer and together they heal. In Chapter 2, we will review phenomenological research to show how *people are deeply connected to places*, such that any interventions which aim to change individual and social behaviors must also consider the environment as well. Just as bodies can be divided by internal conflict, we argue that *places are marked by spatial and experiential boundaries that confer privileges to some groups over others*. Here, we propose that *places may be inhabited by schemas in a manner similar to the racialized (or gendered) body*. In Chapter 3, we will begin to critically examine race and introduce a local, historical perspective to emphatically show how racialization affects one’s experience of self and ipso facto, one’s places as well. A historical perspective, we argue, is important for two major reasons: 1) *looking at the past often reveals the fuller story of today’s inequities* and 2) *the past often contains narratives (from those who are vulnerable) that are marginalized in our current discourse*. Using our concept of ‘spatial epidermal schemas’ we highlight how pre-thematic perception—which recognizes places as extensions of bodies—may become racialized such that *we are likely to perceive others stereotypically depending on our environment*. We will also begin to look at language, via interpretive repertoires (Wetherell & Potter, 1988), to appreciate how privileges and oppressions become codified and reproduced. Here, we will examine the racialization behind urban renewal and consider how communities of color became deterritorialized (Simms, 2014)—a process we may call ‘uncommoning’—in a similar manner to which (Black) bodies become dispossessed from themselves. Recognizing the deep and scarring legacy of racialization—specifically the process of producing Whiteness and Blackness—we frame efforts towards

redress as *reparations*. In Chapter 4 we introduce our ethical framework, *which is based on systemically eliminating health inequities and spatial injustices*. We use the concept of *spatial justice* (Soja, 2009, 2010, 2011) to analyze the impact that social and geographic processes have on our supposedly universal rights to inhabit a given place. Looking at epidemiological data across national, county and municipal levels we shall see how *spatial segregation has engendered racial disparities in health and wellbeing*. We close out the chapter by considering the differences between equality and equity; we argue that equity is only achieved through systemically addressing privilege and reducing racial disparities. We will then examine reparations strategies, which are designed to fix broken systems. Finally, Chapter 5 explores the impact of urban green spaces on community health and wellbeing. We will discuss how such *green spaces may be developed into hubs of life and activity or, alternatively, used as a geospatial barrier to segregate communities*. Using a historical analysis, we consider how assumptions and discourses around nature are significantly racialized and signify the worldviews of communities that are divided by privileges and history. Striving towards justice, we will discuss the importance of attending to nature spaces in communities of color, particularly by re-territorializing such places within the intentional domain of the community. Following a selective review of green jobs programs, including the ETC, we will be better able to understand the impact of this program.

### **Sorting the Data**

After introducing the conceptual tools needed for our analysis, we will look at our own study's data. Presenting this data is a form of case history, in the sense that we are connecting our participants' experiences within a social and historical milieu in order to make recommendations for spatial justice and health equity. By using highly interpretive methods, one may argue that our analysis is self-confirming; however, much like the clinical interpretive

method, creating narratives from experience may be helpful, hopeful and—to the extent that they are close to our participants’ actual experiences—true (Schafer, 1983). Part II of this dissertation begins with Chapter 6; here, we will review the methodology and procedures that were used in the ethnographic fieldwork, interviews and analysis of our data. In Chapters 7 through 9, we will present our data, with chapters respectively devoted to the themes of nature, work and identity. Like any good narrative, these chapters foreground our participant/stakeholders’ voices (i.e. the ETC crew members and staff) in order to decentralize our researcher/academic perspective.

This study attempts to *negotiate an ambivalent space between a systemic framework and a phenomenological narrative*. A systemic framework is necessary in order to make sense of the epidemiological data, social determinants of health and cultural discourses that are embedded in history and place. To this end we will use a critical thematic analysis to understand how language is used to reinforce or challenge relations of power and privilege. These relations may refer to those between participant/stakeholder groups (e.g. crew members and staff) or within the broader society. However, we also want to especially attend to the agency and meaning-making capacities of our crew members, who represent often marginalized groups. Therefore, we use a phenomenological method to describe the complexity, meaning-making and agency that emerges from their personal experiences of making trails. Through analyzing our participants’ lived experiences and patterns of language, we *hope to illustrate important relationships between place, community, race and self*. This study contributes in three main ways by: (1) developing a *local-participatory* model of research that meaningfully involves stakeholders within the community, thus strengthening the alliance between academia and community programs (2) stimulating *pedagogical* investigations in how we think about place, history, community, race, language and their connections with health and wellbeing and (3) *empowering* stakeholders,

particularly those who have been marginalized, by privileging their agency and meaning-making in the analysis and presentation of our findings.

This study is a clinical study, insofar as it hopes to enlarge our perspective on how we conceptualize health. But it is also a project in social justice; by calling attention to spatial injustices and health inequities we are enabling our community stakeholders to design programs that are more equitable and just. Our far-ranging ambitions do not make for easy reading. In fact, the reader is asked to doggedly critique his/her own personal and cultural assumptions around place, language, race, community, and self so as to better recognize how one's frame of reference discloses a world-historical narrative that may reproduce spatial (in)justice and health (in)equity. However, such a call cannot be conscionably requested unless I, as researcher, am also willing to disclose my own intellectual viewpoint, history and world-context which shapes the case that is presented and the evidence gathered (Finney, 2014).

### **Summary and Recommendations**

A summary is sometimes understood as a hermetically-closed statement of self-evident conclusions. Like diagnoses, conclusions in health research are often read with the weight of authority and consensus. Yet in social science research, stolid positions are usually folly—and worse—potentially harmful for those we serve. Therefore, we offer our conclusions as a *verdict* [Latin: *ver*, “true” + *dit* “to say”]<sup>3</sup> in its literal sense. We will speak our truth, which is based on our own experiences, privileges and values. In fact, there is no purely empirically research that does not disclose the researcher/clinician's frame of references as well as biases and limitations.

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout this study we will refer to the etymology of commonly used words. In so doing, we are attempting to honor the trails by which our registers of meaning have travelled. Note: all word origins will be cross-referenced from [www.etymologyonline.com](http://www.etymologyonline.com)

While our perspectives may contaminate the findings, they are also the dirt—or living soil—which infuses the research with direction, passion, and conviction. Quite simply, it is the ground from which the trails between stakeholders are paved. So let us start from my (the author's) beginning:

I was born in Seremban, Malaysia, the son of a biologist and family physician. From what I remember of my early childhood, we were surrounded by verdant forest. I also recall the fumes of gasoline and burning rubber trees as cars became ubiquitous in our small city. My family soon emigrated to Canada and settled in a mid-sized city in northern Alberta. We would often go out on weekend camping trips and many of my childhood summers were spent exploring lakes, mountains and trails. Even at that young age, I was bothered by two observations. First, our family was often the only non-White family in the wilderness. As a child, I sometimes felt embarrassed by our lack of representation—as if we did not belong there, that this was somehow White space. Second, nature was largely invisible in the city. Sure there were fields and trees (we had nearly 20 trees on our own property), but these were mainly manicured parts of a suburban roadscape. After earning my master's degree in psychology, I worked in a not-for-profit counseling clinic for four years. There were large disparities in the treatment population compared to those who would be seen in private practice and predictable differences in income: the patients on a sliding scale were often uninsured and qualified to receive social services (i.e. welfare). But there were also geographic differences as well; most lower income folks lived within the city with relatively few commuting from the suburbs. There were also a relatively higher proportion of patients who ethnically identified as First Nations or indigenous peoples. This population has been highly segregated in Canada and are still largely confined to off-city reserves or dilapidated, inner-city neighborhoods. Their culture, which is highly attuned to nature and the environment, has barely survived due to decades of cultural genocide in the



forms of residential schooling and colonial treaties which robbed them of their lands and ways of life (TRCC, 2015). Because these peoples were disadvantaged historically, cultural, economically and spatially they often suffered poorer outcomes in education, health and criminal justice. At the clinic, like many other social service agencies, there existed both implicit and explicit biases against this population. Although treatment providers recognized a connection between one's lived places and one's status as either privileged or marginalized, few saw it as a priority to investigate further.

Since beginning my doctoral studies at Duquesne, I have been interested in how nature could be used to promote healing. I became more involved in urban environmental issues (particularly urban community farming) but sensed a familiar feeling of exclusion that goes back to my childhood camping days: where were all the people of color? Often, I was the only non-White person volunteering on the nearby community farm. Interestingly, the farm itself is located in a predominately Black neighborhood. Today, the farm is completely enclosed by 12-foot tall wooden fencing—which I helped build. The rationale for the wall was “to keep the deer out”; however, it likely functioned as a deterrent to what the farm staff have perceived as a problem of theft and crime in the neighborhood. Unfortunately, the community leaders were not consulted about these problems. As a result, community residents now encounter a 12-foot high fence around space that they were once free to walk through—space that is owned and occupied by people who are not their neighbors. Learning more about Pittsburgh's largely Black and White demographic and America's own history of segregation, I quickly noticed parallels between African Americans and the First Nations peoples of Canada (of course, there are also important differences). Yet this realization induced a shift in me such that I could no longer think of environmentalism as some abstract issue or worse, a concern for only the White, educated, middle-class. I started to research connections between environmental investment and health

promotion and recovery, as the correlation seemed strong. I realized that environmentalism was a necessary aspect of health science and—because of spatial segregation—was also a matter of social justice. But something was still missing from my awareness. This ‘something’ germinated as a seed within me after the following episode, which took place in 2013:

*I was in the Kingsley Center in Larimer attending a presentation on community gardening. The presenters were African American but the room was mostly White. The audience, including myself, was very receptive to their presentation. However, in the back, one elderly African American gentleman remained silent. After the presentation, during the Q & A, he finally voiced his concerns. I cannot recall exactly what he said but it was somewhat along the lines of: “We can’t think about tomatoes and potatoes; we’ve got more pressing needs at hand...” Sitting back, I felt my judgment creep in. “How could he?” I thought, “Doesn’t this man understand that gardens benefit everyone, and furthermore, are good for the environment?”*

Luckily for me, I chose to keep my opinions to myself. The man, obviously a respected elder in the community, was given his proper acknowledgment by the presenters. They realized what I only vaguely understood at that time; as an elder, this man cared more deeply about his own community than I ever could and he was voicing a legitimate concern<sup>4</sup> about how his community would benefit from what might be yet another program funded by external stakeholders. Years later, I came to appreciate that this man might have witnessed such programs

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<sup>4</sup> Another complicating but important factor concerns community representation (Manspeizer, personal communication). Attention must be given to how certain voices (e.g. respected elders) accrue privileged over other voices to speak on behalf of the community. Even if these doubly-marginalized voices are indeed heard, how do researchers and developers ascertain the value of these various perspectives?

come and go, as the funding dried up, so too went the services and the community was left no better off—often worse, for the disappointment and loss—than it was before.

Larimer is a small community in East Pittsburgh with a population of about 1700. Like many neighborhoods in the area, Larimer—named after the railway magnate William Larimer—was a relatively affluent area settled by the Italians, who also populated the nearby Bloomfield (DCPP, 1974). However, all that changed in the 1960s following urban renewal. ‘Urban renewal’ is a term commonly understood to refer to the massive redevelopment of urban infrastructure nationwide, however for many people of color—particularly African Americans—it also signified a time when Whites largely abandoned the inner-city to move to the suburbs. This resulted in entire neighborhoods either being neglected by the city and left to ruin or destroyed to make way for larger infrastructure projects like arenas and highways. During this time, African American families—newly mobilized following the Civil Rights Act, which ended formal segregation—moved into other parts of the city, including Larimer, seeking to better their residential conditions. Whites, fearing their property values would decline, took advantage of their own newfound mobility (courtesy of the Highway Expansion Act and the mass production of automobiles) and fled for the suburbs. As Larimer became progressively darker, it also became more neglected. Today, Larimer is mostly African American (85.8%); the community also suffers significantly higher rates of crime, infant mortality, land and housing vacancy, and tax delinquency compared to the rest of the city (Zuberi et al., 2015). This phenomenon, repeated across many cities, neighborhoods and places has been often misdiagnosed using an individualistic discourse of pathology. Too often, we are told that communities of color are to blame for their conditions and residents are described as ‘lazy’ ‘irresponsible’ or ‘criminal’, etc. Whether we consider these characteristics—which are now almost universally used to define Black communities—inherent (i.e. genetic) or due to social and cultural processes, such

discourse frames the issue as individuals making poor choices. This ‘pathology’ discourse may result from our individualistic bias, the fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977), by which we concentrate on internal factors (i.e. character, ability, motivation) when explaining the behavior of Others, instead of environmental or historical determinants, which are often far better predictors of variations in social behaviors. Health practitioners mainly operate from a pathology discourse in thinking that communities of color somehow bring about poor outcomes by engaging in unhealthy behaviors and are likely to conceptualize the community’s general mistrust of the system as paranoia or non-compliance. Like my encounter in Larimer, we—as a socially and educationally privileged group—are too ready to assign blame to Others for not conforming to our worldview without first trying to understand their perspectives. Unfortunately, the pathology discourse ignores two major factors: the overwhelming power of systems to shape housing, health, education, and crime outcomes and the capacity of communities to empower individuals and shape institutions. That gentleman in Larimer taught me that researchers and practitioners must make a concerted effort to engage the community—especially its elders and spokespeople—as the community is an important gatekeeper between the residents and broader institutions, many of whom have perpetuated harm despite their best intentions. This reflexive process, which I have outlined here, will be revisited throughout the study.

During my graduate training years, I worked with Dr. Eva Simms in a qualitative research group, PlaceLab, which explored the intersections between place and community. This lab had given me opportunities to participate in the conceptualization, planning and evaluation of several research projects. Through PlaceLab, my understanding of communities has shifted from seeing them merely as a geographic agglomeration of people to recognizing how they are key agents of change that can crucially inform researchers and policy developers and also uniquely empower residents. It is not enough for researchers to approach the community and demand or

expect their participation. Such positions might even be considered self-serving and extractive, unwittingly perpetuating the very oppression and marginalization that one hopes to address. One must approach the community with great tact, meeting with key leaders and explaining how the research will directly benefit their people *and their places*. Practically, this means that the research question should be developed through dialogue with key stakeholders in the community. Furthermore, it helps to know the history of the community including the positive institutions that have functioned—or continue to function—from within. Such institutions can and should be approached as key stakeholders in the research. Ultimately, communities should achieve some degree of self-sufficiency as a result of external research and interventions—otherwise, we are enforcing dependencies.

In Chapter 10, Part III of our study, we will summarize our findings and, in Chapter 11, integrate the results from Part I and Part II. Bringing together phenomenology, critical race theory, spatial justice, epidemiology and local history makes for ‘dirty pedagogy’. Nevertheless, researchers bear the responsibility for paving this dirt into a narrative that is compelling, meaningful and empowering on behalf of all stakeholders. Trail making can function as a metaphor by which we discuss our participants’ lived experiences of nature, work and identity. To this end, the ETC crew members deserve special recognition as they modeled for the researcher a living process of translating plans of action into usable paths that people can use and enjoy for years to come. The aims of our praxis, which a) values local knowledge and history, b) is pedagogical and c) empowers stakeholders to take cooperative action in their communities, will serve as our flag lines from which we attempt to make serviceable trails for the reader. But flag lines are simply conceptual plans that must be connected through a process that requires knowledge, self-awareness, action and a vision of how this fits into the greater picture. We will do our best to catalyze this process.

This study is intended for a broad audience that includes community developers, policy planners, academics, health workers and, of course, concerned citizens who are working to improve their communities. As a project that strives to be inclusive of different groups, we try to communicate in a manner that is personal, accessible and credible. Where possible, we have cited previous research to validate our interpretations and used data to back up our verdict/truth-sayings. However, given the complex connections between the topics we are studying, the broad audience we are speaking to and the need to write across a variety of disciplines using different methodologies, both the researcher and reader must embrace layers of interpretation, which are often ambiguous and even contradictory.

Just as we critique power relationships and historical narratives, we are also aware of our slippery position as the final authorial and interpretive voice. Accordingly, we should be concerned with the production of what philosophers call the “gaze”, which is a cultural process of identity production through which we come to recognize and/or disown certain aspects of ourselves within others. Psychological discourses tend to reflect the White, Western, male, and economically privileged gaze (E. E. Sampson, 1993). Our gaze as critical researchers is necessarily complicated by concerns about the impact of social representation, particularly of our participant/stakeholders. Nevertheless, we hope to present our participants’ voices around nature, work and identity in a manner that is respectful and true to their experiences. However, it is impossible to include everything or to speak for everyone. Just as we ask the reader to witness his/her own biases, we will also disclose the limitations of this research. One of the important lessons learned from observing the crew members was their ability to honor the diverse visions of all stakeholders (i.e. engineers, park users, peers and staff) to create trails that most would be happy with. This was a complicated and often frustrating endeavor. Nevertheless, it is very important that we speak to a diverse audience and bring different stakeholders into conversation

with each other. Social change, after all, is rarely the result of individual choices but is usually achieved when groups of people meet and agree to change the *context* in which we make our individual choices. In working towards our goal of changing the context to favor equitable access to safe, healthy green spaces and develop community resilience, our hope is that each reader will bring his/her own vision to meet the complexities, ambiguities and contradictions of this research and forge new paths and partnerships. In other words, this study is not so much *on* trail making as it is about *making* trails.

### **Making Trails: A Wandering Commitment**

The existential phenomenologist Martin Heidegger (1994) once asserted that wonder was the basic attitude of philosophical inquiry. Heidegger employed a metaphorical register of forests and paths, trails and clearings to describe our capacity for wonder (de la Durantaye, 2007, Spring). Van Manen (2007) then observed that wonder was not simply pathos, or an emotional openness to the world but rather a disposition, which as such, has a “dis-positional effect: it dislocates and displaces us” (p. 37). To wonder, van Manen claimed, is to *wander*. Yet most of us know the perils of wandering: we may forget our way<sup>5</sup>. Whether as a cause or consequence of forgetting, our mainstream political discourses are paved along the path of this nation’s imperialistic and genocidal history; moreover they enact power relations that issue from historically Western dichotomies of humans over nature, self over community and White over non-White. This erasure of our collective being is also funded by the Western projection of the self as a construct that is neither tethered to body nor place.

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<sup>5</sup> Heidegger himself had been excoriated for his collaboration and sympathies with the Nazi party (Moran, 2000). Scholars continue to debate whether his political views are essential, antithetical or indifferent to his philosophy.

As phenomenologists, we are committed to re-member; that is to reconnect to the paths that are habitually unexplored. To do so however means that we must again wonder and wander away from our taken-for-granted ideas and assumptions. In so doing, we may discover connections between humans and nature, self and other and what we recognize as the Same with what we do not recognize, as Other. This experience may be exciting or even liberating, yet it may also be terrifying. For the experience of wandering, said Minh-Ha (1994), may also be a “process whereby the self loses its fixed boundaries” (p. 23). The wonderer/wanderer suffers displacement from the familiar. This reading may be difficult for some, especially those who identify as having racial and class privileges. But it is our hope that as one experiences displacement, one may also adopt new understandings of self and place-making. In wandering, the boundaries of self may simultaneously expand to transcend the dualisms that perpetrate the race/gender/class borders that stratify our places.

Finally, we must acknowledge that creating trails is by no means straightforward. It is often guided by intuition, experience and aesthetics. By aesthetic [Greek: *aisthetikos*, “to perceive” derived from Proto-Indo-European: *awis-dh-yo-*, “to feel”] we mean a quality of sensory immersion that leads to direction or invocation. Being on the trail is a fully sensory experience requiring that our eyes, feet, ears tune into cues which direct us through the wilderness. In making trails, one tries to guide the reader/wanderer but more importantly, involve him/her in a fully immersive experience by which he/she is engaged viscerally, intellectually, imaginally and empathically.



## CHAPTER 2. BEING AND PLACE

We are always inhabiting place<sup>6</sup>. These places may be physical or virtual, empirical or imagined, shared or private. However places are not merely vessels which support human activities; there is a mutual recognition and transaction always occurring between beings and places. Through our habits and dwellings we give life to places, yet places inform the very ways we inhabit the world (Casey, 1993, 2001; Relph, 1976). We can say therefore that as beings, we reside within places, but places also reside within us. Our lived experience is a history or narrative of place-being interactions unfolded through time. As we move through space, we bring our old, lived places into conversation with our new ones. Ontologically speaking, place refers to both an empirical reality as well as a psychic landscape wherein one's own subjectivity and historicity are situated. These phenomenological insights allow us to rethink the relationship between self and place, as well as appreciate the importance of historicity in place-making.

Seamon (2014) has recently argued that place can be understood from holistic, dialectic and generative perspectives. The *holistic* view, which we have stated, assumes that our sense of being and the world we inhabit, produce, or co-constitute, one another. From this perspective we can speak of place as an experiential field that unifies body, self and world. *Dialectic* refers to the experiential continuums along which places are situated. For example, places may manifest inward and/or outward aspects (Seamon, 2013, 2014). A nun's cloister, for instance, can be described as inward because this space closes upon itself while separating the person within from the outside world. The highway, by contrast, is outward in that it bears itself entirely to the outside world (Simms, personal communication). Along this inward/outward continuum, we also

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<sup>6</sup> The term 'place' is itself polyvalent and, for the purposes of our discussion, used somewhat interchangeably with 'space'. See Casey (2012) for a discussion on the philosophical nuances in the meanings of place and space.

observe how beings are either in place, out of place or between places. When we feel “in place”, we experience homeliness, belonging and security. When we are “out of place”, we might experience alienation, longing (for home), and vulnerability. In-between places, we may sense ourselves and/or the world as transient, ephemeral and changing. It is useful therefore to consider the boundaries and markers that define our positionality with respect to place. Thinking about boundaries also helps us appreciate how one’s identity may reveal or conceal possibilities for experiencing place. Places may furnish not only a strong sense of individual identity but also one of community as well (Low, 2009). The *generative* perspective considers the social, historical and evolving interactions that define the particular nature of places. Though it is beyond the scope of this study to survey the impact of urbanization and globalization on place-making, we shall explore how places develop an autobiographical and socio-cultural identity—like bodies—which defines it and its people within. In Chapter 3, we will examine certain spatial identities and consider their impact on the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

### **Place and the Body-Self-World**

As a philosophical method, phenomenology attempts to reconcile our traditional, Western dichotomies (i.e. between mind and body, subject and object) through describing the broader structures of perception and experience (Moran, 2000). Phenomenologists consider place to include not only the landscape and geography but also the social transactions and cultural milieu that gives meaning to our experiences within a given spatial environment. Though we speak of bodies, selves and the environment in categorically distinct terms, our experience is first given to us as a unity of body-self-world. This does not mean that body, self and world are reducible to one another; rather they are united in the situation of place and from this unity emerges a rich and complex experience of place (Seamon, 2014). That is to say, our subjective experience is

often described as emergent intentions, routines and meaningful interactions which are produced through being embodied in a world. Phenomenologists today largely draw from the work of the French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1967), to describe this unity of body-self-world:

In so far as, when I reflect on the essence of subjectivity, I find it bound up with that of the body and that of the world, this is because my existence as subjectivity is merely one with my existence as a body and with the existence of the world, and because the subject that I am, when taken concretely, is inseparable from this body and this world. The ontological world and body which we find at the core of the subject are not the world or body as idea, but on the one hand the world itself contracted into a comprehensive grasp, and on the other the body itself as a knowing-body. (Merleau-Ponty, 1967, p. 475)

What Merleau-Ponty called the *body-subject* is the unity of body, self and world—not simply a concept but our very mode of having experiences. It is through the sensate body that one can know the world and it is through being in a world that one’s body is disclosed to self. Merleau-Ponty arrived at these insights through a methodology that relied upon experience and perception—rather than theories—to understand the data. According to him, we do not experience our bodies in the way they are commonly represented, as things in space; rather, our bodies bring the world to us in a certain way; they are expressions of the greater lifeworld. Simms (2010) illustrated this body-self-world relation through the case of a neglected child who was confined within her crib. Unable to move freely and explore outside, the child’s body adapted to her restricted world. In this sensory-restricted environment, the child could perceive the world and herself only through the limited ways in which she was able to use her body (e.g. rocking, waving her fingers before her eyes). This case demonstrates how our ability to use our bodies to interact with the world crucially informs how we come to know ourselves. This

understanding becomes important when the spaces we live in either facilitate or impede movement. Later on, we shall also see how places acquire identities which influence how we perceive people dwelling within.

Within our earliest places of development are formed what Bachelard (1964) called “the topography of our intimate being” (p. xxxvi). The spaces we inhabit<sup>7</sup>—especially those we call our homes or communities—exist in us as much as we exist in them. Bachelard uses sensory descriptions to illustrate how everyday household items and places interact with the body to disclose certain moods, memories, desires and attachments. The cellar, he writes, by virtue of being small, dark and housed beneath our living space is a place that holds “a mute tumult of memories” (p. 79). In small spaces, one may experience feelings of imprisonment while being in unsheltered, open spaces may leave one feeling vulnerable and exposed. In making these associations, Bachelard is not being prescriptive or reductive but he does invite us to consider how our lived history, bodily comportment, and environment all converge in an experiential narrative. Jager (1985) argued that our body schemas also inform the designs of places such as buildings and even communities. Tracing the history of the body and its representations through time, Jager claimed that we are living in an age of ‘anatomical man’ (i.e. the body is understood to be a complicated machine of interacting parts). This schema also informed current architecture and urban planning such that our dwellings (e.g. apartments, hospitals and universities) came to resemble surgical wards, which itself resembles an anatomical body as a structure that can be isolated or divided into ever smaller component parts. Romanyshyn (1989) then demonstrated how our cultural mode of perceiving space (as linear) historically converged with our perception

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<sup>7</sup> Edward Casey (1993, 2001) reminds us that the word inhabit is derived from the Latin *habére*, meaning “to have” or hold. His point is that we do not merely exist within places but we have or hold them within us.

of the body (as anatomical). As technologies increasingly govern our public and private lives (Deppen, 2017, January 12), a spatial justice perspective is needed to understand how they shape our sense of self, body and world. We will learn more about this perspective in the next chapter, but we must look at history and discourse, which together with place, critically shapes power and privilege (Foucault, 1977).

### **Place as a Gathering of History; Analyzing Power and Privilege**

“[W]hat we call history”, the poet and civil-rights activist James Baldwin once declared, “is perhaps a way of avoiding responsibility for what has happened, is happening, in time” (Baldwin & Mead, 1971, p. 177). Through Baldwin, we recall Heidegger’s (1962) concept of *thrownness* [geworfenheit]—namely, that we always find ourselves within (or thrown into) a particular social, historical and cultural world. In our everyday, habitual way of being, we experience the present moment with a certain naivete, accepting things as they are. But the present is always situated within a temporality that contains the past and future. The future is the horizon, which the present moves towards, its path only vaguely illuminated by intention, expectation and desire; the past is the living roots which the present grows out of. Dwelling within a place, it is easy to forget or dismiss its historicity and accept that things are as they were and will continue to be. Yet places, as we have claimed, exert a continuous influence on the body and sense of self. As we shall see, places are also powerful determinants of health and wellbeing. To understand and improve the quality of our lived places, we argue that clinicians and scholars must attend to their historical narratives. These communal accounts are especially important when attending to poor and neglected urban neighborhoods. The city of Pittsburgh, where our study takes place, is like many American cities in that its neighborhoods are highly unequal in measures of health and wealth due to a history of segregation, deindustrialization, gentrification

and displacement of local populations (Glasco, 2004; Smith, 1990). To dismiss this history is to disavow the ways that certain individuals and communities continue to disproportionately benefit (or be burdened) by its effects in the present. Both Baldwin and Heidegger affirmed that we can and must recognize our temporal condition in order to act responsibly. In the next chapter, we will look at some of these historical conditions that divide places. We will also examine how discourses (i.e. linguistic communications) reproduce not only schemas but relations of power and privilege. The ways in which we think, speak and act not only frame our experiences but these frames also express social and cultural assumptions about people and places. Studying these discourses may help us better understand how place informs our sense of self and others.

### **Other Bodies**

After Hegel (1949), Merleau-Ponty (1967) concluded that the self comes to know itself as a presence through the manifestation of an Other self. This event is actually an important developmental milestone; it is through the responsive gestures and words of the (m)other or caretaker that a child forms an idea of herself as an individual. Accomplishing this, the child also begins to acknowledge the perspectival nature of the world as well as the limits of her own knowledge and ability to act upon the world and others. Self-recognition continually takes place thereafter, particularly when the child is aware of being observed by others. Merleau-Ponty characterized these moments of self-presentation as *depresentation* [entgegenwärtigung], observing that being gazed at by another person “throws me outside myself” (p. 423). This condition posed a challenge to philosophers committed to a *transcendental cogito* (i.e. a consciousness fully present to itself). Unfortunately, Merleau-Ponty failed to investigate this condition further (notwithstanding his analysis of physical or neurological abnormalities). Instead, the task fell upon feminist and race scholars, whose female and colored bodies could

never completely recede from the gaze of others in public space (Ahmed, 2007; Du Bois, 1984; Fanon, 2008; Spain, 1992; I. M. Young, 1980, 2009).

Applying Merleau-Ponty's (1967) philosophy of the body-subject to female bodies, I. M. Young (1980) argued against the prevailing discourse, which assumed that females were anatomically weak, kinesthetically inept and fragile. Instead, Young described how girls are socialized at an early age to comport their bodies very differently than boys. This socialization process influences both how girls' bodies take up space and how their bodies are perceived by others. For Young, the female body is prevented from being completely at home with itself, due to this socialization process which constricts actionable space. Similarly, the Martinique-born psychiatrist, Frantz Fanon (2008), wrote of his Black body being "assailed at various points" by the White gaze. In his own account of derepresentation, Fanon observed, "[my] corporeal schema had crumbled, its place taken by a *racial epidermal schema*...it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person...I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors" (p. 84, emphasis added). Fanon described these racialization experiences in psychiatric terms, writing of his "corporeal malediction" (ibid.); a visceral distress due to his body being continually noticed and (re)presented back to him in its strange, unfamiliar "blackness". Subject to the other's gaze, Fanon's body was rendered before him as an object, specifically an effigy of Blackness, a skin upon which his life history was written into a narrative of "tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and... "Sho' good eatin'"" (p. 85). Fanon's own body was made visible to him as an Other and, consequently, his body was deprived of the "ontological resistance" to define itself on its own terms. Instead, his body was defined in relation to what it was not (i.e. a White body).

Though scholars have increasingly attended to these racial or gendered schemas, we need more studies on how space and the lived environment impacts this schematization process (Spain, 1992). Such investigations may uniquely contribute to our understanding of environmental inequities and the resulting social, economic and health burdens that particularly affect women and communities of color. Recognizing the importance of social action theories, Merleau-Ponty (1968) began to rework his earlier philosophy to explore relationships between the self, world and others. From this work, we have metaphors through which we can think about the dynamics of space, others and language coming together to construct our experience of the world.

### **Depth, The World of Flesh and Skin**

What did Merleau-Ponty (1968) mean when he claimed that one exists as a “carnal being, as a being of depths” (p. 136)? Notice that he draws our attention to the sensual richness of depth because for him depth is the dimension that enfolds all. “To put it precisely,” he stated, “...time and space extend beyond the visible present, and at the same time they are *behind* it, in depth, in hiding” (1968, p. 113). In other words, there is continuity between things we observe in our perceptual field and things we do not, which are nonetheless still there but concealed in depth. These things may be out of sensory range—as the backside of opaque objects—or, as Baldwin would note, on the other side of present time, in the past and future. From his own account of depth, Abram (1997) wrote, “I am, in my depths...as my sadness is indistinguishable from a certain heaviness of my bodily limbs, or as my delight is only artificially separable from the widening of my eyes, from the bounce in my step and the heightened sensitivity of my skin” (1997, p. 46). Abram is claiming here that his mood is not just a private experience but rather “draws its sustenance and very substance” (ibid.) from his body’s situatedness in the world.



Through the dimension of depth, we may also experience certain things (or possibilities) as nearer and others as farther away. Depth, Abram (2011) explained, is the “dimension of closeness and distance...the continuum, or glide, between the known and the unknown” (pp. 65/66). It is the field through which things reveal themselves or hide away. In other words, depth both reveals and conceals possibilities for being. As our sense of self is ultimately rooted within the depths of places, we are concerned with the possibilities that places reveal and conceal.

Using the metaphor of *flesh*, Merleau-Ponty (1968) moves towards an ontology in which body, world and others are ‘coiled’ up together in a field composed of layers of visible and invisible depth. The things one may sense and perceive, including other beings and places, Merleau-Ponty (1968) called the ‘visible’. He described the visible as, “a quality pregnant with texture, the surface of a depth, a cross section upon a massive being, a grain or corpuscle borne by a wave of Being” (p. 136). This wave of Being is the flesh through which one’s self—as a being that is both sensate and sensible (i.e. capable of being sensed)—is coiled up or intertwined with the sensible world to such a degree as to be “fundamentally homogenous with [it]; he feels that he is the sensible itself coming to itself and that in return the sensible is in his eyes as it were his double or an extension of his own flesh” (p. 114). In other words, things, people and places do not exist independently; the nature of our perceptual experience reveals a fundamental contiguity between ourselves, others, and the world.

Simms (2008a) adapted Merleau-Ponty’s schematic of flesh to the sensory-immersive field in which infants and children dwell. Skin, she observes, is the preeminent perceptual organ, through which all other sense organs are derived. Skin therefore forms the field of perception; it is through skin boundaries that one comes to experience the world. “Like the newborn’s experience of skin,” Simms wrote, “lived space in its there-ness comes to us in bits and pieces, in

small islands of consistency” (p. 34). By relating the infant’s experience of maternal skin with his ever-expanding experience of the world, Simms uses developmental research to refine the concept of flesh. Informed by this work as well as feminist and race scholarship, we will propose how places can be read like skins which are engrained with social and historical meanings resulting in privileges for some over others.

Another visceral metaphor Merleau-Ponty (1968) adopted was the *chiasm*, through which he extended the image of flesh to include the invisible field of language. “We situate ourselves in ourselves,” he claimed, “*and* in the things, in ourselves *and* in the other, at the point where, by a sort of chiasm, we become the others and we become the world” (p. 160). Merleau-Ponty conceived the structure of language through the chiasmic metaphor of two optic nerves converging into a singular field of vision or of two hands united by the body. When we use language therefore, we are not simply using a cultural tool but are bringing ourselves, the world and others into expression. He explained: “It is as though the visibility that animates the sensible world were to emigrate, not outside of every body, but into another less heavy, more transparent body, as though it were to change flesh, abandoning the flesh of the body for that of language...” (p. 153). By attending to this invisible field, we acknowledge that just as bodies are coterminous with places, so too are places with social and cultural discourses.

Furthermore, as we move through places our social and cultural referents also shift. For example, I (the author) identify as an Indo-Canadian male. Growing up in Alberta, Canada, my Indian ethnicity was central to how I identified myself. Upon moving to Pittsburgh, USA to begin my doctoral studies, I began to center my Canadian ethnicity when relating to others and also to myself. In Pittsburgh, with its different social and cultural context, I was ethnically ambiguous—it was not uncommon to be thought of by others (regardless of race) as Black or

sometimes Hispanic. Through travelling/wandering I experienced a literal displacement of identity. Pittsburgh, it turned out, perceived differences in color and ethnicity quite differently from Alberta. Throughout our study, we will notice how these descriptions of depth, flesh and skin function to create discourses for understanding people and places. We shall now look at how social and cultural diversity may be experienced through place.

### **Canopies and Borders**

No circle of belonging can ever contain all the longings of the human heart. – John O’Donohue, *Eternal Echoes*

We use metaphors not only to describe the material features of place but also its psychological, cultural, social and political landscape. This is because we understand place as both a physical environment and a field where identities are reproduced. When we feel a sense of belonging, we are ‘rooted’ in place; to be ‘displaced’ is to experience one’s identity at the margins of lived space (Fullilove, 2014). In the next chapter, we will look at metaphors through a phenomenology of race. But here we will consider how places orchestrate social relations. In her landmark study on *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*, Jacobs’ (1961) wrote about a particular kind of social belonging unique to cities:

This order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art, we may fancifully call it the art form of the city and liken it to the dance—not to a simple-minded precision dance with everyone kicking up at the same time, twirling in unison and bowing off en masse, but to an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole. (Jacobs, 1961, p. 50)

According to Jacobs, street sidewalks are the city’s stage whereupon individuals from various ‘walks’ are coiled up into a syncretic movement with its own, emergent rhythm and

style. This ‘art form’, which Jacobs calls the *sidewalk ballet*, characterizes the potential of places which are suited to the diverse needs of a city population. In her ethnographic descriptions of Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia, Jacobs interviews a local resident who describes the ‘ballet’ as a series of acts, beginning in the morning with ‘early-bird walkers’, peaking with the mid-day lunch rush of the working crowd, and eventually reaching its cadence in the evening crowd of young couples strolling or dining nearby. Jacobs concludes that the life of the sidewalk—and of all healthy urban places—depends upon what she calls “functional diversity” (p. 82), which refers to the capacity of a place to hold multiple uses (i.e. relaxation, work, retail, recreation) for multiple groups of people.

Jacobs’ (1961) study was conducted during a time when, following WWII, the nation experienced a post-industrial boom which allowed for increased home ownership and a massive expansion of the interstate highway system. She observed that these trends allowed for and even encouraged the move of many businesses, industries and middle-class residents away from cities and towards the suburbs. What resulted was an urban crisis that left many cities neglected and socially, culturally and financially bankrupt. Jacobs looks at some of the forces behind this decline and suggests possibilities for regeneration. Her work, though dated, is a useful reference point from which we can examine and critique the dominant discourses around the city and its people.

Decades after Jacobs’ publication, Anderson (2004) observed that the forces of industrialism, immigration and globalism are making American cities more racially, ethnically and socially diverse than ever before. However, he cautioned that these changes have been accompanied by “profound cleavages dividing one element from another and one social group from another” (p. 15). When these divisions are geographic or marked in space then they—like

the sidewalk—also function to choreograph the interactions among strangers. We must recognize that one’s personal and social experience of place is often bound within layers of color and/or class. “As the urban public spaces of big cities have become more riven by issues of race, poverty, and crime” wrote Anderson, the casual indifference that characterized Jacobs’ sidewalk ballet “...seems to have given way to a pervasive wariness towards strangers, particularly anonymous black males” (ibid.). Anderson understood this wariness to be a function of social borders within places, which foregrounds certain people for the color of their skin. “Skin color” he continued, “often becomes a social border that deeply complicates public interactions; stereotypically, white skin color is associated with civility and trust, and black skin color is associated with danger and distrust—especially with regard to anonymous young males” (ibid.). By connecting skin color with certain identities, social borders govern one’s interactions and attitudes towards certain groups of people within a given place. Borders also regulate who is welcome and who is not. The identities of individuals and even communities are indelibly shaped by these place borders. The effects are most stark and destructive for those living in places that are segregated by rigid social or geographic borders. Jacobs (1961) noted, for example, that communities which are divided by place borders (e.g. road, rail, river or hill) will struggle to unify for the greater good of its peoples. As we shall see, the hilly topography of Pittsburgh exacerbated the social and economic segregation experienced by its Black communities (Glasco, 1989).

On the whole however, cities deemphasize borders preferring instead to regulate the flow of its residents through boundaries. Residents are purportedly free to traffic, shop, dine, explore and play in the various neighborhoods within the town’s borders. However our activities are also carefully regulated through the particular boundaries that characterize distinct neighborhoods.

But there is also a mutability implied by boundaries; by virtue of contact with others, the style of a place may change over time. Indeed, the word boundary [Proto-Germanic *bowan*, “to dwell”] has identifications with stability and rootedness but also movement and change [Old French *bondir*, “to leap or jump”]. The shifting nature of boundaries indeed discloses a history through which we can map the social effects of migration, slavery, reconstruction, segregation, gentrification and suburbanization. Boundaries differ from borders in that their primary function is not to protect or keep out, but instead, as Simms (2008a) explained, “to create a location from which to encounter the other in a particular and individual style” (p. 32). Through these encounters, people from different backgrounds may come together and create new place identities.

Later in her career, Jacobs (1998) also began to explore how urban public spaces could facilitate interactions among people who differed by race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality. Like Anderson (2004, 2011), she expressed hope that urban places may facilitate harmonious relationships between different groups of people. Indeed, Anderson also provided an ethnographic account of Rittenhouse Square (the stage of Jacobs’ sidewalk ballet) and he concluded that this place allowed for “feelings of community across racial and ethnic lines” (2004, p. 16). He referred to places such as Rittenhouse Square as *cosmopolitan canopies*. According to Anderson, canopies are not only well-planned and functionally diverse public spaces; they also facilitate harmony among socially and culturally diverse groups of people. In the space of these canopies, colored<sup>8</sup> individuals are not subjected to the deprecating, racially

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<sup>8</sup> The term ‘colored’ is somewhat contested and may be deployed to various effects socially, psychologically and politically. Although beyond the scope of this paper, readers who are interested in the discursive effects of racial

hostile gaze. The canopy is also a place where Whites and more economically privileged groups can interact with other groups with less distrust and hypervigilance. Anderson (2004) concluded that cosmopolitan canopies establish “new social patterns and norms of tolerance, while encouraging everyday common civility, if not comity and goodwill, among the various groups that make up the city” (p. 29). As the demographics of this country become increasingly urban and multiracial, such spaces will become essential to the health of cities. Later, in Chapter 5, we will consider the potential for urban green spaces to function as cosmopolitan canopies.

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construction are directed to works such as Fernando (1991) and Barker and Galasinski (2001). Fernando, for example, explores how the terms ‘ethnicity’ and ‘culture’—now favored in mental health research and treatment because they are less politically volatile than the term ‘race’—are still employed to racialize groups.

### CHAPTER 3. RACE, PLACE AND HISTORY

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

– 1 Corinthians 13:12

An identity is questioned only when it is menaced, as when the mighty begin to fall, or when the wretched begin to rise, or when the stranger enters the gates, never, thereafter, to be a stranger...Identity would seem to be the garment which covers the nakedness of the self....This trust in one's nakedness is all that gives one the power to change one's robes.

– James Baldwin, *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction, 1948-1985*

Before proceeding further we must first clarify our focus on race, which centers on Blackness and Whiteness. As they are presented here, the terms Black<sup>9</sup> and White refer to *race*<sup>10</sup>. We have chosen to capitalize these terms to emphasize their social and material productions, which extend far beyond their function as mere adjectives or (poor) qualitative descriptors. In America, these particular terms are deployed to co-create and reinforce social, economic, spatial and health disparities between groups of people. While we recognize that race extends far

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<sup>9</sup> This term is used somewhat interchangeably with 'African American', although the latter specifically identifies an ethnic heritage and nationality. Black, in contrast, is a broader term that may describe people of African, Haitian, Jamaican or West Indian decent and is irrespective of nationality.

<sup>10</sup> The word race is derived from the Old Norse *ras*, meaning "running" or "to rush." By the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the English meaning had shifted to signify "a contest of speed". Race, since the earliest days of European colonialism in the 15<sup>th</sup> century has been invoked to signify the dominance and superiority (i.e. winner of a contest) of one group over another.



beyond simple binaries of White and Black and includes the myriad permutations in which ethnicity, class, sexuality and gender are performed, we have restricted our present discussion to these terms because the most pervasive patterns of spatial injustice and health inequities in the US can be traced through a history that has served to entrench Black inferiority and White supremacy.

Though the concept of race has no genetic correlates it continues to be used in scientific, political and public discourses (Miles, 1989). There exists no valid empirical measure of race yet it is constructed, measured and reproduced—along with health inequities and injustices—by the processes of racialization and racism. The production of race is called *racialization* and it is used to validate physical, social and material differences between groups of people. Racialization is based on a set of shared representations and discourses that include stereotypes and imagery. *Racism* is the assumption of one group's superiority vis-à-vis these representations (Miles; Todorov, 2000). Racism may be evident in various discourses used to negatively characterize a group (e.g. biological inferiority, moral depravity, emotional immaturity and/or cultural and economic deficiencies)<sup>11</sup>. In fact, racism is historically fluid and may change over time. For example, Miles writes that in 18<sup>th</sup> century America Blacks were considered lazy, degenerate and hypersexual because they were not properly 'civilized.' It was thought that they could—and indeed would—improve their station through European colonization/civilization<sup>12</sup>. By the turn of

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<sup>11</sup> Although racism can—and is—used to ascribe positive values to the privileged group, its primary function is to normalize the power relations of one group over another. Therefore, racism cannot be benignly rendered or divorced from power relations (as the interpretive repertoire of “reverse racism” would imply).

<sup>12</sup> Today, a more liberal version of this logic predominates, to wit, that Blacks are lazy or sexual or criminally-prone because of oppressive experiences or colonization. Although perhaps well-intentioned, such reasoning is racist

the 19<sup>th</sup> century however, as slavery was established as the lynchpin of the American economy and transatlantic trade, assumptions of Black inferiority gravitated towards a biological model. Slavery and indentured labor were rationalized as effective and even humane means of subduing the Black population. Through this perennially inventive production of race, the institution of slavery continued virtually uncontested for another 60 years, producing the bulk of this nation's wealth and undergirding our system of democracy<sup>13</sup>. As we shall see, racial constructions continually adapt to the changing social, political and economic landscape. Though they may change over time (e.g. from "three fifths of a human being" to "super-predators") they are consistently deployed to reproduce power relations between groups of individuals.

The phenomenology of Blackness, as it has been produced and globally exported is one of double-consciousness, a schismatic state where one exists as simultaneously a self and a veil/mask/effigy (Du Bois, 1984; Fanon, 2008). To be Black in America is to not feel at home in one's flesh. For in becoming American, one is indoctrinated with beliefs about Black inferiority and saturated with visual images and narratives of White superiority. Small wonder then that the African American children in Kenneth and Mamie Clark's (1947) iconic doll experiment unanimously preferred the White doll to the Black one despite painfully identifying themselves

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because it a) encourages prejudicial behavior and stereotyping b) ignores the Black history of resilience and its massive cultural contributions c) norms others on a White cultural standard and d) assumes that in the absence of White protectionism (i.e. paternalism), non-White cultures will deviate and eventually breakdown.

<sup>13</sup> To fully appreciate the premises of these claims, one must be familiar with the complex, often symbiotic relationships between American capitalism, democracy and slavery. Such explanations are well beyond the scope of this study thus the reader is referred to works such as Ta-Nehisi Coates' *The Case for Reparations* and Ibrahim X Kendi's *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*.

with the latter<sup>14</sup>. For these and millions of other Black children, their dilemma is in striving for an ideal that negates Blackness or blazing the path towards self-recognition while inuring oneself to constant messages of inferiority. Interventions within Black communities must be sensitive to discursive (including visual) communications which might unintentionally convey Blackness as inferior or somehow not belonging. The representation of self under the White gaze, described by Du Bois and Fanon, is compounded by the legacy of historical discrimination and intergenerational traumas.



Figure 3.1. Charles Harris, American, 1908-1998, Republican campaign billboard with slogan "Make Our Homes and Streets Safe!" possibly on Morgan Street, Hill District, 1948, photo, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, <http://teenie.cmoa.org>, Accession No. 2001.35.3092, Exhibition No. 454. Credit: Estate of Charles "Teenie" Harris Photograph © 2013 Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh. Note that this billboard, which centers a White child standing upright with a Black doll dangling limply by her side, was placed in a primarily African American neighborhood.

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<sup>14</sup> In 2006, Kiri Davis, a New York high school student replicated the Clarks' study and obtained similar results. Her findings are presented in the video, *A Girl Like Me* ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0BxFRu\\_SOw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0BxFRu_SOw)).

*Racism* may be perpetuated by individuals or institutions. As such, racism can be reproduced with or without the conscious intent of the acting agents. This also means that racism cannot be eliminated solely through education or moral persuasion but *must also be confronted and undone on an institutional level*. The ideology underlying all forms of racism is the same: it is, as Miles (1989) puts it, "...the representation of the Other [which] serves simultaneously to refract a representation of Self" (p. 79). Like a prism which refracts light into separate colors, racism is an ideology of exclusion, whereby negative characteristics are disowned from the self—or self-identified group—and projected into the Other. The Other then becomes a sort of mirror or negative image of the self, reflecting back one's positive qualities through their perceived negative qualities. Although it is true that individuals of all colors, creeds and ethnicities may suffer racial discrimination, we must reiterate that racism in America is most coherent, systemic and virulent along the vector of White supremacy and Black inferiority.

Nowhere is this more cogently articulated than in Baldwin's (1984) essay titled, *On Being White...And Other Lies*. Here, Baldwin noted that among the European settlers "[n]o one was white before he/she came to America. It took generations, and a vast amount of coercion, before this became a white country" (p. 1). Prior to this racialization process, it was the Irish (and later, Jewish and Slavic) emigres who came to America who were rebuked and relegated to the lowest, most demeaning work and decrepit dormitory conditions in the city. It quickly became a priority for these ethnic groups to assimilate into the dominant group (i.e. to become White) in order to accrue the social, financial, health and spatial benefits that came with it (Baldwin; Kendi, 2017). Unfortunately, this meant that Blackness had to be constructed and reified as something they were not. Groups that had no hope of becoming White (e.g. Brown and Latino peoples) also had to emphasize that they were not Black, thus perpetuating colored racism (i.e. colorism) and

reinforcing an assimilationist ideal. “In this country” wrote the prize-winning novelist Toni T. Morrison (1992, January 29), “American means white. Everybody else has to hyphenate.” Though it is true that European and Asian immigrants inured themselves to hardships, their struggles do not compare with the historical and ongoing tribulation of African Americans, who were brought to American shores not as immigrants but as slaves.

Becoming White is a process that also involves two other factors, “denying the Black presence, and justifying the Black subjugation” (Baldwin, 1984, p. 2). Fine (2004) clarified this point when she wrote that Whites “develop a profoundly false [often implicit] sense of superiority premised almost entirely on denigration which requires opposition to sustain the racial hierarchy. Opposition and denigration became a fix, a steroid to white identity” (p. 60). Essentially, what Baldwin and Fine are describing can be conceptualized as a Hegelian dialectic whereby one group (Whites) profit from the exploitation of another group (Blacks); *this relationship is preserved so long as Whites deny Blacks their merits to full inclusion and refuse to redress the historical and present-day effects of their subjugation*. In his influential *Phenomenology*, Hegel (1949) reasoned that the master-consciousness—or privileged group (Freire, 1993)—establishes itself ipso facto by repudiating all perceivably inferior qualities through projecting them into another consciousness/group. Incidentally, this privileged group then becomes defined in diametrical opposition to traits that they cannot own. Whiteness, as described earlier by Anderson (2011), is a legitimization of a claim to lawfulness, rationality, civility and purity through the construction of a Blackness that is repudiated as guilty, irrational,

heathen and impure. As evidenced in the archetypal imagery of Jung (1969)<sup>15</sup> and stated explicitly by Fanon (2008), Blackness becomes a signifier for a repository of impulses and excitations that trouble the White ego and are warded off through defenses such as splitting, projection, and the denial/forgetting of history. Phenomenologically, Whiteness may be disclosed through an orientation of mastery, self-possession and at-homeness in the world. Just as I. M. Young (1980) described the upright and relatively freer comportment of the male body, Ahmed (2007) argued this for White bodies<sup>16</sup>. We must note here that Whiteness is not performed by Whites alone; it is also maintained by Blacks (who struggle with internalized inferiority and double consciousness) and other peoples of color (who strive to assimilate towards a White ideal). The color binary may be simplistic but, like any power structure, it is consistently and pervasively reinforced through behavioral expectations and norms.

Derrida's (1977, 1978) concept of the *trace* helps us better understand how identities are performed in place. Performing 'de-constructive' philosophy, Derrida demonstrates how the essential or central definition of a thing fundamentally depends on other meanings that are less

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<sup>15</sup> Fernando (1991) outlined how psychology, since Freud and Jung, harbored fundamentally racist assumptions predicated on the superiority of certain traits that were thought inherent to White, European culture (i.e. rationality, emotional suppression, internalized guilt) over supposed 'child-like' or 'primitive' traits attributed to non-Western cultures (i.e. animism, emotive, externalized shame). Aron and Starr (2013) further demonstrate how these splits—relics of Western dualism—furnished binary classifications between male/female, heterosexual/homosexual and gentile/Jew.

<sup>16</sup> To use a personal example, the author recently attended a workshop where the participants were encouraged to assume a 'power pose' (based on the research of social psychologist, Amy Cuddy). Legs spread and arms in the air, the White participants endorsed feeling confident and in charge. Similarly pronounced, the author (a person of color) could not help recall memories of being searched at an airport and images of Black men confronted at gunpoint.

central, or even marginal to the thing. For Derrida, definitions, meanings or identities are always embedded in a network, connected to each other through semiotic links he calls ‘traces’. For example, a person’s ability to identify as something—let us say a male—is predicated upon cultural discourses and performances of masculinity. Yet what we consider as essential or central to the performance of masculinity is positioned with respect to femininity, transsexuality, asexuality and an otherwise infinite network of related identities. The connection with these other identities are traces, lingering at the margins of one’s consciousness yet providing essential meaning and context to what is centered. Regarding race in America, we may say that Whiteness is an identity that is not only dependent upon but made possible through the (marginalized) trace of Blackness (Baldwin, 1984). The symbolic regime that clusters and differentiates identities carries across bodies and places such that it is easier and perhaps more intuitive to group together clean/suburban/civil/White and categorize these away from dirty/urban/unruly/Black. However, this privileged position does not come without debt<sup>17</sup>.

### **Healing Forgotten Debts: Reparations Part I**

Hegel (1949) understood that the master-consciousness/privileged group is not free because it is yoked to the subjugation of the Other, to whom it exists *via negativa*. It can only be free when it sees through this illusion of independence and acknowledges that its privileges are accrued through the unrecognized labor/sacrifices of that very Other. If Whiteness is taken to be a system that confers advantages and opportunities for one group through the construction of an unwanted Other, how does one undo it? According to Bliss (2015, December 2), Whiteness must first be understood as a “forgotten debt” (p. 3). “Whiteness”, she explained, “is not a kinship or a

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<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, debt [Latin, *de-habere*] shares its etymology with inhabit [Latin, *in-habere*], and may have originally referred to keeping something away from someone.

culture. White people are no more closely related to one another, genetically, than we are to black people...What binds us is that we share a system of social advantages that can be traced back to the advent of slavery in the colonies that became the United States<sup>18</sup>.” (p. 4/5). These ‘social advantages’ may be material and financial wealth, access and ownership of valuable land and natural resources, greater educational opportunities and/or better health outcomes. Of course, not all Whites benefit equally. However, Whiteness was and is enabled through a history of ill-gotten wealth made possible by the creation and displacement of a Black Other. The debt Bliss refers to is the resulting racial inequities that continue to burden Blacks while privileging Whites. This debt is continually deferred through a process of *historical erasure* and *cultural agnosia*. Bliss offers the image of Whiteness as a blindfold; the image, as Baldwin would say, is just a garment and not one’s true nature. Therefore, it can be given up. What this means for Whites is that they may be morally obliged to combat White privilege without having to despise themselves *as* White.

It is commonly thought and taught that the Civil Rights era ushered in policies that gave everyone—regardless of sex, race or class—an equal chance to succeed. Indeed, this seemed to be the prevailing national sentiment between 2008 and 2016, during the Obama administration, when our collective consciousness indulged in the myth of a post-racial America. This fantasy, of course, shattered violently upon the mantle of the ensuing administration<sup>19</sup> and we are again

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<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that the history of transatlantic slavery started in the Caribbean and later, South America, predating the American colonies by approximately a century ([www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic\\_slave\\_trade](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_slave_trade)).

<sup>19</sup> On the day this passage was written, president Trump had publicly cast doubt on the motivations behind the Civil War (which Dyson (2017, p. 200) described as “the infernal contest of white regions over black flesh and its future in America”), praised the legacy of Andrew Jackson (the 7<sup>th</sup> POTUS who was infamous for owning slaves and



confronted by the reality that Blacks and Whites live in a different America, and experience different levels of wealth, education and health. In Donald Trump's oath to "Make America Great Again", he countenances "the literal face of white innocence, white privilege [i.e. historical erasure and cultural agnosia] without apology" (Dyson, 2017, p. 109). Roused from our dream, we urgently need to recollect our history from the great maw of forgetting; it is the first step towards an equity model that seeks reparations for the structural gaps created by racism. Dyson's (2017) excellent sermon, *Tears We Cannot Stop*, might be necessary reading for those wishing to delve further into the subject. Apropos the case for spatial justice and health equity, we will summarize his four liberation processes.

First, White consciousness is invited to grieve as one casts off all learned assumptions of superiority and entitlements<sup>20</sup>. Too often we pathologize grief, preferring instead the substantiality and conviction that is implied by guilt and remorse. We will soon discuss White guilt, but for now let us note that grief is a necessary element in the emotional alchemy that

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persecuting Native Americans) and terminated funding for Michelle Obama's health and education programs for underserved girls.

<sup>20</sup> This may be especially difficult, as Dyson pointed out, for beleaguered members of the 'White working class.' Their desperation has been famously exploited by self-serving politicians who appeal to their sense of racial superiority and entitlement (enabled by the erasure of all traces that would complicate their nostalgic, antebellum history). Said the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, in his historic 1965 speech at Selma, AL: "If it may be said of the slavery era that the white man took the world and gave the Negro Jesus, then it may be said of the Reconstruction era that the Southern aristocracy took the world and gave the poor white man Jim Crow. He gave him Jim Crow. And when his wrinkled stomach cried out for the food that his empty pockets could not provide, he ate Jim Crow, a psychological bird that told him that no matter how bad off he was, at least he was a white man, better than the black man."

labors towards justice. Second, Whiteness is called to witness. Witnessing [from the Proto Indo-European root *weid*, meaning “to see”] requires the White de/representing gaze be turned inwards to analyze how institutions and systems (i.e. political, health, transportation, justice, housing, educational) consistently produce disparate outcomes between Black and White folk. These outcomes, which we will come to, are too systemic to be produced by individual failures (i.e. a “few bad apples”) and too pervasive to be completely accounted for by other factors such as socioeconomic status (SES). Setting aside the legacy of abuse and inhumanity shown by the police and judicial system towards Black boys (and increasingly Black girls), how are we to understand the fact that given equal levels of education, a White man with a criminal record is statistically more likely to be employed than a Black man without one (Dyson, 2017)? These disparities have cumulative effects such that inequities in one system (e.g. employment) will likely lead to poorer outcomes in another (e.g. health). Third, Whites are asked to renounce their innocence<sup>21</sup>. According to Dyson, this innocence manifests in several interrelated ways. Firstly, there is a collective denial towards acknowledging the wealth, employment, education and housing gaps that African Americans—regardless of class—continue to face. This is evidenced in polls showing that 38% of White Americans believe that “our country has made the changes needed to give blacks equal rights with whites”, compared to 10% of Blacks who endorse this view (Matthew, Rodrigue, & Reeves, 2016). Secondly, while many Whites are troubled by explicit declarations of White superiority most are relatively unbothered by implicit

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<sup>21</sup> Many find this rhetoric disturbing precisely because it calls out individuals and not institutions. However, as individuals we are capable of responding to the call for justice with agency and moral invective.

assumptions<sup>22</sup>. Thirdly, there is little tolerance for centering race in our political and academic discourses as the focus often shifts to other issues that avoid upsetting the White ego. This was evidenced in the recent electoral debates, which centered the travails of the ‘White working class’ as the pivot upon which government and policy must turn<sup>23</sup>. Whiteness often takes umbrage to these truths and seeks recourse in innocence, which is presumed to be its birthright: *“But, I’m not the one who kept slaves!” “Life’s not easy for me either!” “My grandparents had it hard!” “As a \_\_\_\_\_, I also face obstacles!” or “If you try, you can make it” “What do you expect me to do?” “It’s \_\_\_\_\_ fault!” and “I had no idea!”* The presumption here is that one is not individually culpable for the horrors of racism but is entitled to personally benefit from a racist system. It is not only that Whites are easily able to cast off guilt (in contrast to Blacks, whose skins are permanently branded with a different kind of guilt) but many simply do not—and are permitted not—to see that Blacks and Whites inhabit different lifeworlds. As Matthew et al. (2016) report, “...in addition to the tangible inequalities captured in the statistics, the intangible experience of being black in America is nothing like the experience of a white person. Racial injustice lies not only in hard facts, but also in “the thickness of everyday life”” (p. 3). As surely as one drop of Black blood indelibly imprints upon the skin<sup>24</sup>, Black consciousness does not have the luxury of denying the past—in the words of T. Morrison (1987), there is only

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<sup>22</sup> Using the Implicit Association Test, which assesses implicit racial bias, Greenwald, Uhlmann, Poehlman, and Banaji (2009) found that approximately 70% of all respondents—across races—endorsed White superiority.

<sup>23</sup> Recent data collected from over 4000 respondents who completed the American National Election Studies pre- and post-election surveys reveals that it was, in fact, primarily racial animus and not economic anxiety that consolidated a Republican victory (McElwee & McDaniel, 2017, May 8).

<sup>24</sup> Under the 1924 *Racial Integrity Act*, individuals were legally designated as “colored” if they had any ancestors of African descent. It became colloquially known as the ‘one drop rule.’

“rememory” and “disremember.” If it is sometimes the wish but never the power for one to erase one’s Black difference, Whiteness is the inverse; as White, it is almost always within one’s power to elide questions of race but rarely one’s wish to give up Whiteness and its privileges.

A justice orientation must recognize that guilt is a double-harness; as long it binds Black skin to the guilt of inferiority—in the view of the schools, streets, courts, offices and welfare system—then it also yokes White skin to the guilt of forgetting, not seeing, marginalizing and profiting from these injustices. As long as there is one, there is the other. To be White then is to be guilty—not existentially—but socially and culturally for embodying Whiteness, a system of accrued privileges founded on historical erasure and cultural agnosia. Justice however should not be confused with sentimentality, which would center the White experience in guilt and *noblesse oblige* and marginalize the Black experience in victimhood and noble suffering. In other words, one’s social or cultural identification should not encapsulate our understanding of individual experiences. To paraphrase Baldwin (1955), every human being has the potential to at once be beautiful, dreadful and powerful. Justice is participating in the call towards reconciling the debts of history with those who inherit the present. Though there are myriad ways this work can be accomplished (e.g. via education, civic action, democratic participation, charitable giving, volunteering and work), the shift towards thinking in terms of reparations is one that requires systemic solutions rather than individual ones—as important as the latter may be.

In his sweeping analysis of the economic force that was slavery, Coates (2014, June Issue) compared the idea of undoing all of America’s ill-gotten and maintained wealth to a forced removal of all homeowners from their homes. Of course, Coates opposed any action that would devastate one group for the advantage of another but he endorsed efforts that would return decades of lost/stolen income, equity and opportunity to generations of African Americans.

Dyson (2017) broadly defined *reparations* as “the notion that the descendants of enslaved Africans should receive from the society that exploited them some sort of compensation” (p. 197). Of course, no social or economic compensation can recompense lost time, broken families and lost lives; and these irreconcilable debts continue to pile. Perhaps this staggering calculus has wrought moral inertia in the public, which tends to support the *idea* of reparations but does consider it feasible, practicable or urgent (Coates, 2014, June Issue, 2016, January 24). Throughout this chapter and the next, we will examine the history of systemic racial discrimination and argue that reparations should not simply be dismissed as an abstract or infeasible idea but can be defined and measured through multi-disciplinary research and interventions designed to *repair* the systems that perpetuate racial injustice.

### **Spatial Epidermal Schemas**

In these next two sections, we will introduce the concepts of spatial epidermal schemas and interpretive repertoires to familiarize the reader with the relationships we make between race, place and history. We have created the term *spatial epidermal schemas* to refer to race, class and/or gendered representations that are embedded within the visible and invisible depths of places. We have seen how we pre-thematically perceive places as coterminous with bodies; we argue therefore that places may become racialized just as bodies are. In other words, a person’s interaction with place is somewhat determined by a complex interaction between their racial identification and the social, historical and cultural characteristics imbued into the place itself. For example, a person might have a different experience of self and others—including a distinctly racialized experience—if they perceive themselves to be in space that is primarily White, Black or ethnically inclusive (i.e. canopies).

In Chapter 2, we drew from phenomenological philosophy and research to conceptualize place as the gathering of self, world and others. These dimensions of experience draw from and inform one another according to our ways of inhabiting (i.e. holding and being held within) a given place(s). Places themselves are shaped by history including social and cultural practices, which we can understand as discourses. These processes indelibly pave the physical, socioeconomic and cultural geography and may form barriers that prevent some groups from equitable access, opportunities, and privileges that those places afford. When this happens we see disparate outcomes across multiple systems, including health and wellbeing. Loosely adapted from Seamon's (2014) holistic, dialectic and generative model, Figure 3.2 below summarizes some of the important place-based elements that constitute spatial epidermal schemas.

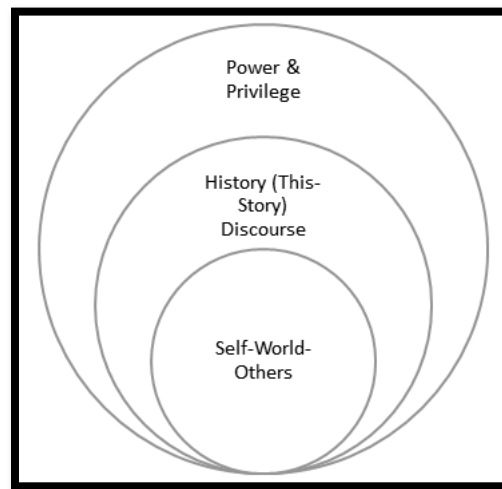


Figure 3.2. Place-based elements constituting spatial epidermal schemas

This idea was developed from Merleau-Ponty's (1967) Hegelian understanding of 'derepresentation' under the gaze of the Other as well as his later (1968) work on depth and flesh. The concept was termed after Fanon's (2008) 'racial epidermal schema', by which he recalled

the surgical application of the White gaze upon his Black skin. It was further informed by Simms' (2008) reading of lived places through the interface of skin and the ethnographic accounts of Jacobs (1961) and Anderson (2004, 2011), both of whom faithfully annotated the symphony of public life. Through Derrida's (1977, 1978) register of the trace, we were also able to observe how communities of people and places are defined through a network of meanings or identities. These schemas, which are reinforced by our ways of speaking or discourse, link communities of people and places to certain racial or identity performances.

*April 18, 2017: I stepped into the 71C Wilkinsburg bus in Shadyside on my way to Homewood to attend a health equity training session. I usually catch this bus heading the other way, into the university district of Oakland towards downtown. Heading west and downtown, the bus is populated by all manner of people—mostly college students—with a smattering of elderly folks who are on their way to the UPMC hospital. But at Shadyside the complexion of passenger drastically changes. At the Giant Eagle grocery store, most students exit and the bus begins to fill up with residents from the East side of town. Soon, the bus is populated entirely by Black riders. Past the Target, neatly paved sidewalks give way to cracked crumbled concrete. Moving North of Penn Avenue, the boarded houses, broken windows and vacant lots begin to appear and soon routinely punctuate the sides of the road. I feel slight yet definite sense of unease. Notably absent from my window-seat are views of parks, playgrounds and children.*

This reflection was written by me in a stream of consciousness soon after I entered the neighborhood of Homewood in Pittsburgh. Homewood is considered a poor, Black “inner-city”

neighborhood that has a reputation for being prone to crime<sup>25</sup>. Assuming the reader has any experience as an American city-dweller, this account will not be at all surprising or unfamiliar. The discourse around such urban places—particularly if populated by African American or Latino residents—is of blight, crime and hostility. So pronounced are these identities that we take their validity for granted. In 2016, then presidential-candidate Donald Trump addressed a primarily White audience and proclaimed: “Our African-American communities are absolutely in the worst shape that they’ve ever been in before, ever, ever, ever. You take a look at the inner cities, you’ve got no education, you’ve got no jobs, you get shot walking down the street.”<sup>26</sup> Although his comments were excoriated by the media (Covert, 2016, November 7; DelReal, 2016, September 20), these views deeply align with populist rhetoric and public consciousness on the state of African Americans and the inner-city. And yet, I too had presented this Black neighborhood in a manner that aligns with this racist discourse. Does the account above reveal something truthful or is it an instance of individual racism? Perhaps something more complex is going on.

Using Google Maps to trace my route through Homewood, one may notice several nearby restaurants, two schools, two churches, a mechanic and phone dealer, in addition to the community health and education center where I was headed. These landmarks—indicators of Jacob’s (1961) functional diversity—were not perceived initially, partly because they did not fit into my constructed schema of the neighborhood. The schemas through which we perceive

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<sup>25</sup> According to a report by Zuberi et al. (2015), Homewood is 94.7% Black. Compared to the city average, the neighborhood suffers from disproportionately high rates of poverty (1.5x) and crime (2.6x).

<sup>26</sup> Campaign speech given on September 20, 2016 during a rally at the Duplin County Events Center in Kenansville, NC.



places bears traces of historical, social and political discourses that foreground certain racial or identity performances. My account above will be recognized as a description of “the hood”, which is a discursive way of talking about a community by highlighting its qualities as poor, Black/colored, segregated and crime-ridden. In this instance, I entered what is known as a “Black” neighborhood and passing this threshold immediately racialized the place and people within. As a Brown man, I could almost certainly pass for Black but I was still taken up in a discourse that portrayed the world as unsafe and others as dangerous. In our social-historical era, Blackness signifies not only a skin color but the place qualities of poverty, crime and hostility. It may be tempting to write off this account as an example of individual ignorance or prejudice but here again we can reference Jacobs (1961), who described New York’s Lower East Side as follows:

At the borders of the dark and empty grounds of the massive, low-income housing projects, the streets are dark and empty of people too. Stores, except for a few sustained by the projected dwellers themselves, have gone out of business, and many quarters stand unused and empty. Street by street, as you move away from the project borders, a little more life is to be found, progressively a little more brightness... (Jacobs, 1961, p. 189)

Notice her account centers the familiar themes of neglect and fear, in line with my own observations of Homewood. However Jacobs uses “dark” and “brightness” to not only signify depth but *a quality of life*. Darkness is associated with the interiority and isolation of the projects; its emptiness and lifelessness vividly contrast with the city’s brightness that is associated with openness, vitality and life. These descriptors also consolidate discourses around the inhabitants who live within such places. In her passage, “darkness” can easily be associated as a hue of one’s skin and such associations are readily made together with other place-based descriptors such as

“low-income” and “projects.” To be sure, the city also offers cosmopolitan canopies (see Chapter 2) which invoke softer body-place schematizations. In such places, skin color may be recognized but not perceived with the same degree of fear, mistrust and/or hostility. Even a self-identifying Black individual may enter a ‘Black’ place and feel fear, hostility and alienation—such spatial epidermal experiences underscore the fact that racial schemas may reinforce intrapsychic as well as external alienation<sup>27</sup>.

This schematization process is linked to other negative processes such as: 1) centering a single narrative or perspective on development while excluding others (e.g. African Americans) from the process 2) essentializing or reifying ideas about groups of people and 3) consolidating barriers between people and communities, effectively sealing off communities from the rest of the city. It is important to note that these schemas, which organize our collective images of urban, colored neighborhoods have been historically produced through social and economic segregation. And these schemas may change as boundary spaces develop between Black and White neighborhoods.

### **Interpretive Repertoires Used in Urban Renewal**

It is the particular triumph of society—and its loss—that it is able to convince those people to whom it has given inferior status of the reality of this decree; it has the force and the weapons to translate its dictum into fact, so that the allegedly inferior are actually made so, insofar as the social realities are concerned.

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<sup>27</sup> This hypothesis of how Black folk might experience so-called Black places was inferred by W.E.B du Bois (1984), whose account of ‘double consciousness’ essentially describes Blacks who long to have what Whites have but recognize that on some level that having is predicated upon seeing Blackness (i.e. themselves) in a less than human light.

Developed by Wetherell and Potter (1988), *interpretive repertoires* (IR's) are a methodological unit of analysis used in the study of discourses (i.e. linguistic communications that are both purposeful and consequential in bringing about outcomes). Specifically, IR's help us grasp the web of experiences, intentions and relationships that are enabled by particular discourses. Usually signified by "certain tropes or figures of speech" (p. 172), IR's encode the functions (whether or not intentional) of a discourse without having to spell them out. Importantly, IR's are not affectively or morally neutral; they have a perceptible impact on how communities are perceived and come to perceive themselves. We introduce this concept here to encourage the reader to consider how our contemporary discourses around place frames our perspectives and interventions.

In her discourse on 'the life and death of great American cities', Jacobs (1961) described particular urban places with terms such as 'blight', 'dead', 'vacuum', 'slum', and 'ghetto'. Such descriptors are powerful and continue to be advocated today because they are politically useful in securing funding or resources for a community (Mock, 2017, February 16). Yet, as repertoires, they also center certain perspectives while marginalizing others. Whether or not intentional, the word *dead*, for example, when used as a descriptor opens a discursive space for certain assumptions. One may assume that a given place or community has no (civilized) life or that such life is not worth preserving. In response to this death discourse, the Black community has cried out, "*Hands up, don't shoot!*" "*I can't breathe*" and "*Black lives matter.*" Long after the names and faces of Eric Garner and Michael Brown have been forgotten/erased, these statements function as IR's that implore us to truly see (and not de-present as dead or dying) the living presence of people in the community. Similar pleas have railed against centuries of discourse

that have rendered Black bodies as subhuman, exotic, hypersexual, mechanical, diseased and dead. Because of our institutionalized tendencies to objectify the ‘flesh’ (as a self-world interaction) of those deemed Other<sup>28</sup>, it is difficult to recognize the personal impacts of social injustice on others. One may discuss “police brutality”, “a war on drugs”, “sex work”, “implicit bias” or “poverty” without having to comprehend the gravity of these injustices upon real colored and gendered bodies (Coates, 2014, June Issue, 2015). As an instructive contrast, we observe that the “White-Mortality Crisis”<sup>29</sup> is attributed by researchers to “despair” brought about by social, economic and developmental stressors (Burke, 2017). Meanwhile, the well-documented high infant and young adult mortality rates for Blacks have been attributed to external causal factors (i.e. environment, crime) but not thus far to despair and intergenerational trauma. The White-Mortality Crisis is an IR that links despair—as a psychological experience—to mortality; in so doing, the subjective experience of White despair urgently commands our public attention and moral support. Furthermore, connecting Whiteness with despair (and not disease) allows us to build an empathic bridge to connect to their experiences. Minimizing the subjectivity of Other bodies makes this process much more difficult and consequently harder for the public to acknowledge their struggles.

When death discourses are applied to environments, we say that these places are falling into *waste*. Waste—a term Jacobs uses liberally to describe land that lacks functional diversity—used to refer to lands that evoked a sense of physical abhorrence (Di Palma, 2014) . According to Di Palma, ‘wastelands’ in Biblical times were understood to be deserts and barren landscapes; by the 17<sup>th</sup> century it was adopted into English parlance to describe forests, swamps and common-

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<sup>28</sup> This is also true for women and transgendered persons. Being of color adds another layer of marginalization.

<sup>29</sup> Across the nation, middle-aged Whites suffer much higher suicide rates than other racial groups (CRSP, 2015).

land that had been overused. Following WWII and the destruction of many European cities, ‘wastelands’ was adopted into urban American discourse to describe dilapidated city areas that the post-war economy could rebuild (Ammon, 2016). Waste also came to mean garbage whose presence, according to Simms (2013, March 14), signifies a degradation of common spaces “and a marker of the ethical failure of community members” to maintain their places. Garbage, Simms (2012, December 5, 2014) wrote, offends our natural aesthetic; it cannot return to where it came from and it ‘interrupts’ the holism of place. Through her territorial analysis of garbage and common spaces, Simms (2014) introduces a post-structural framework that we can apply towards understanding spatial injustice (Chapter 4), and environmental degradation (Chapter 5). According to Simms, places become sites of waste when they are ‘de-territorialized’ (i.e. no longer used as common spaces). From her study, we understand de-territorialization to be a process of *uncommoning* spaces. Simms outlines four factors behind this process, which we might call: 1) extraction 2) displacement 3) amnesia and 4) erasure. Critiquing Hardin’s (cited in Simms, 2014) classic *Tragedy of the Commons*, Simms pointed out that common spaces fall into ruin and waste when social and “bioethical” (p. 242) responsibilities are discarded and a selfish, capitalistic mentality governs interactions. The land is then *extracted* for its use-value without consideration for other people’s needs or its future sustainability. Garbage is *displaced*, because it cannot be contained in the places that have been ‘territorialized’ or settled. It is literally the surplus of that which belongs. Furthermore, de-territorialization is a process of *amnesia* or forgetting—places “fall out of the awareness of a local community” (p. 240), becoming invisible. Finally, de-territorialized garbage places are *erased*; they become what Simms called ‘undetermined’ (German: *unbestimmt*). This process, said Simms, means that “something is no longer given a voice...it has fallen out of human discourse” (p. 244). More seriously, when a

place is undetermined it is denuded of its phenomenal plenitude; that is, it is no longer seen in terms of what may be revealed or concealed but is reduced to being defined by what it is not (i.e. a dwelling or commons).

Substituting ‘de-territorialization’ for ‘colonization’, Simms’ (2012, December 5, 2013, March 14, 2014) analysis can be fruitfully applied to our critical racial analysis. In fact, the themes of extraction, displacement, amnesia and erasure almost perfectly coincide with the racialization of Blackness, upon which the production of Whiteness is predicated. Mills (2001), for example, had noted that the discourse on garbage (which is de-territorialized from the commons) dovetails with the discourses that de-present Black bodies. Imagine the double-consciousness of communities of color whose histories, roots and traditions are embedded in the very places that, under our social gaze, are represented as garbage<sup>30</sup>. From this, one may conclude that our social and cultural attitude towards waste is a by-product of a capitalistic/colonial framework which produces institutions (e.g. slavery) that desecrate people. Not surprisingly, colonized peoples also disproportionately occupy sites of deterritorialization.

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<sup>30</sup> For example, one African American Pittsburgher identified being “born in, but not from” his neighborhood, which he also described as “the world’s garbage can” (PerspectVeChannel, 2014, June 1).

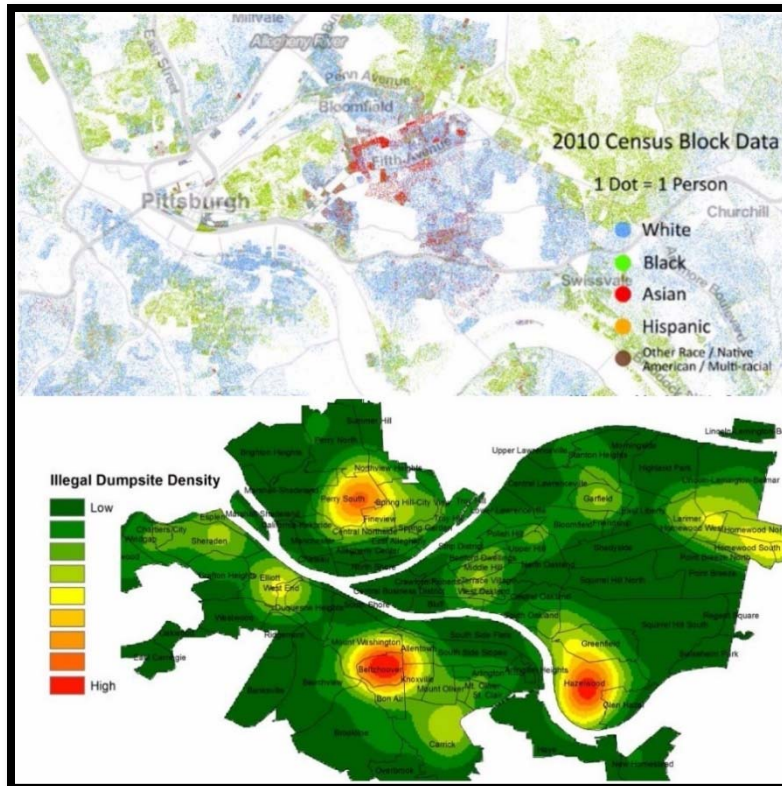


Figure 3.3. [Top] Racial demographic map of Pittsburgh (retrieved from <https://demographics.virginia.edu/DotMap/index.html>) vs. [Bottom] Heat map of illegal dumpsites across Pittsburgh (from Teixeira & Zuberi, 2016, p. 252).

In Figure 3.3 above, we see can clearly observe that Black neighborhoods are more prone to be sites for illegal dumping activities, particularly in the neighborhood of Beltzhoover (which we will soon cover in more detail). From our racial phenomenological analysis we may reiterate that the greater ethical failure lies not within these communities but in the institutions that perpetuate spatial segregation and discourses that reify people as disordered and places as waste. In Chapter 4, we shall look at the health impacts of racialization and racism. So bearing in mind that Black bodies bear a disproportionate burden of disease and illness, we can also see that historically segregated places bear a disproportionate amount of waste. In urban contexts, we use the term *blight*—which is connected to rot, disease and visceral nausea—to describe vacant lots

and their communities. As with waste, blight evokes an aesthetic/feeling that calls for the eradication/sanitization of such places. On blight, Jacobs (1961) quotes the novelist John Cheever who provides an anthropomorphic description of such neighborhoods, "...not persecuted, but only unpopular, as if it suffered acne or bad breath, and it has a bad complexion—colorless<sup>31</sup> and seamed and missing a feature here and there" (p. 190). Blight invokes pathology and/or deficits within people and their places and self-justifies bio-medical interventions such as an "amputation" (p. 198) of place when deemed necessary.

Furthermore, describing a public space as a wasteland or blighted, may marginalize the residents' place attachments, local history and community traditions (Bollier, 2014). Developers use terms such as "renewal" or "renaissance" to justify new developments without having to consider the needs and desires of the place and its existing inhabitants (Misra, 2017, February 17; Mock, 2017, February 16). Jacobs (1961) however was thoroughly disillusioned by *urban renewal*, a nationwide process of urban land development following the zoning of cities and the migration of the White middle class to the suburbs. In Jacobs' (1961) analysis, cities benefit greatly from "all kinds of diversity, intricately mingled in mutual support" (p. 177). She maintained that the 'death' of cities results from a lack of diversity—or homogeneity—in the way that places are inhabited, used, and developed. However, neighborhoods themselves were not the cause of homogenization but broader social and economic forces. Home ownership, made possible through the creation of the Federal Housing Administration in 1934, the Federal-Aid

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<sup>31</sup> Though Jacobs' (1961) analysis of border vacuums applies across all neighborhoods, irrespective of race, she primarily applies the pejorative label of blight towards the inner city and not the bland, sprawling suburb. We may say rhetorically that "blight" is the spatial boundary between "Black" and "White".



Highway Act of 1956 and the post-war manufacturing boom were all factors which contributed to cities being divided up by zones (effectively separating residence, industry, retail and recreation), encouraging residents to move to the suburbs and beyond<sup>32</sup>. The residents who could not afford to move to the suburbs or who (in the case of many Black and colored people) were denied that right saw their neighborhoods quickly decay as vital services were discontinued and infrastructure was no longer maintained. These communities—often called ‘slums’—were cast as responsible for their substandard living conditions. For her part, Jacobs recognized the limits of the prevailing (and still dominant) discursive model, which centers the burden of responsibility on individuals for social, economic and health outcomes. She resisted such simplistic assessments and instructed readers to “understand that self-destruction of diversity is caused by success, not by failure [of economic growth]” (p. 183). In so doing, she demonstrated a powerful—if not prescient—understanding of systemic factors that contribute to the prosperity or decline of places. Jacobs was also aware of the discrimination faced by Black families who moved into a neighborhood and noted that similar prejudices were shown towards Italian, Jewish and Irish immigrants prior to their assimilation (as Whites). However, Jacobs downplayed racism and emphasized industrial and technological forces as the primary drivers behind the “flight” of the White, middle-class from the cities.

Jacobs’ (1961) main critique of urban renewal centered on the observations that rebuilding over ‘slum’ communities not only destroys old buildings but destroys long-standing and vital social relationships and informal networks of caregiving and services that residents rely upon. Moreover, the displaced residents have nowhere to go and are eventually moved to other

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<sup>32</sup> In 1938, only 23% of Pittsburgh workers commuted by automobile as they lived within the vicinity of work and retail; by 1958 only 10% did *not* commute by automobile (ACTION, 1962).

areas—which Jacob’s referred to as “slum-shifting.” The displaced residents are then even worse off because they can no longer rely upon their established social networks. The psychiatrist Mindy Thompson Fullilove (1986, 2009) studied urban renewal in Pittsburgh’s Hill District. She conceptualized this process as a pathological condition affecting communities and diagnosed it as *root shock*. Baldwin (1983, May 24) famously interpreted urban renewal to mean “negro removal.” Pittsburgh’s history, like that of other American cities, bears the legacy of forced displacement of many African American communities to make way for renewal projects (Jacobs, 1961; Fullilove & Wallace, 2011). Again, Jacobs was conscious of the social and psychological impacts of such projects and even expressed concern that Whites’ have developed a “master-race psychology” (p. 206) by regarding Blacks as inferior because of their environment.

However Jacobs (1961) does lapse into paternalism when she assumes that impoverished Black communities will decide to ‘unslum’ when they retain their middle-class members and open the land to developers who value functional diversity. Despite her progressive views and antiracist sympathies, Jacobs falls into the trap of what Kendi (2017) calls “uplift suasion.” This discourse, which has its roots in abolitionist thinking, was popularly extolled by well-regarded Black scholars such as W.E.B. Du Bois<sup>33</sup> and continues to enjoy currency in progressive politics<sup>34</sup>, suggests that disadvantaged people—particularly of color—can gain mainstream

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<sup>33</sup> According to Kendi (2017), Du Bois spent his early career trying to convince White Americans that the most exemplary Blacks, whom he dubbed the “Talented Tenth”, were as competent as any White. Eventually, however, he grew frustrated by this endeavor and spent his later career bringing to light the problems of racism that plagued African Americans regardless of position or class.

<sup>34</sup> The 2016 Democratic candidate Senator Bernie Sanders built his political platform around raising the minimum wage and sponsoring universal health and education plans. However, he has also been criticized for dismissing

acceptance through hard work and self-improvement. Racial uplift when applied to Whites teaches that racism is a moral problem remedied through education. The problem with this view is it again places the burden of responsibility on individuals and often neglects to consider the deeper, systemic processes of discrimination. As we shall see, even a strong middle-class core could not save Pittsburgh's Black communities from decline or prevent local, Black-owned businesses from being brutally extirpated within a generation. Ironically, the discourse on urban renewal is often colorless. It discusses 'environmental hazards', 'inclusionary zoning' and 'extraction' but does not viscerally appeal to the values and culture of the community (Dickinson, 2017). Although she lacked a justice and equity framework as well as historical data to appreciate the systemic nature of discrimination, Jacobs conceded that "unslumming is at the very least directly—as well as indirectly—inhibited by discrimination" (p. 207). In her most antiracist positions, Jacobs critiques the liberal, paternalistic attitude stating: "The trouble with paternalists is that they want to make impossibly profound changes, and they choose impossibly superficial means for doing so. To overcome slums, we must regard slum dwellers as people capable of understanding and acting upon their own self-interests, which they certainly are" (p. 197). Jacobs goes on to describe a process of 'unslumming', which must necessarily involve initiatives from within the community. Though her use of the word slum to designate a community that is preserving its own self-interests is itself paternalistic, Jacobs sounds a clarion for researchers, policy makers and place advocates.

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initiatives specifically designed to address racial inequities (Coates, 2016, January 24), choosing to emphasize class divides as the master-narrative (Street, 2015, August 12).

If the old urban crisis was engendered by suburbanization, White flight and deindustrialization, the “new urban crisis” is a result of gentrification<sup>35</sup>, economic segregation and a crisis in affordable housing (Florida, 2017)<sup>36</sup>. Florida particularly identified cities within the Northeast “Rust Belt” and Southwest “Sunbelt” as most prone. Looking at urbanization across the globe, Florida concluded that we need stronger governance at local and community levels to invest in vital housing and infrastructure, progressive taxes that keep inflation low and livable wages for jobs in the service industry. Undeniably there are more working-class, White people who are disenfranchised under this new regime, however we also need policies that recognize the stark racial inequities that characterize most American cities. City planners must be familiar with the history of their colored communities in order to appreciate how the urban crises—both old and new—were created by the accrual and consolidation of ill-gotten wealth and systemically enshrined in systems that preserved White supremacy (Coates, 2014, June Issue).

Movements towards racial equity and antiracist thinking have been mired by a framework that places responsibility for outcomes solely on individuals and communities to the virtual exclusion of larger, interconnected systems (i.e. education, health, employment) that consolidate social, cultural, health and material privileges for certain groups of people (Kendi, 2017). We shall see how some of this thinking, which characterized deeply racist policies and was even

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<sup>35</sup> Following decades of urban population decline, between 2010 to 2014 the White population grew in nearly half of the 50 largest US cities (Badger cited in Takeuchi, Park, Thomas & Teixeira, 2016).

<sup>36</sup> Although beyond the scope of our study, it must be noted that suburbs were never constructed to have functional diversity or a social safety net. The same forces (i.e. globalization, privatization, austerity budgets) that affect the urban poor now contribute to an increasing rate of poverty in suburbia (Allard, 2017).

appropriated by the Black cultural elite, ultimately failed to bring about equitable outcomes. But to appreciate how place meanings and identities become entrenched we need to become familiar with the historical<sup>37</sup> development of segregated places.

### **Pittsburgh's History (Of)fences: A Double Burden**

Born in 1945 in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, the renowned playwright August Wilson wrote a series of 10 plays, referred to as “The Pittsburgh Cycle” (Lyons & Plimpton, 1999, Winter). Each play takes place in a different decade and is meant to showcase the lives of ordinary Black Americans in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Set in Pittsburgh’s Hill District, *Fences* is perhaps his best known play (recently adapted into an Academy Award-winning movie), which portrayed the family life of middle-class African Americans in the 1950s. Wilson uses the fence as an allegory to represent Black America’s shared border with death; the fence is also a spatial boundary that separates fathers from sons, husbands from wives, and present from future. As an interpretive repertoire, the unbuilt fence could also be read as an invisible wall that hemmed in Black families from the fuller field of the American Dream. Yet the fence is also testimony to the resilience of African Americans who had fought hard to secure home ownership and gainful employment in the post-Reconstruction era. Reflecting on his own childhood in “the Hill”, Mock (2017, January 13) offered another useful interpretation. Fences, he wrote, represent both protection and segregation. The fence signifies home ownership and may galvanize Black families into a community. However, *fence* [Latin: *defensum*, “a thing protected or forbidden”] also signifies isolation, both wanted and unwanted. It speaks to communities left to look after

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<sup>37</sup> History, in the main, is the centering of one group’s story over another. However, the traces of that Other group(s) are not entirely absent either. Like footnotes in the margin, they complicate the coherence of any one, single narrative.

themselves, rebuked by the city at large, and themselves suspicious of outsiders. *Fences* bears the traces of Pittsburgh's long and rich Black history. It is worth recalling some of that history here as it offers evidence vital to our study's claim for the relationship between spatial justice and health equity.

The historian Lawrence Glasco (1989) described two types of fences encountered by Pittsburgh's Black communities. The first of what he called a "double burden" was economic stagnation, which hit Pittsburgh particularly hard but disproportionately affected African Americans. The second was the spatial boundaries created by Pittsburgh's rivers and hilly topography, which effectively isolated pockets of Black communities from one another and forestalled efforts to work together to build political and economic solidarity. These factors are still relevant today to the struggles of Pittsburgh's African Americans, particularly the working class, and they underline the importance of efforts to unite communities while building economic sustainability. In fact, many such efforts took root from *within* these communities; yet history also shows us that new fences sprang up when old ones were torn down.

Comparatively little is known about Blacks in Pittsburgh prior to and including the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Glasco, 1989). However, we do know that these first settlers placed great emphasis on education. "The [Black] community" Glasco noted, "stressed both cultural attainments and gentility" (p. 72). In response to Pittsburgh's segregation laws, the Black community established their own school. They protested en masse when, in 1837, Pennsylvania disenfranchised its African Americans. In 1850, the federal government passed the Fugitive Slave Act (requiring that all escaped slaves, particularly those fleeing to the North, be returned to their masters) and thus instituted a system of state sanctioned terror that halved Pittsburgh's Black population. As a result, by 1875 enrollment in their Miller Street School was flagging and—out of necessity—the

Pittsburgh Board of Education desegregated the entire system. Ironically, Glasco noted, because of slavery laws Pittsburgh became one of the first few large cities with desegregated schools<sup>38</sup>. But this, among other gains, would be a pyrrhic victory; under a segregated system there was a need for African American teachers but now they found themselves unemployable because “it was unacceptable for whites to study under a black” (p. 73). Industrial work was scarcely more available despite the city’s mines, mills, factories and offices; African Americans were shut out of jobs except when they were needed—as temporary strikebreakers (ibid.). Despite these obstacles, Pittsburgh’s Blacks made notable strides and by the turn of the century experienced their largest rate of population growth. With these social and cultural successes, Blacks also experienced internal divisions by class, ethnicity and color. Southern Blacks immigrating to the North were held in disdain by their earlier-settling brethren and racial uplift (see the previous section) pervaded the rank and file of the city’s Black institutions. Glasco noted that the Black churches and prominent social clubs exhibited favoritism such as segregating the wealthier and/or the lighter-colored Blacks from the rest.

The First World War was a watershed moment for Blacks in Pittsburgh (Glasco, 1989). With European immigration temporarily halted, factories were forced to employ African Americans. This, along with the desire for Blacks to escape Southern segregation led them again Northward in their “Great Migration” into the cities. Pittsburgh’s Black migrants contributed immensely to the city’s social life, music and sports. However, Blacks came into the city at a

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<sup>38</sup> (Whitaker, 2018) also noted how the philanthropic contributions of Pittsburgh’s industrial capitalists helped fund integrated schools in the city that birthed scores of Black graduates, many of whom would go on to become well-regarded cultural and political luminaries.

time when the American industrial sector was beginning to decline. During the 1920s, many Whites left the city as skilled labor was increasingly hard to come by; Blacks, having nowhere to go, accepted unskilled positions which saw their population grow by 46 percent (Glasco; Trotter & Day, 2010). Working under deplorable conditions for what little wages they could get<sup>39</sup>, Black workers were often set against White workers, as they were usually employed to break strikes<sup>40</sup>. Unions, when they were nonracist, however, proved to be a boon for worker solidarity between Blacks and Whites. The combination of unemployment, environmental pollution, racial discrimination, and segregation contributed to soaring rates of chronic disease, death and crime in the Hill District. Loan discrimination and redlining practices also resulted in very low rates of home ownership compared to neighboring districts in Polish Hill and Bloomfield, which Glasco noted were respectively settled by Slavic and Italian populations. The Hill however was not the only Black settlement. Many Blacks lived in East Liberty, the North Side, Beltzhoover and Homewood. However, the spatial boundaries created by the city's hills and rivers prevented strong alliances between these communities. In fact, as upwardly mobile residents left the Hill and moved to East Liberty, Beltzhoover and Homewood, the Hill became increasingly poor and neglected. Homewood (whose dilapidated condition I described earlier) was once an exemplar for uplift aspirations. In the 1930s, Homewood's residents were described as "respectable,

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<sup>39</sup> The street corners of these Northern cities, where Black laborers would be recruited for the day, were colloquially referred to as the new "slave markets" Kendi (2017).

<sup>40</sup> But subsequently fired when the strikes ended, hence the slogan: Last hired, first fired. The documentary (Buba & Henderson, 1996) interviews generations of Pittsburgh's African Americans who worked in the steel industry. Theirs is a story of discrimination and struggle but also of national resistance, organized labor and political advocacy that resulted in federal consent decrees that greatly expanded access for African Americans to the labor markets.



working people desirous of making their homes and neighborhoods as attractive as possible” (Bodnar et al., cited in Glasgow, p. 80). So, we may ask, what happened to Pittsburgh’s Black middle class?

Part of the issue concerned the difficulties Black college graduates had in finding work in a city that refused to hire them for anything more than menial labor. In fact, many upwardly mobile African Americans left Pittsburgh to pursue more lucrative opportunities out West (Walls cited in Glasco, 1989). Those who remained found themselves unable to integrate into middle-class neighborhoods, as Whites would leave soon upon their arrival. Racial discrimination in the 1930s translated Roosevelt’s New Deal for Whites into an ‘Old Deal’ or ‘Raw Deal’ for Blacks (Coates, 2014, June Issue; Kendi, 2017; Trotter & Day, 2010). FHA loans, offered to poor Whites, were denied to aspiring Blacks who wished to live in middle-class neighborhoods; laborers and domestic service employees—the bulk of the Black workforce—were excluded from the new federal benefits such as minimum wage and hour codes. Yet again, despite these obstacles, Pittsburgh’s Blacks had forged vital social, political and economic networks. Among their successes was the Freedom House Ambulance Service (the city’s first mobile ambulance program and a pioneering model for the entire nation; Starzenski, 2009), a “Jitney” taxi service (twice as large as the city’s taxi and bus services, which had excluded Black workers; Davis & Johnson cited in Trotter & Day, 2010), and the best-rated Black weekly magazine in the nation, the *Pittsburgh Courier*. Headed by Robert Vann (one of the earliest Black settlers in Homewood), the *Courier* promoted a familiar uplift message which called Blacks to personal accountability and excoriated those who fell into the vise of drug use, teen pregnancy, eviction and crime (Buni cited in Glasco). We must note here that although this kind of moralism was

problematic for shifting the focus from systemic discrimination to individual failings<sup>41</sup>, it was considerably better than the prevailing White attitudes which categorized *all* Blacks as inferior beings (Kendi, 2017). Despite the strong sports and cultural contributions of Pittsburgh's African Americans, the prevention of home ownership contributed to the decline of the Black middle class and also heralded the community's loss of economic and political viability in the post WWII era.

Yet things began with promise. Crippled by the Depression and largely ignored by the New Deal, African Americans found employment in the city following the labor shortages of WWII<sup>42</sup>. The *Courier* ran a "Double V" campaign: "Victory Abroad and Victory [Against Discrimination] at Home" (Dalfiume cited in Trotter & Day, 2010). And though Blacks were denied home mortgages, the city's public housing projects offered healthier and safer alternatives to the dilapidated buildings on the Hill (Trotter & Day, 2010). Unfortunately, the post war boom also ushered in renewal projects (including the construction of a civic arena) that brutally uprooted many Hilltop communities (Fullilove, 2009; Fullilove & Wallace, 2011). A 1962 report by the Allegheny Council (ACTION) on urban renewal stated that the County's non-White

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<sup>41</sup> Elsewhere, Glasco (1996) notes the historicism in which Black writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly those commissioned to contribute to the groundbreaking Pittsburgh Survey, often minimized problems of racism and instead focused on the successes of certain individuals. He claims that this was a deliberate choice on their part both to shore up group solidarity amongst Blacks and also to combat White assumptions of universal Black inferiority. Black writers also had to be cautious about sounding out racism so as not to alienate their White audience.

<sup>42</sup> Trotter and Day (2010) noted that African Americans across the nation and particularly in Pittsburgh were very proactive in organizing for labor rights and affirmative action agreements. Equitable jobs were still hard to come by. Black women in particular often found themselves unemployed or relegated to the lowest positions while their White counterparts occupied jobs previously held by the men who had left to fight abroad.

population (which was 98% Black) were “disadvantaged both economically and specifically in its housing...” and that “these two conditions are interrelated” (p. 21). The report went on to state that Blacks “are heavily concentrated in areas at present or potentially scheduled for clearance and redevelopment” (ibid.).

The Civil Rights movement was another landmark event in Black American history. With the Civil Rights Act in 1964, services that were exclusively for Whites (or were segregated) became de-segregated and available for Blacks. While this greatly improved the living conditions for almost all African Americans, the influx of health, education, transportation, retail and recreational services coming from outside the Black community greatly undermined their self-sufficiency and self-efficacy. This eventually led to the closure of some important Black institutions such as Pittsburgh’s two Negro National League baseball teams and the *Courier* magazine<sup>43</sup> (Trotter & Day, 2010). In the 1970s and 1980s competition from global labor markets, technological changes and a federal pivot away from manufacturing sent Pittsburgh through a period of massive steelworks closures and deindustrialization (Trotter & Day, 2010). Wealth and employment gaps widened between Blacks and Whites and between the Black working and middle classes (Glasco, 1989). By the 1990s, Pittsburghers suffered from nation-high unemployment and poverty rates. Blacks however were disproportionately set back<sup>44</sup>;

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<sup>43</sup> Fortunately, the magazine was bought one year later by John H. Sengstacke, a Black newspaper mogul, and re-opened as *The New Pittsburgh Courier* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pittsburgh\\_Courier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pittsburgh_Courier)).

<sup>44</sup> Although federal policy and globalization were important factors, Blacks also contended with outright racism as Trotter and Day (2010) described the efforts of grassroots White organizations in Pittsburgh to deny African Americans competition for jobs and entry into schools. As a result, many skilled and educated young Blacks left

during this time, Pittsburgh recorded some of the nation's highest racial gaps in education, unemployment, poverty and home ownership rates between Blacks and Whites across age cohorts (UCSUR, 1995). Unemployment, the influx of crack cocaine and federal policies aimed at the mass incarceration of Blacks and Hispanics<sup>45</sup> ignited a fuse of violence and gang activity in Pittsburgh's Black neighborhoods (Trotter & Day, 2010). This was again followed by another wave of urban renewal (Hyra cited in Fullilove, 2014) as housing projects were demolished to make way for mixed-income communities<sup>46</sup>. Again, the double burden of economic and geospatial segregation preempted community efforts to coordinate leadership and priorities (Gilbert cited in Glasco). The double-burden not only created fences between the city's Blacks and Whites but also divided up neighborhoods and engendered strife within Black communities

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Pittsburgh for opportunities down South in what a 1990 article in the *Wall Street Journal* called a "reverse exodus" (cited in *ibid.*).

<sup>45</sup> Ava DuVernay's acclaimed documentary, *13<sup>th</sup>* (2016), revealed how the influx of drugs combined with mass incarceration and plea bargain deals (to unclog the courts) created a new Black underclass—not seen since slavery—of men and women whose prison labor has been exploited with little to no compensation. In *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2010), Michelle Alexander makes the case that drug laws (i.e. mandatory minimum sentencing, three-strike rules, life without parole for non-violent offenses) are racially motivated and covertly sold to the public using a discourse of criminality set against the sanctity of (White) communities. Incarceration sets up a vicious circle of recidivism as being Black with a criminal record, makes one doubly marked for unemployment and thus, hopelessness and desperation (Reisig, Bales, Hay, & Wang, 2007).

<sup>46</sup> In his new book on urban renewal, Hyra (2017) uses an ethnographic analysis to show how "negro removal" is now happening on a microscale, within neighborhoods. Describing a "gilded ghetto" or "cappuccino city", Hyra details how Whites are moving back to the inner-cities and developing housing, retail and recreation spaces that—although not officially segregated—socially and economically exclude existing Black residents.

that eventually undermined their vitality. During this period, the city witnessed a resurgence in classism and colorism as middle-class Blacks began to worry about the influx of working-class individuals and those deemed immoral and dangerous (Williams cited in Glasco). Yet through it all, Black communities retained their own vital structures of support; the Urban League of Pittsburgh, for example, in partnership with neighborhood-based churches and organizations provided essential social<sup>47</sup> and healthcare services to their residents (Glasco, 1989; Trotter & Day, 2010). While formal segregation ended with the Civil Rights movement, affirmative action expanded opportunities for working and middle-class Blacks in the city. The Hill, a bastion of Black culture survived its dark age and emerged as a hub for urban and social planning<sup>48</sup>. Although this history is marked by losses, injustice and bittersweet victories, the story of African Americans in Pittsburgh is ultimately a testimony to how Black communities have continually scaled social and geographic fences to create important civic and cultural institutions that have enriched the city as a whole. The struggle continues to this day.

### **Framing our Interventions Through Interpretive Repertoires**

Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody. (Jacobs, 1961, p. 174)

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<sup>47</sup> In many cases communities teamed up with local government to make vital changes. In 1997, for example, Pittsburgh authored the nation's first consent decree to address racially biased policing (Stolberg, 2017, April 9). Unfortunately, the consent decree expired in 2002 and was not renewed. This case illustrates the need for continued cooperation between local politics and federal policy.

<sup>48</sup> In the 1990s a grant from the Falk Fund enabled the Hill District Collaborative to bring in Robert and Mindy Fullilove as consultants. They helped create the Coalition for a Healthy Habitat, which gives the Hill's residents input into the city's urban renewal policies (Trotter & Day, 2010).

The psychological impact of urban renewal, particularly in Pittsburgh's Hill District, has been well documented (see Fullilove, 1986, 2009, 2014; Fullilove & Wallace, 2011; Simms, 2008b). As urban renewal and gentrification swept across US cities, social and spatial boundaries between neighborhoods and communities were quickly realtered. Communities that were once cohesive were now divided between old and new residents, and although they shared a geographic space, older residents often perceived certain communal places as *no longer for them* because they were not made stakeholders in the consulting and development process (Hyra, 2017). Despite better intentions, external interventions often weakened the integrity of the communities they served. From a phenomenological perspective, we understand that people and their communities are deeply rooted in one another. If one or the other is displaced there will be devastating consequences to the whole. As early as 1962, urban researchers from the Allegheny Council (ACTION) recognized that "merely shifting [Black communities] without a program aimed at fundamental improvement of their lot can only lead to a compounding of the problems of the spread of blight with *touchy questions of human relations*" (p. 27, emphasis added). They recommended that the city make a concentrated effort to make educational, employment and housing opportunities directly available for its Black population. Clearly, their recommendations were not taken up and the 'touchy questions' remain.<sup>49</sup>

Surveying this brief history, we can see how *fences* function as an IR characterizing the dual nature of spatial and social borders within the Black community; fences signify ownership and protection but also create isolation and division. Stakeholders who work within fences must

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<sup>49</sup> Yet the prevailing view is that Pittsburgh's urban renewal was a success and, despite its segregation, it consistently ranks as one of the most livable places in the US (Levy, 2010, April 29; Smit, 2014, August 25; VisitPITTSBURGH, 2017).

respond to the visceral urgency from within the community to be seen and also included in planning and decision-making. Re-writing the spatial epidermal schemas that negatively characterize certain places and their people will likely require external interventions however stakeholders should also mobilize the communities' internal resources and seek to strengthen them where possible. External stakeholders should also be aware of their tendencies to build fences between themselves and the communities they serve. Institutional language may disempower people intellectually, socially and emotionally and invalidate the cultural referents that shape the knowledge, attitudes and history of a community (Ladson-Billings, 1994). To organize research, training and advocacy that is multi-systemic, interdisciplinary and antiracist we need a discourse that respects the agency of communities as well as the vital humanity of Other bodies. Working towards a holistic vision of place and community, developers may preserve the boundaries of ownership in a neighborhood while bringing down fences that divide communities from one another and the larger city.

Essentially, clinicians and researchers must facilitate place-making. This process will be greatly aided if we understand place as encompassing more than a geography or region but as a field of self-other-world relationships. This perspective fundamentally regards place as a nexus of relationships that must be engaged through open dialogue. By considering spatial epidermal schemas we may address negative stereotypes while fostering a sense of pride that people may feel about their places.

In the previous chapter we saw how urban places can bring people together from diverse backgrounds and cultures through creating an urban canopy space. In contrast to wastelands, such places are positive examples of what we call the *commons*. Commons is of course the root word in community, which The National Academies of Sciences Engineering and Medicine

(2017) defines as “any configuration of individuals, families, and groups whose values, characteristics, interests, geography, or social relations unify them in some way...” but may refer to “both the people living in a place and the place itself” (p. 1). According to Walljasper (2010), the commons may refer to space or resources that are available to everyone in the community. Examples of commons might include natural resources such as the air, oceans and mountains but also human-made resources such as governance, language, cultural forms and customs and open-access technologies such as the internet. We could broaden this definition of the commons to include things that are private or state-owned but in the public domain such as national parks, public transportation, libraries, blood banks, unions, museums, festivals, nonprofit organizations and urban green spaces. Beginning with the industrial revolution however and continuing through our current regime of global capitalism we are facing an unprecedented erosion and theft of this space, so vital to our civic life (Agyeman, 2013).

The commons [PIE root: *ko* “together” + *moi-n-* “change or exchange”] functions as an IR that signifies these collective materials, relationships, values as well as a vision for the future. These assets, relationships, values and vision can be leveraged to a) foster authentic community engagement b) instill ownership and accountability for outcomes c) reinforce existing change strategies d) increase resilience e) allow intergenerational and cultural exchange and f) increase partnerships and cross-boundary collaboration (NASEM, 2017). *Commons, in short, invokes community, communication and commitment towards change.* “As a paradigm”, says Bollier (2014), “the commons consists of working, evolving models of self-provisioning and stewardship that combine the economic and the social, the collective and the personal. It is humanistic at its core but also richly political in implication...” (pp. 4/5).



Fullilove (2013) uses *urban alchemy* as an IR to emphasize the need for processes that coordinate the many elements that make the commons. These processes include framing the identity of place, mending fractured space, creating meaningful places, showing solidarity with all of life and celebrating accomplishments as a community. Fullilove's processes align with what Simms (cited in Fullilove, 2014) called "community practices"; these encompass "the complex and reciprocal relationships among people and the economic, social and physical resources [currently] existing in the location" (Fullilove, 2014, p. 146). In this context, *community* frames the group of people who are doing these practices as active agents who belong to a collective and are capable of acting in their self-interests (Potter & Collie; Potter & Reicher cited in Wetherell & Potter). On the other hand, simply saying 'group' or 'local' practices, does not quite render the individual agents into a cohesive, self-organizing unit. Communities are an organic dynamic of several interrelated systems, they require systemic interventions but have already developed a level of cohesiveness and agency which researchers can optimize (Frerichs, Lich, Dave, & Corbie-Smith, 2016). A community that is able to sustain cooperation, resilience and opportunity amongst its people is the ideal unit to engage participatory action research. Moreover, the term *practices* suggests skill-based, growth-oriented and morally positive behaviors and interactions. External stakeholders are beginning to appreciate how communities may aid in the assessment and planning process through the use of inclusive tools such as interactive mapping projects and focus groups (NPS & CDC, 2016). Collectively, a community can become an important stakeholder to leverage academic strategies into government policies (Cacari-Stone, Wallerstein, Garcia, & Minkler, 2014). Through these participatory relationships, communities may be assisted in overcoming spatial inequities through partnerships with external agencies and nonprofit groups, which can aid with funding, education/training, needs assessment

and resource allocation (Westphal, 2003). As an IR, *community practices* may be used in discourse to advocate both for and against external interventions, depending on how one weighs



Figure 3.4. Pittsburgh's East Liberty district (picture taken by the author in March, 2017). Notice the words “history, art, community” emblazoned on the windows of closed storefronts, many of which were formerly Black-owned businesses. A recent report indicates that East Liberty experienced a population loss of its African American residents in two waves. The first occurred between 2005-2011 due to housing foreclosure and abandonment of the neighborhood while the second wave, beginning in 2013 and continuing today, is due to gentrification and market forces that drastically raised the threshold for rent and home ownership (Fabusuyi & Hill, 2018).

the costs and benefits with respect to community stakeholders. Without attention to spatial justice or a sufficient historical lens, ‘community’ discourses can be co-opted into profit-making schemes that do not benefit the residents.

When resident stakeholders are not involved then economic development becomes potentially exploitative, toxic and unsustainable, social development becomes segregated and marginalized and environmental development becomes inefficient, irrelevant and untenable<sup>50</sup>. If the vital, life affirming processes of common places require place attachment and social capital

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<sup>50</sup> The Hill District, despite its strong political leadership, must still contend with the city government and Urban Redevelopment Authority who are currently trying to acquire land in the neighborhood without consulting stakeholders within the community (R. Taylor, 2017, June 6).

(Mihaylov & Perkins, 2014; Seamon, 2014), then residents need to be represented at all levels of decision making. Moreover, when residents are given a community forum to converse around their place and history, they may develop more insight into their places and be more empowered as advocates. In short, developers ought to be wholly accountable to the existing social and environmental processes within that community. Such efforts reimagine fences as skin boundaries where different groups can meet and promote inclusion and equity.

As we stated in Chapter 1, we hope that our historical and theoretical investigations into place will help pave trails between the academy, external service providers and the community. More research is needed to study the relationships between systems (i.e. health, education, housing, justice) while also including the voices of community stakeholders who are not typically involved. In short, research and interventions designed to help the community must propose to move beyond the familiar vehicle of *outreach*, which relies primarily on external knowledge and skills (often without community feedback or ownership) to a model of *in-reach* or better, *within-reach*, which leverages the vitality and resilience of individuals and communities and helps them overcome systemic barriers to pave their own paths to success. Now that we have looked at the history of race discrimination in the city, we will use a spatial justice model to examine the current health inequities that this has engendered.

## CHAPTER 4. WORKING TOWARDS HEALTH EQUITY USING SPATIAL JUSTICE

Researchers and clinicians are increasingly thinking about the social determinants of mental and physical health (Commission on Social Determinants of Health, 2008; Di Thiene & Marceca, 2008; Dlamini & Chiao, 2015; Leclerc, Kaminski, & Lang, 2009; Marmot, 2005, 2009; Marmot, Friel, Bell, Houweling, & Taylor, 2008; Sheiham, 2009). This perspective considers factors beyond variations in individual characteristics and behaviors. Systemic factors such as physical and social environments, public safety, housing, education, transportation, and employment as well as identifying factors such as SES, gender, and race all wield influence on health and confer disproportionate advantages for some groups over others. On April 7, 2017—World Health Day—the UN Office of the High Commissioner released a statement stating:

[W]e should not accept that medications and other biomedical interventions be commonly used to address issues which are closely related to social problems, unequal power relationships, violence and other adversities that determine our social and emotional environment. There is a need of a shift in investments in mental health, from focusing on "chemical imbalances" to focusing on "power imbalances" and inequalities (Pūras, 2017, para. 13) .

Though this statement sounds progressive, it dates back many decades. Back in 1978, the World Health Organization (WHO) initiated a campaign called *Health For all by the Year 2000*; there they defined health as a “state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity...” they further mentioned that “[health] is a fundamental human right...whose realization requires the action of many other social and economic sectors in addition to the health sector” (WHO cited in Fernando, 1991, p. 209). Despite this knowledge, it is well known that the US—despite spending the most on health care—suffers poorer health and fields lower outcomes of measures of well-being relative to most

other industrialized nations (Bradley, Taylor, & Fineberg, 2015). It turns out that these countries spend relatively more on social services and universal protection systems to alleviate inequalities in wealth and education. Their spending patterns are associated with better overall health and lower mortality rates, particularly among socially marginalized groups (Marmot et al., 2008). But health care is not simply an economic matter, it is a matter of social justice and that, as the WHO put it, “is a matter of life and death” (WHO, 2008, p. 3).

*Health equity* is defined as “the state in which everyone has the opportunity to attain full health potential and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or any other socially defined circumstance” (p. 1, NASEM, 2017). The WHO is tasked with developing government policies to address “avoidable inequalities in health between groups of people”, while the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion develops practical strategies for individuals and communities to alleviate *health disparities*, which are defined as “a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

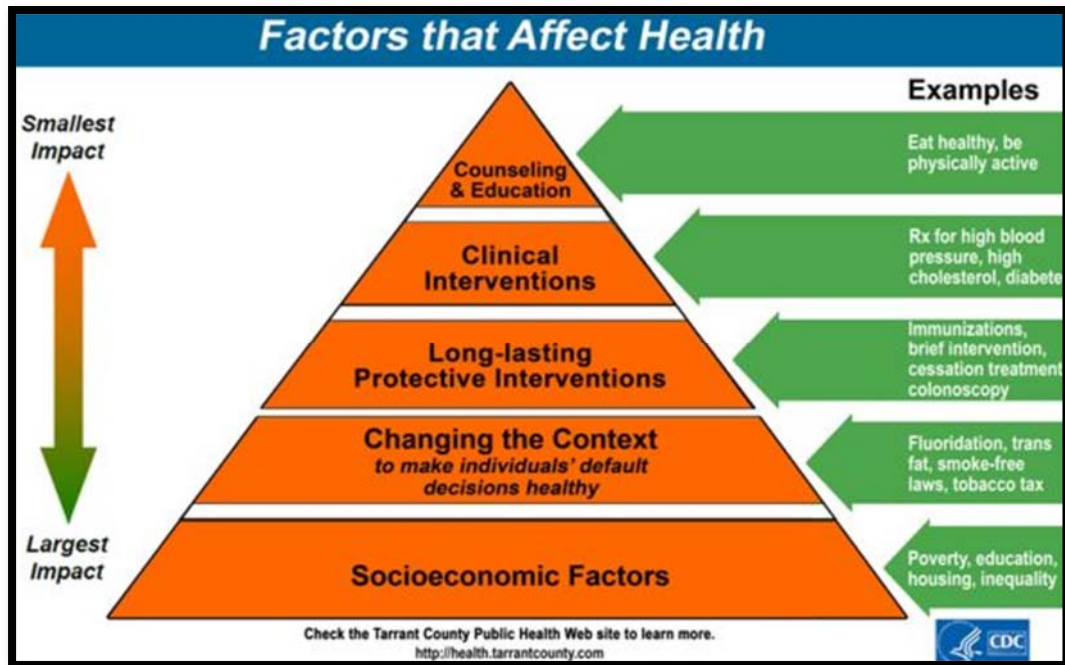


Figure 4.1. CDC Health Impact Pyramid. Retrieved from: <http://www.mapc.org/hia>

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Figure 4.1), our inordinate focus on clinical interventions and education is insufficient to offset the impact of socioeconomic factors, which are the greatest overall predictors of health. We may be cognitively biased to focus on individual health behaviors because they are most accessible within our everyday intentional domain. But this cognitive bias has profound limitations. As Figure 4.2 shows, by focusing solely on individualistic factors we may unintentionally construct vulnerable populations as lazy, irresponsible or pathological; consequently our interventions will be limited to moralizing, policing and/or biomedical care. The individualistic, biomedical model has dominated for decades and the outcomes have not improved. We urgently need to examine systemic factors behind poor health outcomes and we can do so by focusing on wellness (vs. acute care), addressing barriers such as poor access or exclusive insurance coverage, integrating

with other social and community services and empowering peer support groups rather than solely relying on external service providers.

Too often interventions are targeted towards individual factors (in both service providers and patient populations) such as ignorance, poor attitudes, behavioral practices etc. If interventions were to also address systemic factors then perhaps we would be breaking new ground towards health equity.

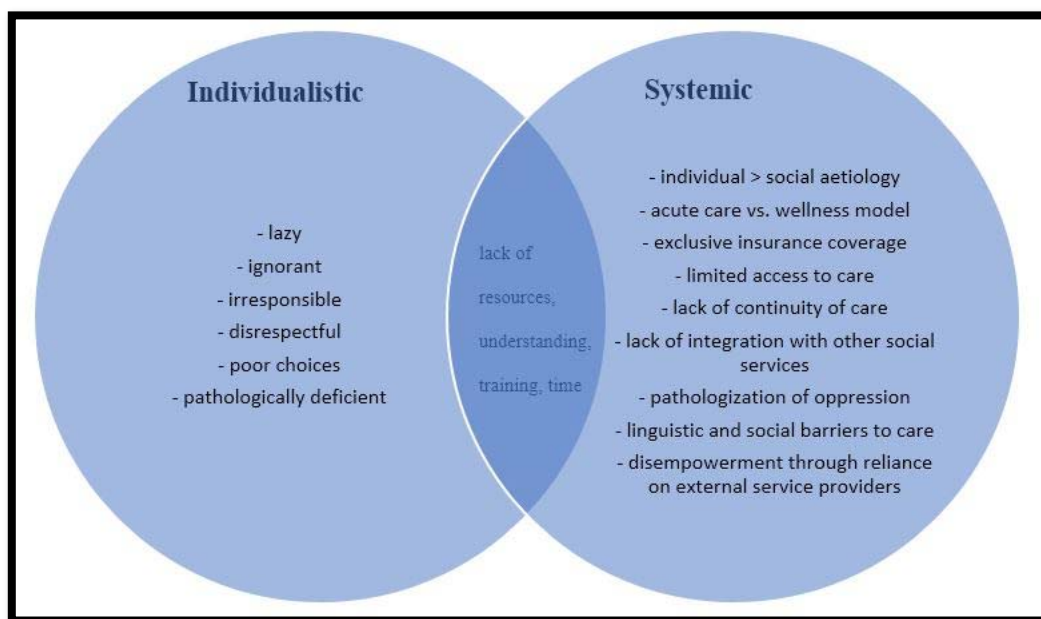


Figure 4.2. Individualistic and systemic factors negatively affecting health outcomes. Adapted from a health equity training seminar (James & Hill, 2017, April).

Working to make these cultural shifts within our institutions means that we will need to I) make health equity a core value II) foster collaborations between health, employment, non-profit,

and other sectors III) ensure a continuity between research and care and IV) increase the community's capacity to plan and create its own outcomes (NASEM, 2017) <sup>51</sup>.

Our study considers some social determinants of health such as the environment (i.e. urban green space) and work as well as identifying factors of race, gender and class to explore how wellbeing is achieved by participants in the ETC program. We have focused on racial disparities and spatial justice in order to develop a multi-systemic and culturally reflexive research perspective. In this chapter, we look at race as the single largest predictor of disparities in spatial justice and, consequently, health outcomes. By incorporating a spatial justice perspective into our systemic analysis, we acknowledge that places—phenomenally contiguous with bodies—must be empowered. We make the link between spatial justice and health by surveying Pittsburgh's current landscape of health inequities.

### **Placing Justice**

Individual wellbeing is facilitated by access to socially and economically vibrant places. Beyond individual wellbeing, we are concerned with wellbeing for all. The concept of *justice* [Latin: *iustus*, “upright, righteous, equitable...”] however, is multifaceted and has no operational center or place (Foucault, 1977). Consequently, justice—and injustice—are not reducible to laws and their enforcement but are manifest in everyday places. Picture, for example, a retail store in a high-income neighborhood. You may notice bright, open displays that entice pedestrians to stop and look. Inside, the rooms are spacious and attractive; items are on display and patrons are entitled to walk through. The music, scents and colors encourage a state of relaxation and even

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<sup>51</sup> NASEM's framework was informed by the Robert Wood Johnson (RWJF) Culture of Health Action Framework and the Prevention Institute's *Systems Framework to Achieve an Equitable Culture of Health* (see NASEM, 2017, p. 5).



idle reverie. Under the consumer gaze, most things are available for possession. Now let us go to the ‘the other side of the tracks’; imagine another store in a so-called blighted neighborhood. It is opaque to the gaze of passersby, windows are barred with iron lattice. Inside, the wares are secured behind glass and watchful eyes (or cameras) follow you from the moment the door chime announces your presence. In the first neighborhood, space is designed to facilitate free, upright movement; walking with dignity, if not purpose. Notice then that the word *upright* not only describes a spatial configuration but also a moral bearing of freedom, righteousness and entitlement (i.e. ownership). In the second neighborhood, one is virtually on trial and presumed guilty upon arrival. The spatial epidermal schemas that characterize these places could not be more different. As we had seen in Chapter 2, privilege may be observed in one’s corporeal orientation in space and in the very designs of places. This research supports our claim that one’s perception of place informs one’s perception of its people. If a given place is dilapidated, we are perceptually biased towards viewing people through that lens rather than critiquing the institutional injustices that produce these conditions—as these systems are much more abstract.

Observing the real-life impacts of these place disparities, Soja (2010) stated that, “[j]ustice, however it might be defined, has a *consequential geography*” (p. 1). Drawing from the spatial philosophies of Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre, Soja suggested that our behaviors and interactions can be mapped according to a consequential geography in which natural forms, architectural designs and urban planning conspicuously reproduce forms of social control and discipline (Soja, 2009, 2010, 2011). Foucault (1977) demonstrated this in his historical analysis of the design of prisons and mental asylums, while Lefebvre (cited in Shaw & Graham, 2017) argued that rights needed to be distributed evenly across space. Our current discourse on justice is centered on human rights. Article 3 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, states “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person” (UN General Assembly, 1948, p.

2). This statement aligns with the unalienable rights to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” enshrined in the United States Declaration of Independence. However, we contend that rights must also be examined with a critical awareness to spatial production, noting who is privileged and who is marginalized. Rights therefore are not reducible to individual freedoms but must be seen as social processes involving multiple stakeholders. According to Davoudi and Brooks (2016), this shift in focus “...is not only on who gets what, but also on who counts, who gets heard, what matters and who does what” (p. 25). In addition to equitable and accessible distribution of resources, justice is advanced by empowering individuals and communities through institutional recognition, participatory decision-making, ownership stake, and self-determination of their own values.

Soja (2010) also advocated a “critical spatial perspective” that looks at our relationship with place in the context of historical and socialization processes. Assuming a critical consciousness of space allows us to think about how social and geographic borders in the city may produce inequities. In our review of urban renewal (Chapter 3), we saw how structural barriers had historically prevented African Americans from fully realizing their rights to the city. These barriers date back to slavery and colonialism but the traces of these institutions linger in policies within our labor, housing, transportation and judicial sectors. Even within racially mixed or so-called ‘multiethnic’ neighborhoods, there is evidence of racial and socioeconomic inequality which reproduces society’s dominant power relations (Hyra, 2017; Walton & Hardebeck, 2016). Therefore, spatial justice cannot be achieved simply by interventions that minimize distance between groups. Stakeholders must also address structural barriers, which we may consider the not-absent traces of a marginalized history.

## Racial Disparities in Health and Environment

As long as race is a predictor of differences in health outcomes, we don't have equity.

– Joyce James, *personal communication*

There is decades of data showing educational, employment, housing and health disparities by race in America (Iceland & Wilkes, 2006; Kawachi, Daniels, & Robinson, 2005; Mays, Cochran, & Barnes, 2007; Nazroo, 2003; PolicyLink & Program for Environmental and Regional Equity, 2016; Reeves & Matthew, 2016; D. R. Williams & Collins, 2001; D. R. Williams, Mohammed, Leavell, & Collins, 2010). There are, of course, complex relationships between inequity and gender as well as class, immigration status and other factors in addition to race. However, *race consistently exacerbates disparities even when all other factors are statistically controlled for*. We know, for example, that an African American mother with an advanced professional degree is statistically more likely to suffer infant complications and mortality than a Caucasian mother without a high school education (CDC, 2014). This research and others support the claim that White poverty/sexism is not the same as Black poverty/sexism (Coates, 2016, January 24; James & Hill, 2017, April; Kendi, 2017). Unfortunately, racial disparities have persisted (and even worsened) over the generations (Williams et al., 2010). Without a systemic framework, we may place undue responsibility on individuals. Disadvantaged Black mothers, for example, are frequently blamed for their higher rates of infant mortality (Meadows-Fernandez, 2017, May 4). Often, this blame is framed in terms of stereotypes (e.g. they are not willing to access health services, they use illicit drugs). Such Othering narratives only thicken the institutional barriers that impede access to healthier outcomes. To be make sense of the data on health disparities, health practitioners and researchers must consider generational, familial, lifecourse and epigenetic impacts of racial trauma in

addition to the other social determinants of health (i.e. in education, employment, environment, housing, and justice) (Gee, Walsemann, & Brondolo, 2012; D. R. Williams et al., 2010).

Regarding racial disparities and spatial justice, African Americans are more segregated than any immigrant group in US history. Moreover, African Americans—regardless of SES—tend to be concentrated in the highest-risk neighborhoods (Crowder & Downey, 2010; R. J. Sampson & Wilson, 1995). Although disappointing, this fact is not surprising considering that slavery is America’s oldest institution and has birthed a score of segregationist policies that have particularly disadvantaged Blacks (Matthew et al., 2016)<sup>52</sup>. Unlike most other ethnic groups, African Americans experience persistently high levels of segregation across generations (Williams & Collins; Massey cited in Williams et al., 2010; Matthew, Rodrigue, & Reeves, 2016)<sup>53</sup>. Demographic data shows, for example, clear housing disparities between poor Black and poor White families on Section 8 housing vouchers; poor Blacks tend to be segregated in high-poverty areas while poor Whites are much more integrated into middle-class neighborhoods with lower crime rates and better school systems (Misra, 2017, May 5). These differences simply cannot be explained by SES or individual or group preferences. Over generations these housing disparities will produce large inequities in health and wealth. So significant is the impact of place on health outcomes that Ron Sims, former deputy secretary for the Department of Housing and

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<sup>52</sup> R. J. Sampson and Wilson (1995) found that Native Americans were the only other group with comparably bleak outcomes resulting from segregation.

<sup>53</sup> White Americans are also more segregated from Blacks than any other group (Matthew et al., 2016). The segregation also implies class divisions. In Pittsburgh, Blacks make up the highest proportion of residents in high-poverty neighborhoods whereas Whites are the lowest (PolicyLink & Program for Environmental and Regional Equity, 2016).

Urban Development, once claimed “zip codes are life determinants” (cited in Ellison, 2017)<sup>54</sup>. In a longitudinal study (2001 – 2014) on the association of income to life expectancy in the US, Chetty et al. (2016) found, not surprisingly, that life expectancy was strongly correlated with income. More interesting however was the role of place and community in determining life expectancy. Of course, environmental factors—which we will soon speak to—have a major impact on health but their data also consistently showed that poor people tend to live longer in places with a higher percentage of immigrants, higher median home value, increased local government expenditures, higher population density, and a higher percentage of college graduates. In addition to income, it would seem that diversity, housing, government support, urban networks and education increase health equity. There is also evidence that individuals suffering from residential displacement—what Fullilove (1986, 2009) calls “root shock”—also have poorer mental health outcomes (Lim et al., 2017). In Figure 4.3 below, we can clearly observe how historical practices of spatial injustice in Pittsburgh (i.e. redlining) resulted in current patterns of inequity.

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<sup>54</sup> The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation provides an interactive webtool that calculates average life expectancy for men and women based on zip code:

<http://www.rwjf.org/en/library/interactives/whereyouliveaffectshowlongyoulive.html>

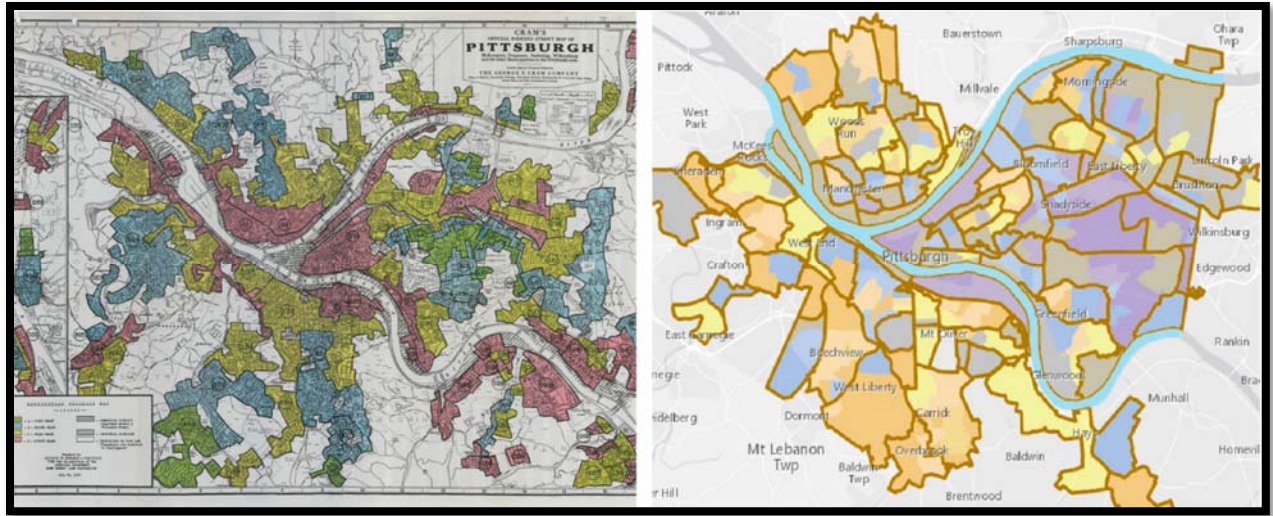


Figure 4.3. [Left] A map of early 20th century redlining (red representing segregated areas) in Pittsburgh vs. [Right] market value analysis of housing today (darker hues represent higher land value). Both images taken from the OnePGH report (2017).

The focus on health inequities has also highlighted environmental factors such as air and water pollution, noise and lack of green space, which disproportionately burden communities of color (Flacke, Shule, Kockler, & Bolte, 2016; Gouveia, 2016). Yet most of the current academic discourse on environmentalism focuses mainly on either global climate concerns (e.g. CO<sup>2</sup> concentration, ozone depletion, deforestation etc.) or conservation efforts (Agyeman, 2013; Pellow, 2016). However with the majority of the world's population now living in and around cities (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014), we must reconsider environmentalism within an urban context. Though underemphasized, this perspective is not new. In fact since the early 1970s researchers have studied the impact of SES on exposure to air quality; during the social activism movements of the 1980s, many environmentalists began to examine the experiences of socially marginalized communities (Pellow, 2016). There are now hundreds of studies that have examined how urban communities had been affected by dangerous infrastructures (e.g. landfills, factories), transportation systems, and pollution (Ringquist cited in

Pellow). It is now well known that “racial and ethnic minority neighborhoods disproportionately bear the brunt of environmental harm in the United States and it is well established that neighborhoods matter when it comes to explaining racial disparities in health and well-being” (Teixeira & Zuberi, 2016, p. 847).

The field of *environmental justice* explores the relationships between environmental factors and other urban issues such as housing discrimination, segregation, and crime (Teixeira & Zuberi, 2016). For example, there is research demonstrating the correlation between lead exposure, racial segregation and poorer developmental outcomes (R. J. Sampson & Winter, 2016). Yet more research is needed to understand the multi-systemic impacts of environmental burdens, such as air pollution or lack of clean water infrastructure, that disproportionately affect communities of color (Gasteyer, Lai, Tucker, Carrera, & Moss, 2016; Kravitz-Wirtz, Crowder, Hajat, & Sass, 2016; Schulz et al., 2016). But despite the available research that does demonstrate racial disparities in health, we have not seen commensurate efforts at coordinating health care, education, employment, housing and community development to offset these health inequities (García & Sharif, 2015). Our mainstream medical discourse still minimizes the health impacts of racism and racialization (Fernando, 1991). Therefore, García and Sharif (2015) call for researchers, clinicians and policy makers to attend to the real, visceral impacts of discrimination upon marginalized groups and understand how “existing power structures may impede otherwise well-intentioned public health interventions” (p. 28). Accordingly, environmental justice scholars have developed research models which are inclusive of community stakeholder engagement, with youth as a particular focus (Dill, Morrison, & Dunn, 2016; Teixeira & Sing, 2016; Teixeira & Zuberi, 2016). Our current study aims to engage community stakeholders through a community presentation of the findings (see Chapter 6). Next,

we will look at local epidemiological data that contextualizes health disparities in Pittsburgh in terms of spatial injustice.

### **History is This-Story: Health Disparities as a Function of Segregated Neighborhoods**

Allegheny County, where the Pittsburgh metropolitan area is located, ranks in the bottom quartile across all US counties in mortality rates due to coronary heart disease (the leading cause of deaths in America), cancer (2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause) and chronic kidney disease (9<sup>th</sup> leading cause) (CDC, 2017; NCHS, 2016). The county also ranks poorly in preventable elderly hospitalizations and suffers high rates of adult binge drinking and smoking. These findings are especially problematic considering the county's relatively lower costs for health care, increased access to primary care, lower cost of housing, lower poverty rates and better than average high school graduation rates (CDC, 2017). But we might make sense of these findings by considering Pittsburgh's history of segregation and looking at data that is de-aggregated by race. And again, this is not new. In 1985, a report by the Secretary of Health and Human Services documented significant health disparities in the US between Blacks and other racial groups compared to Whites (Heckler et al., 1985). Thirty years on, not much has changed. A recent government report found that African Americans had the lowest life expectancy, highest infant mortality and preterm birth rates, second highest child obesity rates, and highest rates of hypertension across the nation (NCHS, 2016). Within Allegheny County, Kurta, Torso, Monroe, and Brink (2015) revealed similar racial health disparities. Compared to Whites (who comprise over 80% of the county's population) Blacks suffer the poorest outcomes in the county, with significantly higher mortality rates from cancer as well as heart and kidney disease. Furthermore Blacks, having twice the rate of non-insurance compared to Whites and make up a disproportionate amount of the county's ER visits (Kurta et al., 2015). Instead of regular, preventative care Blacks are more



likely to be seen in a state of crisis which results in poorer outcomes and higher state costs. These disparities are also evident at the metropolitan, district and neighborhood levels.

Following its manufacturing slump, Pittsburgh has emerged as a paragon of urban planning and health and technological innovation (Galston, 2015; Laneri, 2009, September 2; Tierney, 2014, December 11; A. Young, 2016, August 19). But with any success, one must wonder: “Success for who?” Pittsburgh’s metro area is largely White (87.1%)<sup>55</sup>, with Blacks making up 8.3% of the population. Compared to the national average, a very small portion of the population identifies as either Asian or Hispanic (CRSP, 2015). Compared to Whites, Hispanics and Asians in the metro area, Blacks have poorer educational opportunities and outcomes, with a higher proportion living in poverty. Blacks and Hispanics still have the highest unemployment rates and the lowest home ownership rates. Blacks are also the most segregated minority group and tend to report higher problems with crime and less satisfaction with their neighborhoods. Although compared to other US cities, Pittsburgh has relatively better employment rates and comparable housing, these statistics belie high disparities between Black and White populations (and, to a lesser degree, between Whites and Hispanics; FRBC, 2017)<sup>56</sup>. A recent city report found that Pittsburgh was the 17<sup>th</sup> most residentially segregated US metropolitan region with

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<sup>55</sup> Pittsburgh has the Whitest large metropolitan area (i.e.  $\geq 1$  million pop.) in the US (CRSP, 2015).

<sup>56</sup> We now have data to support the anecdotal evidence that Pittsburgh’s social and economic success is not primarily shared by African Americans. According to a recent report from the Brookings Institution (Shearer, Friedhoff, Shah, & Berube, 2017), which gathered data across all major American cities between 2010 to 2015, the average median wage for African Americans in Pittsburgh dropped nearly 20 percent during this time while every other race saw increases. Conversely, rates of poverty increased by 25.9 percent amongst African Americans while decreasing for Whites and Hispanics. This data is easily—and gravely—comprehensible through graphs made available from <https://projects.publicsource.org/pittsburgh-race/data.html>.

racial inequities in employment and poverty, affordable housing, education, safety and justice, transportation and health (Pittsburgh, 2017). In addition to higher infant mortality rates and deaths due to cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes, Blacks also report significantly higher rates of physical and psychological problems than other groups. Consistent with data at the county level, a much higher proportion of Black Pittsburghers lack health insurance and are significantly less likely than Whites to access mental health and drug abuse services (CRSP, 2015).



Figure 4.4. Allegheny County Council Districts map (taken from: <http://www.achd.net/>)

The Mount Washington community, where our present study was conducted, is grouped within the metropolitan area's 12<sup>th</sup> district. District 12 is highly segregated with 15 of its 27 municipalities being more than 80% White (Kurta et al., 2015). Despite having the highest levels of education across all 13 of the county area's districts, the district also has one of its highest mortality rates. Upon closer inspection, this mortality rate reveals the largest racial gap in the county, with Whites in District 12 living to a median age of 76.6 years compared to 57.8 years

for Blacks (Kurta et al., 2015). This difference—nearly two decades of life—quantifies our claim that spatial (in)justice is indeed a matter of life and death. District 12 also recorded the county’s largest racial disparities in infant mortality rates. Within the district, the only non-White neighborhood is Beltzhoover, which is 83.3% Black. It shares a spatial boundary with the neighborhood of Mount Washington, which is 85.9% White (Kurta et al., 2015). It is revealing therefore to compare the histories of these neighborhoods as they are so close in proximity yet remain divided by spatial epidermal schemas signifying Whiteness in one place and Blackness in the Other. It is a tale of two cities<sup>57</sup>.

Beltzhoover was named after a German landowner who settled the area in 1794. It was primarily rural land until the 1860s, when the McLain and Maple firm bought the land and plotted it into city streets (UCSUR, 1977a). Most of its housing was constructed between 1850 to 1900. First populated by Germans and then Italians, Beltzhoover was increasingly settled by upwardly mobile African Americans who could afford to leave the Hill District. By the 1970s however, following decades of White flight and urban renewal, a citizen survey reported that Beltzhoover’s residents were becoming concerned with problems in the neighborhood such as litter, vandalism, poor maintenance and accessibility as well as crime<sup>58</sup>. The most common

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<sup>57</sup> In a PolicyLink report, Treuhaft (2016) suggested that there are “two Pittsburghs: one growing more prosperous, and the other cut off from opportunity by poverty, structural racism and discrimination” (p. 3).

<sup>58</sup> While the public’s fear of crime was increasing, the rate of major crimes in Beltzhoover had actually been steadily *decreasing* over the previous three years, between 1973 to 1976 (UCSUR, 1977a). The discrepancy between the public’s perception and reality concerning crime rates is well-known to the African American community, and along with a host of other factors, has unfortunately resulted in more aggressive policing and harsher sentencing policies towards Blacks. It is also revealing that fear of crime was not reported as a concern in Duquesne Heights (mostly

complaint however was “undesirable people moving into the neighborhood” (p. 6). The urban green space, Mckinley Park, received the neighborhood’s second-highest satisfaction rating next to the fire department service.

Although a neighborhood survey of Mount Washington was not available for this time, historical data from its upriver section, Duquesne Heights, tells us that the area was annexed to the city around the same time as Beltzhoover, in the mid to late 1800s, and was also initially settled by German and then Italian immigrants (UCSUR, 1977b). Unlike Beltzhoover however, this area was never settled by Blacks. According to the same 1977 citizen survey, residents from Duquesne Heights were generally more satisfied with their neighborhood and reported relatively few problems such as poor maintenance and accessibility (both neighborhoods sit atop a large hill across the Monongahela river, two spatial boundaries effectively separating them from the downtown core). Perhaps owing to decades of hillside mining, their urban green space received the neighborhood’s second-poorest satisfaction rating. Despite their geographic proximity and common history, these two neighborhoods were divided by a racial boundary. By the 1970s, this also translated to marked differences in wealth and home ownership. And things got worse.

Today, the Beltzhoover and Mount Washington neighborhoods still share some demographics. About a quarter of residents in both neighborhoods are married-couple families (although Beltzhoover has twice the rate of single-female family households); the modal age of residents in Beltzhoover is 30-34 years while in Mount Washington it is 25-29 years (UCSUR, 2016). Levels of poverty are also similar (23.48%, Beltzhoover vs. 20.24%, Mount Washington; Zuberi, Hopkinson, Gradeck & Duck, 2015). Crime rates for both neighborhoods are also above

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White) yet the rates of major crimes in this neighborhood had actually *increased* over those previous three years (UCSUR, 1977b).

the city average, although Beltzhoover's is significantly higher (163.64 vs. 123.37<sup>59</sup>). So while these neighborhoods are statistically yoked by similar age and class, we must look at race as predictive of differences in wellbeing and health. Compared to Mount Washington, Beltzhoover has three times as many vacant lots and residential units, while its homes have less than 1/8<sup>th</sup> the retail value of Mount Washington homes (Zuberi et al., 2015). The modal household income in Mount Washington is 75-100K while in Beltzhoover it is 25-30K. Only 40.9% of Beltzhoover's population has more than a high school degree or GED compared to 66.3% in Mount Washington (UCSUR, 2016). Meanwhile, the health data shows that Beltzhoover's infant mortality rate is nearly five times higher than Mount Washington's (32.26 vs. 6.91; Zuberi et al.).

From this brief survey of data from the national, county and municipal levels we see pervasive racial disparities in neighborhood quality, wealth accrual and health. These disparities cannot be explained by any single factor but are the result of many related social determinants of health (including environment, income and education) *as well as* race discrimination (Matthew et al., 2016). On an individual level, personal health behaviors are impacted by lack of food access, unsafe neighborhoods, and aggressive criminalization. Spatial injustice is a product of geographically disparate outcomes across multiple systems including education, criminal justice, employment, housing and individual health. Through spatial injustice may result from discrimination and ensures poorer outcomes for some, there are others who may accrue what Takeuchi et al. (2016) call *environmental privileges* such as “near-exclusive access to coveted

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<sup>59</sup> Crime rate per 1000 people, averaged over the years 2005-2011. The city's average was 119.10 (Zuberi et al., 2015).

amenities such as forests, parks, mountains, rivers, coastal property, open lands, and elite neighborhoods” (p. 218). These privileges are associated with better outcomes (ibid.).

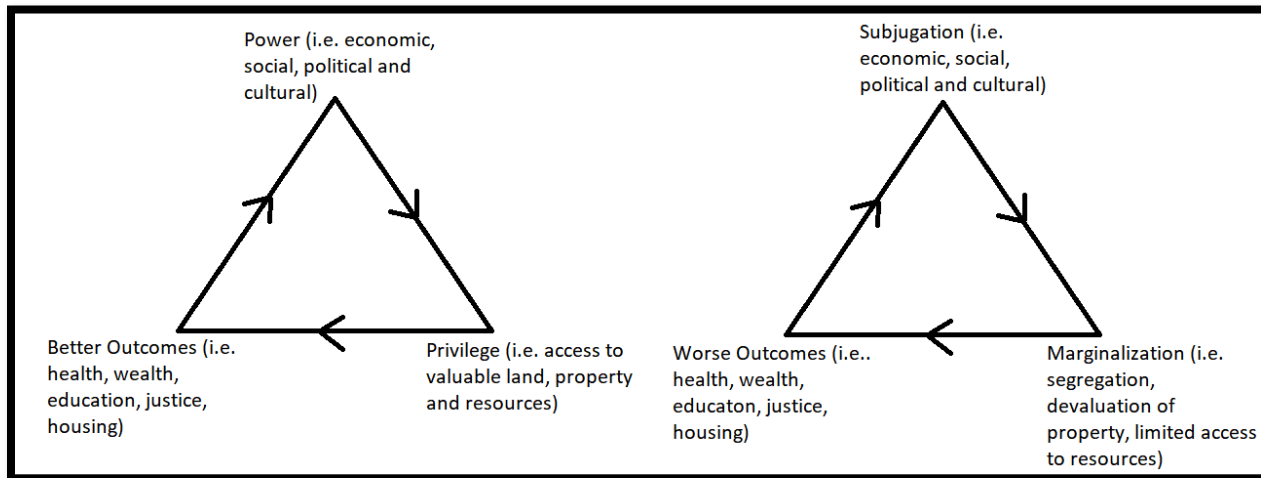


Figure 4.5. Illustration of the relationships between [Left] power, privilege and better outcomes and [Right] subjugation, marginalization and worse outcomes.

In Figure 4.5 above, we have illustrated how power, which may have been secured through historic and ongoing processes of discrimination, allows some groups to enjoy environmental privileges and better outcomes, which in turn leads to those groups maintaining their power and privileges. Privilege, as we have shown in Chapter 3, is secured at the expense of an Other group, who are marginalized and suffer poorer outcomes. History has also demonstrated that as neighborhoods become more segregated (even if they become more diverse), there will be larger disparities in health and wealth outcomes which may also impair communal agency (Gibbons & Barton, 2016). We therefore call to clinicians and health researchers to recognize how the historical chain linking slavery to segregation to gentrification continues to bind some groups while others continue to benefit.

History, we argue, can be considered the trace of *this-story*, the story of today’s spatial injustice and health inequities. To understand and treat these issues, we need a framework that is not fenced in by institutional or disciplinary boundaries and that engages communities from within. Rather than recycling an uplift discourse, a multidisciplinary and community-based framework must examine systemic causes and leverage place-based agency. Though interventions that focus on individual uplift are important (especially from within the community<sup>60</sup>), they are not sufficient; systemic interventions are needed to address injustice and inequity (James & Hill, 2017, April). With this in mind, we must also recognize that vulnerable populations may be reluctant to access outside interventions due to their history of neglect and exploitation across multiple institutions.

### **Equality vs. Equity: Reparations Part II**

No doubt the public remains generally unaware of the tremendous social and financial costs of racial health disparities. One recent study found that “eliminating health disparities for minorities would have reduced direct medical care expenditures by \$229.4 billion for the years 2003 – 2006” (LaVeist et al., cited in NASEM, 2017, p. 28). These costs—which do not account for lost productivity in the workplace and schools—are only increasing as racial gaps persist and widen over time. Lacking any consensus on what these costs are and how they are to be paid, we may dismiss the idea of reparations as abstract and/or infeasible. However, the concept of reparations also functions as an IR that interjects into the public consciousness. Reparations cannot—like so many other well-meaning solutions—become a responsibility that is saddled primarily onto marginalized communities. It has to be addressed by all, particularly those in

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<sup>60</sup> See for example Pittsburgh native, PerspectVe LLC’s YouTube vlog:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjCcOrYcWBeWYbd2zUwcV7Q>

positions of power and privilege. In reviving the discourse on reparations, we need to redefine it. Rather than being limited to a contentious financial payout, reparations can be operationalized in terms of *systemic measures aimed at ameliorating (measurable) spatial injustice and health inequities* that incur the public tremendous moral, social, and financial costs. However reparations and far more tempered initiatives such as affirmative action are often misunderstood or maligned by the public, who generally fail to appreciate the distinction between equality and equity (James & Hill, 2017, April).

*Equality*, broadly speaking, is the belief that racial disparities are best addressed through providing benefits to individuals regardless of their race, gender, or SES. This paradigm, echoed in the “rising tide lifts all boats” discourse (Coates, 2016, January 24), may be well-intentioned but it is thoroughly steeped in historical erasure and cultural agnosia. It presumes (naïvely<sup>61</sup>) that individuals will benefit more or less equally from any social or economic initiative. The insidious presumption underlying this discourse is that Blacks or other disenfranchised groups are disadvantaged because they fail to take responsibility for their own outcomes. As the argument goes: given the opportunity, a person could make it *if they wanted to*. But this argument is fallacious; as García and Sharif (2015) point out, Blacks are not poorer or less healthy and educated because they are Black per se (and therefore socially or biologically maladaptive) but rather because they are “*Black in America* (a racially stratified society) [that] has negative implications for educational and professional trajectories, socioeconomic status, and

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<sup>61</sup> There is now evidence that a ‘rising tide’ (i.e. trickle-down economics or flat tax plans) does *not* lift all boats equally. In a comprehensive study on the impacts of inequality Payne (2017) concluded that people’s social health behaviors, psychological coping and physiological stress responses are more negatively affected by *perceptions* of inequality than actual poverty. Creating wealth, without addressing class divides, exacerbates health inequities.



access to health care services and resources that promote optimum health” (p. 28). There is much evidence to support their argument, such as the fact that Blacks are incarcerated for possession of marijuana at 7x times the rate as Whites despite both groups having similar levels of use (Matthew et al., 2016). If an individual is incarcerated (rather than given alternative sentencing) because of his/her race then he/she may not be eligible for social welfare and will almost certainly have a harder time securing housing and employment. Such outcomes are likely to affect that person’s health and wellbeing (García & Sharif, 2015). By conflating systemic injustice with personal irresponsibility, one fails to recognize the cultural struggles of a group of people. Moreover, the historical narrative is white-washed. The injustice of equality is clearly observed in the ways that interpretive repertoires become racialized around work. Consider how the public generally maligns *affirmative action* (i.e. ‘Black jobs’) while celebrating protectionist policies and corporate tax breaks that are supposed to clear the way for *shovel-ready projects* (i.e. ‘White jobs’)<sup>62</sup>. The irony here, as Dyson pointed out, is that affirmative action, so often reviled as a Black welfare program<sup>63</sup>, disproportionately benefits Whites<sup>64</sup>. When considering the disproportionate benefits accrued by slavery, segregation, gentrification and incarceration, Dyson reminds us that, “...the history of whiteness in America is one long scroll of affirmative action”

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<sup>62</sup> Creating ‘shovel-ready’ jobs was a familiar slogan on Donald Trump’s presidential winning campaign trail. The images of rural and small town workers returning to the mines was a boon to his electorate. However, once in office, his administration abandoned an Obama-era initiative which encouraged cities to hire local residents on federally-funded public projects (Hsu, 2017, August 24).

<sup>63</sup> In the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*’s 1996 race relations survey, 80% of Whites feared they would lose job opportunities to a less qualified Black person while 40% of Blacks also endorsed this view (cited in Trotter & Day, 2010).

<sup>64</sup> Many of whom are also women and/or persons with disabilities.

(p. 89). The discourse of equality is embedded in our mainstream political language (e.g. ‘economic protections’, ‘effective policing’, ‘strong leadership’) in order to promote a narrative of individual accountability while obscuring systemic injustices (i.e. suppression of undocumented workers, criminalization of Black and Brown peoples, suppression of political alternatives), which heavily affect vulnerable populations.

In response, proponents for *equity* argue that racial or gender disparities are *not* primarily due to differences within individuals (i.e. in motivation, responsibility, skill, ability) or groups (i.e. in gender, race) but result from differential experiences and opportunities, which, compounded by discrimination, function as systemic barriers to success and wellbeing. It follows that an individual who does not have to contend with these barriers will benefit more from an equality initiative (e.g. home ownership loans) than someone who does; over time the outcomes between these individuals will widen and reify perceived individual or group differences.

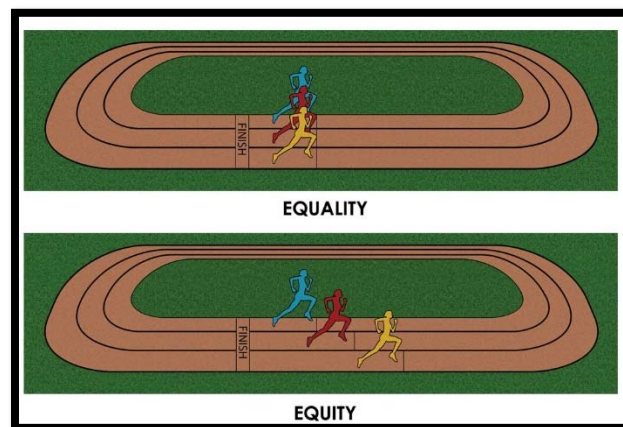


Figure 4.6. Equality vs. equity illustration (© Copyright 2015, Paul Kuttner). Retrieved from <http://culturalorganizing.org/the-problem-with-that-equity-vs-equality-graphic/>

To provide a comparative illustration, suppose you have a concentric oval track with runners in each lane. In an equality-based model, the runners start in line with one another. Of

course, this model favors the runner on the inside track as his/her oval path is smaller and thus shorter. The best outcomes in this case are had by those who run *the privileged race*. An equity model differentially positions runners along their lane so their total running distance is the same. Due to structural racism and discrimination however, African Americans—as a group<sup>65</sup>—face a longer, more circuitous route to success and will require more targeted interventions (especially early in life) to enjoy similar chances for success as White Americans do. An equity model eventually strives to smooth out the turns that make certain paths longer and harder than others.

We propose six objectives for any equity-based strategic initiative. First, stakeholders must *consider all structural barriers* faced by the community. For example, if one is planning a job development program, then issues of transportation, housing, and education may need to be addressed. Importantly, one should avoid conceptualizing poor outcomes as the result of inherent or learned inferiorities within the community; instead there should be a process of mutual accountability where both the community *and* systems of discrimination are addressed (James & Hill, 2017, April). Second, we must *see systems as interconnected* such that privilege or oppression in one system will likely result in privilege or oppression in another. We ought to consider, for instance, how environmental disparities (e.g. exposure to pollutants/garbage, lack of green space, decrepit infrastructure) may impact rates of disease, crime, employment and school completion. Consequently, improvements in one system (e.g. crime, health) may be achieved by

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<sup>65</sup> Of course there are successful and wealthy (and/or exceptionally industrious and resilient) Black individuals—as there are within any group—who will have excellent outcomes in life regardless. However, they too—particularly African American males (Badger, Miller, Pearce, & Quealy, 2018, March 19)—struggle with systemic oppressions not faced by their White counterparts. The reasons for this are complex but likely involve our national fetishization of young, confident, Black males as “America’s nightmare.” This IR is taken from an iconic line in *Menace to Society*, one of the popular ‘hood’ movies of the 1990s, which characterized that era’s blaxploitation.

increasing resources and development in another system (e.g. employment, environment). Third, our multisystemic *interventions must work to reduce disparities* between populations. There are always going to be individual differences in outcomes owing to one's health, ability, motivation, personal history etc. however disparities are defined as preventable gaps in group outcomes based on systemic and discriminatory patterns. Therefore, the presence of disparities indicates inequities that cannot solely be addressed on an individual level. Fourth, researchers and planners must *consider the internal resources* of the community. This becomes crucially important when assessing the actual impact of our interventions. In Pittsburgh, for example, we saw how expanding employment opportunities for African Americans (particularly in the educational and transportation sectors) benefitted these communities but also harmed them by undermining their own, self-reliant education and transportation systems. Fifth, we must *realistically assess how our interventions actually benefit the community while considering the ways it might unintentionally harm them* as well. Sixth and finally, *service providers must make a concerted effort to work with members of the community*, drawing on their internal resources, to plan interventions and programs. Such boundary work goes a ways towards building common ground between different groups while reducing prejudices. Cooperation also opens doors within the unnecessary fences that isolate and segregate communities. Applied to spatial justice, there is a need for research which examines the forces that prevent individuals and communities from working together or cooperating with outside agencies to reclaim their commons.

In fact, Pittsburgh has already been exploring equity initiatives. In 2016, PolicyLink (a national institute for equity) invited Neighborhood Allies (a non-profit organization) and Urban Innovation21 (a public-private partnership) together with dozens of Pittsburgh's community leaders to discuss solutions to racial inequity. Their report concluded that communities must be supported by *equitable development*, which assures that lower-wealth residents, regardless of

color, “a) live in healthy, safe opportunity-rich neighborhoods that reflect their culture b) connect to economic and ownership opportunities and c) have voice and influence in the decisions that shape their neighborhoods” (Treuhart, 2016, p. 4). They add that these principles (i.e. of cultural representation, economic and social enfranchisement and decision-making power) must be worked towards across all institutions including transportation, criminal justice, public education, health, food systems, and workforce development. Furthermore, there must be mechanisms within the community (e.g. in the form of community land trusts, coops, citizen boards or community benefit agreements) to set goals, define performance measures and ensure accountability to these principles. In the next chapter, we will look at Pittsburgh’s Resilience Plan (City of Pittsburgh, 2017) and consider how environmental interventions across the country have been developed to address multiple systems and involve the community in helping vulnerable urban populations overcome barriers to wellbeing.

## CHAPTER 5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITH URBAN GREEN SPACES

If you will stay close to nature, to its simplicity, to the small things hardly noticeable, those things can unexpectedly become great and immeasurable.

– Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*

*Upon entering the park what I immediately noticed was the large downward slope that lead into it. I felt a stillness and quietude to the park that I actually found peaceful and welcoming. I did not feel threatened in the park. I should however note that it was daylight and the street outside the park seemed very quiet. I did find it mildly disconcerting that I could not see outside the park once I was inside. I did not feel trapped although a few of the people who accompanied me commented that there was “no way out.” The park seemed somewhat dilapidated and there were clear signs of vandalism (burnt plastic from the playground, rubber floor tiles removed and discarded from playground). Interestingly, I observed that the floodlight in the basketball court was turned outwards to face the woods. Someone had noted that this was an act of vandalism deliberately done to keep the light off the court at night. I also noticed that the outdoor BBQ grills had small wood and kindling in them but did not appear to be used. I noticed some small litter around the park but nothing to indicate ongoing “nefarious activities.” The area seemed enclosed and heavily wooded. Also, the view of the river was obscured by the dense foliage. I did not like that and felt like my view was blocked in.*

Written in 2013, this passage is a verbatim transcription of my first visit to Cliffside Park in the Hill District. This description was recorded as part of a research project studying the experiential impact of spatial boundaries (i.e. “thresholds”) in the community. The park was dark, quiet and overrun with foliage. Initially, I found the isolation non-threatening and even

peaceful; however, as I became oriented to spatial and social cues, the epidermal schema of the place gradually assumed sinister and claustrophobic qualities. In a community that was already highly segregated, Cliffside Park was quite literally a green fence in the Hill.

Four years later, I revisited this same space, now the site of the newly inaugurated August Wilson Park. It had undergone, to use Fullilove's (2013) term, an urban-alchemical transformation. Newly equipped with clean, colorful playground equipment, walking trails, benches, a performance space, basketball court and an open view towards downtown, August Wilson Park now is considered a green jewel in the community (Arbogast). Residents commented on the park's beauty, sense of safety, community building and positive contributions to the city (ibid.). Along a wall, black-and-white photographs by legendary local photographer, Charles "Teenie" Harris, celebrate the Hill's unique history as do the featured quotes from August Wilson's "Pittsburgh Series" of plays. August Wilson Park is an example of how urban green spaces can unite a community from within while creating a sense of belonging with the greater metropolis.

However, due to the park's location on a cliff, renovations were expensive and cost approximately \$1.3 million (Fong, 2016, April 21). The project was largely funded through a grant to the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy but was aided by private and nonprofit investors as well as individual donors. It was also the first park project developed from the *Greenprint for the Hill District* (PPC, 2017). Greenprints are strategic plans that often combine the input of multiple stakeholders (from community residents to governmental agencies) to identify, map and prioritize the economic, social and benefits that urban green spaces provide communities (TNC, 2017). From the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy (2017) website: "The *Greenprint* plan envisions reconnecting Hill District residents to their unique landscape and connecting the Hill District to the city as a whole." In contrast to earlier discourses on urban renewal—which resulted in

experiences of place-amputation, root shock and fences—the Greenprint provides a framework for how urban landscape can be developed to reconnect residents and communities. The Hill’s greenprint is also referred to as the “Village in the Woods” (PPC, 2017); this description functions as an IR which frames the land as capable of supporting functional diversity, as Jacobs (1961) recommended, while undoing perceptions of the community as blighted wasteland. It is poetic and poignant that the playwright who once wrote of fences on the Hill now christens its first, true green commons.



Figure 5.1. Mount Washington hillside across the Monongahela River (photo taken by author). This hillside creates spatial and ecological challenges for Mount Washington but also offers opportunities for green space development.

Across the Monongahela river, Mount Washington’s Emerald View Park is Pittsburgh’s newest regional park (Manspeizer, 2013). It occupies 257 acres over “what was once industrialized, mined and denuded land overlooking downtown Pittsburgh in Duquesne Heights, Mount Washington and Allentown” (p. 3). Like the Hill, Mount Washington and its surrounding neighborhoods sit atop a steep hill surrounded by urban green spaces. This geography is not only isolating but potentially hazardous as steep gradients are prone to landslides and soil erosion (Pittsburgh, 2017). However, this geography also offers splendid views of the city. In 2005, following years of public planning and grassroots advocacy, Emerald View Park was created in



hopes that it would provide environmental benefits for the community as well as anchor sustainable economic development in that area (Manspeizer, 2013, 2015). Rehabilitating an urban green space would also secure the hillside soil thus preventing landslides and erosion, while also enhancing the scenic lookouts of the city. Today, Emerald View Park is popular amongst its residents and has received local, state and national honors (Manspeizer, 2013).

Since 2007, the MWCDC has been re-introducing plants native to the area because they are ecologically sustainable and best practice (Manspeizer, personal communication). Following a public planning process in 2010, a Master Trail Plan was designed to create and/or restore over 20 miles of multi-use trails through the park. Today these trails connect the neighborhoods of Mount Washington, Duquesne Heights and Allentown. Like August Wilson Park, a significant amount of money (\$4.4 million) was required—and raised by the MWCDC—for investment in the Trail Plan, habitat restoration, event hosting and infrastructure (Manspeizer, 2013).

Although these parks are both examples of recent successes, their hillside geographies have created challenges in accessibility, which can also be regarded as functional barriers. Here, for example, is Simms (2012, October 5) describing her walk through the Greenleaf Street trailhead in Emerald View Park:

I approached the Greenleaf parking lot and trailhead as future walkers and motorists will: all I saw down the street was an expanse of gravel and a telephone pole. No one would know that this is a trailhead and that cars are allowed to park in the lot. Is it private? Is it public? Are you allowed to park there? Are you allowed to walk in the woods behind the Jersey barriers, or is it private land? “Are you allowed?” is the surprising question I have encountered most often when I take people into our urban forest. (Simms, 2012a, *Designing a Trailhead*, para. 3)

If Cliffside Park perturbed visitors with “no way out”, Greenleaf Street in Emerald View Park shutters visitors with no way in. The boundaries that envelop *urban green spaces* (UGS) often function as geospatial barriers—fences—that segregate communities and limit one’s freedom to wander/wonder. In this chapter, we will consider the health impacts of UGS as well as their potential for bringing together individuals and communities. Such places, we argue, form a ‘consequential geography’ (Soja, 2010) that shapes the spatial identity of a community.

### **The Importance of Urban Green Spaces**

Urban green spaces<sup>66</sup> maintain vital social and ecological functions for cities (Roe, 2016; Rose, 2016; WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2016). In addition to providing carbon and heat sinks, ground water capture and corridors for wildlife (Davoudi & Brooks, 2016; Heynen, Perkins, & Roy, 2006), there is ample evidence implicating UGS in the promotion of health recovery (Velarde, Fry, & Tveit, 2007), and overall physical and mental well-being (Brooke, 2010; Fuller, Irvine, Devine-Wright, Warren, & Gaston, 2007; Maas, Van Dillen, Verheij, & Groenewegen, 2009). Further research supports the effectiveness of UGS in reducing rates of stress-related illness (Gidlöf-Gunnarsson & Öhrström, 2007; Maller, Townsend, Pryor, Brown, & St. Leger, 2006; Van den Berg, Maas, Verheij, & Groenewegen, 2010) and morbidity (Maas, Verheij, et al., 2009). Surveying the vast scientific literature on the therapeutic impacts of nature, Williams (2017) concluded that nature not only makes us healthier but also happier and more creative. For example, she cited innovative social action research by MacKerron and Mourato

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<sup>66</sup> For the purposes of our study, we have broadly defined urban green spaces to include parks, open habitats and working lands (i.e. for agriculture, livestock, pollination etc.) within city or metropolitan areas. Although outside the scope of this study, other technically ‘green’ spaces, such as cemeteries, hillsides and vacant lots may share some advantages with other UGS’ but due to their unique place-based features, have different social, economic and geographic functions.

(2013) who developed a smartphone app that asked users to rate their emotional experiences at random times of the day. The app correlated user-generated data on moods with precise geographical and spatial information (i.e. weather, daylight, activity, companionship, location type, time, day) using automated feedback from their mobile devices. From a dataset of over 20000 participants and more than one million responses, they found—all things being equal—that participants were significantly happier being outdoors in green or natural habitats than they were in built environments.

There is also evidence that UGS may positively impact educational outcomes (Ray, Fisher, & Fisher-Maltese, 2016). On the community level, urban green spaces are associated with increased social cohesion, lower crime rates and healthier neighborhoods (Garvin, Cannuscio, & Branas, 2013; Hynes & Howe, 2002; Kuo & Sullivan, 2001; Kuo, Sullivan, Coley, & Brunson, 1998; Sallis et al., 2016; Sullivan & Kuo, 1996). In a report measuring the economic impact of UGS in Pittsburgh, Aiello et al. (2010) found that proximity to such spaces resulted in environmental, health, property, tourism, recreational, crime-reduction and energy benefits, which they called a *green premium*.

Besides their health, safety and economic benefits<sup>67</sup>, UGS are an essential component of environmental justice (Davoudi & Brooks, 2016). We agree with Burrage (2011), who recognized the potential for these places “not just as a benign and pleasant passive context but as a potentially proactive force for community sustainability, cohesion and engagement, and wider social inclusion” ( p. 167). Using GIS datasets, Germann-Chiari and Seeland (2004) found that

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<sup>67</sup> In a recent paper, surveying the 10 biggest cities in the world, Endreny et al. (2017) found that UGS saved these metropolitan areas hundreds of millions of dollars by decreasing air pollution, retaining storm-water and lowering heating and cooling costs.

urban green spaces have potential to bring youth, elderly, foreigners, the unemployed and other marginalized social groups together provided these people are included in the process of planning, design, maintenance and activity/use of the space. In 2010, Pittsburgh commissioned MIG Inc. to survey residents' perceptions of the city's open spaces, parks and recreation. A group of over 400 residents, who were roughly representative of the city's demographics, were interviewed. Most residents—regardless of age, gender, race, class—perceived UGS to be 'extremely important' to both their quality of life (70.8%) and quality of their communities (72.5%). Furthermore, residents across all demographics reported a high degree of local park usage (>70%), although Asians/Hispanics, men, families, post-graduates and wealthy (>75K) families were significantly more likely to use parks than the others.

However, the benefits of UGS cannot be realized if they are unsafe, poorly maintained, inaccessible or perceived by residents as "ambiguous spaces" rather than a commons (Seymour, Wolch, Reynolds, & Bradbury, 2010). Evers' (2013) thesis, which examined perceptions of neighborhood park spaces through surveys, interviews and ethnographic observation, found that when residents are not consulted about ongoing gentrification, they experience a loss of 'spatial identity'. This in turn leads to a loss of agency, political apathy and an avoidance of green space. Parks then become 'boundary spaces' separating neighborhoods and residents (Solecki & Welch, 1995). As we have conceptualized it, those not involved in planning may perceive UGS as green fences.

However, the boundaries that are represented by UGS may also function like skin boundaries to bring residents from different neighborhoods in contact with each other. Chicago's Warren Park, for example, successfully integrates Blacks, Whites and Latinos as well as newcomers and established residents (Gobster, 1998). Warren Park is notable because of several factors: i) it promotes a consistent flow of people throughout the day ii) there is a strong

neighborhood constituency working closely with local and state agencies to obtain funding and develop the park while retaining ownership iii) longtime and local residents serve on an advisory council who work with park administrators to solve problems in the park before they escalate iv) there is a strong community policing program. Warren Park is also designed so that its high-use facilities are located along the perimeter of the park. This serves to not only increase visibility and accessibility from adjacent neighborhoods but also to provide a spatial “seam to knit the park together with neighborhoods” (p. 54). Recommendations from health impact assessments generally suggest that UGS should prioritize safety, social cohesion, use and activity, economic and workforce development, environmental benefits (i.e. cleaner air, water), food access, and community ownership/involvement in decision-making (Chicago Department of Public Health & Illinois Public Health Institute, 2016; South Carolina Institute of Medicine and Public Health, 2013). Urban green spaces depend on community investment (including maintenance and monitoring) to facilitate health and wellbeing. Importantly, communities should be consulted on how they are *already using* green spaces. As Evers (2013) concluded, neighborhoods should be involved in storying their own spatial identity.

We agree that efforts towards improving UGS must acknowledge how residents currently perceive and relate to these places. Residents’ attachments and place-based meanings are also deeply affected by how they have been historically involved with developmental and management processes (Mohapatra & Mohamed, 2013). Mihaylov and Perkins (2014) refer to these processes of involvement as ‘social capital’, which they define as collective efficacy, community bonding, citizen participation, and place-based social interactions. Such collaborative efforts may also go a great way towards shaping residents perceptions of other environmental, social and economic activities in the neighborhood (Elmendorf, 2008; Swanick, Dunnett, & Woolley, 2003). Pittsburghers agreed that community-based organizations are ideal stakeholders

to organize green space initiatives (Aiello et al., 2010). In the Pittsburgh-commissioned survey, respondents recommended that parks be diversified in their usage and endorsed playgrounds, picnic areas and ball fields as the most important features (MIG Inc., 2010). Over half of the respondents (51.2%) also agreed that vacant, under-used or abandoned UGS be converted to agricultural uses so that they could provide economic and health benefits for their communities. Unfortunately, urban planners and developers of green spaces have historically neglected the community and consequently reinforced spatial injustice.

### **From Positive Environmentalism (i.e. Paternalism) Towards Resilient Urban Green Spaces**

One summer day in June of 1820, Ms. Basil Hall wrote her sister in London, describing the conditions of Pittsburgh: “The situation of this town is altogether beautiful, surrounded by highly cultivated country and beautifully wooded hills which form an amphitheater” (cited in ACTION, 1962, p. 116). Perhaps writing from a different part of the city in 1800, fellow Londoner John Bernard, an English actor and writer, held a different opinion. He lamented that “a cloud of smoke hung over [Pittsburgh] in an exceedingly clear sky, recalling to me choking sensations of London” (p. 19). Like a younger sibling, Pittsburgh followed London in extracting its rich coal seams, which resulted in its bucolic hills and muddy rivers expiring into a smoggy landscape where the “street lights had to be turned on at high noon” (ibid.). So rapidly had the city’s conditions deteriorated that by 1868, the Boston writer James Parton famously described Pittsburgh as “hell with the lid off.” Nearly one hundred years later, in 1960, Grady Clay referred to Pittsburgh as a “magnificently ruined landscape”. Describing the processes that resulted in its garbage-dump aesthetic, he wrote: “You slice the hills open, and the scars show for miles and miles. You turn them into dumps, and the visual stench reaches into the next county...And the visual pollution encourages everyone within sight...to go and do likewise” (ACTION, p. 116). Over a century of coal extraction and steel production combined with Pittsburgh’s geography of

rivers and floodplains, created major water and air pollution and resulted in serious health problems. The city's water system was (and remains) ill-equipped to cope with storm run-off, so that between 1899 and 1909 Pittsburgh had the nation's highest urban death rate from typhoid fever (Tarr, 1996). But the most notorious problem was—and remains<sup>68</sup>—air pollution due to smoke.

Sixty years before the environmental justice movement, the writers of the 1908 *Pittsburgh Survey* understood that the city's housing, social and environmental conditions were inter-related (Tarr, 1996). These reformers saw it as a “civic responsibility of democracy” (Kellogg cited in Tarr, p. 183) to alleviate public health pandemics along with housing shortages and lack of urban green space. They proposed a “positive environmentalism” (Boyer cited in Tarr), which included the regulation of water and air pollution, improvements to housing, as well as the development of parks and playgrounds. The reformers believed that such efforts would encourage citizens away from crime and vice. Parks and playgrounds in particular were thought to have “moral importance” (Tarr, p. 171). Urban green spaces, they argued, could make people behave better by engaging “high desires that had before been dormant” (Robinson cited in Tarr, p. 174). The turn of the century ushered a zeitgeist of progress through social engineering and these reformers assumed that industrial magnates would willingly collaborate with city planners to produce “self-reliant, self-directing communities” (p. 171). Of course, history has shown that the reformers' trust in social engineering and corporate beneficence was misplaced. Although the

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<sup>68</sup> Today, air pollution still ranks as the number one health concern by Allegheny County residents (Kurta et al., 2015). According to the National Equity Atlas (PolicyLink/PERE, 2016), Pittsburgh's Black population has the highest air pollution exposure index (78), while the White population has the lowest (55). The index value is a percentile ranking based on all US census tracts, thus the national average would be 50.

municipal government seemed to at least be aware of the problems caused by spatial injustice and health inequities, this did little to prevent city land from being appropriated by industry for resource extraction and waste disposal. Also problematic however, was the reformer's paternalistic discourse towards the public, whom they considered ill-educated and morally lacking. Like the well-intentioned assimilationists who implored Blacks to behave more like Whites, the city planners were woefully neglectful of the actual needs of the community. It was not 'high desires' the public lacked but agency and stakeholder representation in their communities. Sadly, this story is not unique to Pittsburgh and it remains an all too common practice for city and community planners to exclude members of marginalized communities from the development and planning of neighborhood programs and safe, healthy places (Dunn, 2010; Fullilove, 1986, 2009, 2013; Heynen et al., 2006). As we have seen, individuals and communities that lack a voice are less likely to have their needs attended to. It becomes routine to ignore their needs for safe green spaces, urban infrastructure and employment opportunities that should come with urban development and renewal (Wolch, Byrne, & Newell, 2014).





Figure 5.2. Pittsburgh, as seen from Mount Washington, in 1916 (Pittsburgh City Photographer Collection, 1901-2002, AIS.1971.05, Archives & Special Collections, University of Pittsburgh Library System) and today (photo taken by author).

In 1962, an Urban Renewal Study was conducted by the Allegheny Council (ACTION) with the focus of making Pittsburgh “a place of unparalleled natural attractiveness enhancing the environment for its residents and visitors indefinitely into the future” (p. 20). The city has since seen a resurgence of green<sup>69</sup>. But green for who? Pittsburgh’s challenging topography has resulted in green spaces being overwhelmingly concentrated in places that are difficult to develop (i.e. hollows and ravines, hill slopes and river banks). These places functioned—and still

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<sup>69</sup> Its color divides notwithstanding, Pittsburgh has been exemplary in re-inventing its social, cultural and educational institutions for prosperity in the global, 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. Despite this, the interpretive repertoire of Pittsburgh as a *steel city* was recently invoked by Donald Trump to justify the US exit from the international Paris Climate Agreement (Picchi, 2017, June 2). Such is the pervasive and lasting power of spatial schemas.

do—as spatial boundaries separating communities from one another; historically they were also places where Blacks, migrating from the South, were forced to live (Trotter & Day, 2010). There are visible differences in UGS quality within the predominately White neighborhoods which border Frick, Schenley, Highland and Emerald View parks and the UGS bordering the Black communities in the Hill, East Liberty and Beltzhoover. In Figure 5.3 below, we see some evidence that density of UGS is correlated with lower levels of poverty and higher levels of education. However, there are particular areas (i.e. the Hill, East Liberty, Beltzhoover and interestingly, Mount Washington) where this is not the case. Clearly, there is a ‘consequential geography’ (Soja, 2010) that determines the quality, accessibility and impact of these UGS. The spatial epidermal schemas which mark some communities may also condemn their UGS as wastelands.

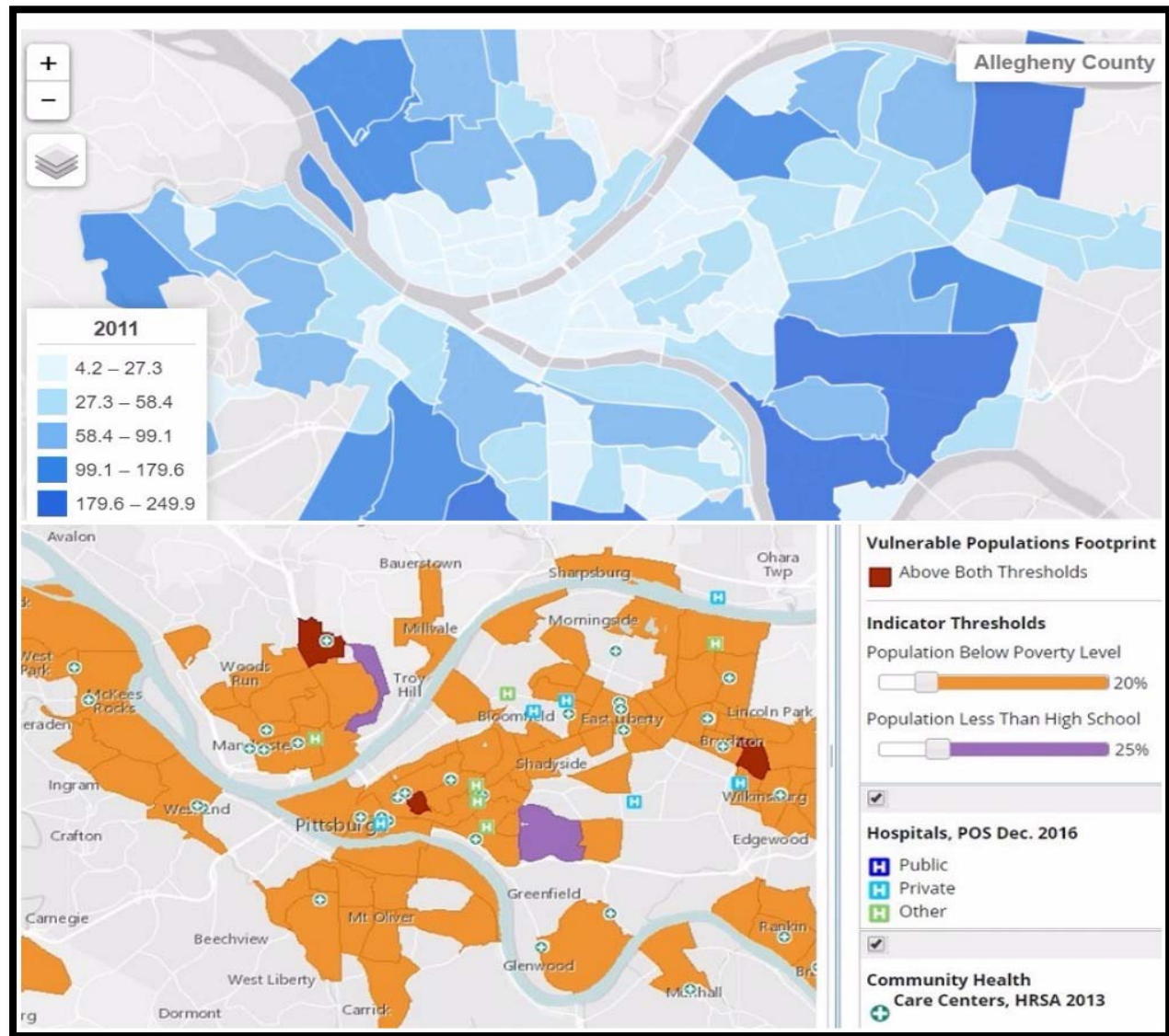


Figure 5.3. [Top] 2011 neighborhood map of open acres of green space (<https://profiles.ucsur.pitt.edu/profiles/county/42003/environment/>) vs. [Bottom] 2013 vulnerable populations footprint by neighborhood (<https://assessment.communitycommons.org/Footprint>)

In response to rising social and economic inequities, the City of Pittsburgh recently released *ONE PGH* (Pittsburgh, 2017), a report which lays out its “vision of urban resilience for the city’s residents, neighborhoods and the region” (p. 6). Like the 1908 *Pittsburgh Survey*, the report is ambitious in scope, attempting to reconcile social, environmental, economic and

governmental concerns. ONE PGH also acknowledges the particular importance of urban green spaces. However, following the 1962 ACTION report and the Hill's (2009) Greenprint, ONE PGH recognized that governmental planning and public/private investment—while important—are not sufficient to building resilient green spaces; the critical process in this alchemy involves community recognition and reclamation of their places. After a century of health inequities, ONE PGH recognized the shortcoming of the *Survey's* positive environmentalism (i.e. paternalism) and instead focuses on a 'resilience framework'. According to the report, *resilience* is operationally defined as the health and wellness measure of a place and also refers to a place's ability to "adapt, survive and grow" (p. 18) in response to acute shocks (e.g. disease outbreak, heat wave, infrastructure failure) and chronic stresses (e.g. racial disparities, poor air quality, fragile hillsides).

Resilience, according to the ONE PGH report, is enhanced when interventions are "holistic and community-centered" (Pittsburgh, 2017, p. 12). As a health-based strategy, building resilience involves understanding the relationships between multiple systems (e.g. economic, environmental, social) and engaging with multiple stakeholders in order to ensure cooperation, effective decision-making and accountability. Communities benefit from an environmentalism that not only preserves landscape features but incorporates the local economy and considers issues of accessibility. This movement, which Elmendorf (2008) called *civic environmentalism* is multi-modal in its efforts to integrate top-down interventions with local decision-making and multi-systemic because it connects social and economic concerns with environmental sustainability. Whether applying resilience or environmentalist metaphors to public urban spaces, we can agree that the health and wellbeing of public spaces may be a broad indicator of the health and wellbeing in our broader public realm (Agyeman, 2013; Low & Smith, 2006).

Given the diverse background of our urban populations, Agyeman (2013) argued that environmental planning should be augmented by a justice framework and should meet the following four conditions: 1) living within ecosystem limits 2) meeting the needs of both present and future generations 3) improving our quality of life and wellbeing and 4) justice and equity in terms of recognition, process, procedure and outcome. Agyeman found that places which met these four conditions could also be characterized as offering residents security, resistance and possibility. *Security* is related to a sense of protection and well-being; in public spaces security is created by reducing fears and mistrust between different groups of people. Urban green spaces, which are already known to be important hubs for individual and community wellbeing, may function as secure cosmopolitan canopies (see Chapter 2) provided they are perceived as accessible and inclusive for everyone. Urban green spaces may also be places of resistance. *Resistance* may be defined as political action against the dominant social order (e.g. the Occupy Wall Street movement, which began in Zuccotti Park) or as a place where individuals may gather to produce civil interactions that defy the typical stereotypes that perpetuate fear and mistrust. Another definition of resistance, closer to resilience, is the capacity of a people or place to resist adverse effects due to shocks and stresses. Resistance may be a feature of parks and UGS when they are leveraged as places of community action or places where community residents can connect to a more positive spatial identity. Finally, UGS may also be sites of *possibility* where people can express themselves and grow. As we had seen earlier, well-maintained UGS produce a green premium that confers multiple benefits upon its users. Our present study will examine how a city park may positively influence participants' individual and social identities.

As our discourse shifts towards resilience, we can reframe our public spaces—particularly our UGS—from sites of consumption to a living forum which sustains, reflects and enhances public life. Correspondingly, we must not only address functional concerns (e.g.

increasing diversity of uses) but also issues of justice and sustainability. This work is inherently a social process, involving multiple stakeholders. In this next section, we will discuss racial differences in discourses around nature and environmentalism. Understanding the context of these differences is a part of within-reach work (see Chapter 3) with UGS in African American communities.

### **Green Spaces, Uncommons**

There is evidence to support the common perception that African Americans under-participate in nature-based recreation (Jin-Hyung, Scott, & Floyd, 2001; Ryan et al., 2010). In an unpublished literature review, Turgeon-Dharmoo (n.d.) investigated several explanations for these findings including socioeconomic barriers, lack of socialization in nature, distance from nature and perceptions of discrimination in the outdoors. Turgeon-Dharmoo also found a persistent “theme of concern with personal safety” (p. 9) that was directly related to the quality of UGS in Black urban communities. It is simply not true that African Americans lack access to urban green spaces (Whitt-Glover, Bennett, & Sallis, 2013), but within these spaces, their aesthetics convey a sense of being fenced off from the city. Accordingly, Turgeon-Dharmoo cites evidence that African American’s tend to favor UGS that are functionally diverse over undeveloped wilderness (Godbey, Caldwell, Floyd, & Payne, 2005; Talbot & Kaplan, 1984). Multi-use parks might also be more open and visible thus increasing one’s sense of safety. If UGS are cut off from community life, they will be marginalized and fall into ruin.

There are also historical reasons as to why the aesthetics of untrammelled wilderness<sup>70</sup> differ widely across the color line. For Whites, images of nature are associated with romantic ideals and an escape from industrial, urban life. For Blacks however, nature has historically been the site of persecution and disinheritance. In the colonial imagination of Europe and America, Blacks were considered primitive and therefore *of* nature as opposed to Whites, who were *in* nature (Finney, 2014). Finney (2014) argued that Whiteness was predicated on a hierarchy, which saw the self as separate from and above nature. Nature could be an idyll or a possession but, since Adam exited Eden, (White) Man had too much knowledge to be nakedly identified with it. The same could not be said for Blackness however, which was portrayed—by such esteemed writers as Kipling, Conrad and later Burroughs—by the trope of a simple, child-like people in participatory mystique with a brute, unforgiving landscape. In fact, the qualities of naivete, nonhuman/subhuman and brutishness are so consistently juxtaposed as to render Blackness and nature as contiguous states—and both as challenges to be overcome, conquered and disciplined.

Beginning with the global slave trade, Africans, arriving on unfamiliar American shores, were soon thrust into the brutal, unforgiving landscape of the cotton fields. Labor was extracted from Black bodies as heavily as cotton was harvested. Soon though, a form of classism developed among slaves in which slaves who were light of skin or ‘light’ spirited enjoyed certain White privileges such as the opportunity to be inside rather than outdoors. The country was not only a field of extraction but a place where many Blacks were hunted, lynched and killed

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<sup>70</sup> Like Finney (2014), we use the terms ‘environment’, ‘nature’ and ‘outdoors’ somewhat interchangeably. Her rationale, as is ours, is that the specificity of these terms matters less than how people actually take up and use them. For the most part, these terms share largely overlapping networks of signification.

(Virden & Walker, 1999). Although the situation improved following the Great Migration to the Northern cities, Blacks were still prevented from owning land (Finney, 2014). Instead, they were largely confined along industrial tracts, in greenspaces that functioned as fences to separate them from the rest of the city. It is not difficult to imagine the ambivalence Blacks had historically felt towards nature, as it had been used towards de-humanization, oppression, torture and isolation (Finney, 2014). Finney argued that this violent and oppressive history is still symbolically overdetermined in nature-objects such as trees and fields as it comprises a collective memory that may be passed down through generations<sup>71</sup>.

In the years following Reconstruction, Whites moved westward to seek out new lands and flee the stifling conditions of the city. One century later, in another reconstruction-like era, it was urban economic growth and technological development (i.e. the mass production of cars and the Highway Expansion Act) which enabled Whites to enjoy unprecedented access to cherished wilderness places (Finney, 2014). The resulting White flight from the cities left Blacks without resources to address dilapidated structures, vacant lots, and air and water pollution (Merchant, 2003). During the 1960s and 1970s, following the manufacturing boom, Blacks and Whites were campaigning for their own protections; Whites for the natural environment and Blacks for civil rights. Incidentally, Finney pointed out, both pieces of federal legislation—the Civil Rights Act and the Wilderness Act—were passed in the same year, 1964. As a group, Blacks—who were historically disinherited from land and property—were largely ignored by this environmental

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<sup>71</sup> Collective memories may be passed down through stories, avoidance behaviors or cultural depictions. A relatively recent example featuring the latter was the 1994 movie, *Surviving the Game*. In it, an African American man (Ice-T) from the inner-city is taken to a remote place in the woods where he was hunted for sport.



movement<sup>72,73</sup>, and in turn felt alienated from its cause. In another wrenching irony, after centuries of working to extricate themselves from the confines of nature, Blacks found themselves redlined and left in the urban lurch as Whites celebrated their acquisition of the outdoors. In fact, as Whites came to enjoy the benefits of outdoor living, Blacks were increasingly disinherited from representations of nature to the point where they hardly appeared in any at all (Finney, 2014). Today, Finney argued, the most prominent environmental representations of African Americans are in stories and images of natural disasters (e.g. hurricane Katrina). After centuries of forced labor, terrorism, discrimination and lack of representation, many African Americans perceive the outdoors as “White spaces”<sup>74</sup> (Finney, 2014).

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<sup>72</sup> In one memorable episode from the early 1960s, Finney (2014) told of how a White professor at Boston college wanted to take an honored Black couple to visit Fundy Bay National Park, where they were looking for a retreat. After writing to the park superintendent to let him know that there would be Black people in the park, the superintendent wrote back claiming that he could not guarantee the couple’s safety. The couple in question were none other than Dr. Martin Luther and Ms. Coretta Scott King.

<sup>73</sup> Until relatively recently, African Americans were also typically excluded from membership in environmental conservation agencies (Schelhas, 2002).

<sup>74</sup> As Finney’s own case in point, there is a growing movement within many African American communities to revive agricultural and nature-based practices. Within Pittsburgh’s Black communities there are initiatives around urban agriculture (e.g. Black Urban Gardeners) and engaging Black and Brown people in hiking city parks (Manspeizer, personal communication). From anecdotal experiences, many associations African Americans make to nature involves private green spaces (e.g. grandmother’s garden), which were protected/segreated from the public spaces by the community’s own fences (ibid.).

Only by the 1980s, did Blacks and other communities of color gain some measure of representation through the environmental justice movement. By this time however, historical erasure and cultural agnosia—the hallmarks of White privilege—had already claimed “representational authority” over the environmental narrative (Finney, 2014, p. 4). According to traditional (White) environmentalism, nature signified purity, self-expression and remoteness from urban life. For reasons stated above, Blacks felt much more ambivalent towards nature. In other words, nature had been racialized to evoke different aesthetics for these groups. For Whites, technological and social mobility allowed them to see nature as something that could be conquered and enjoyed. Accordingly, nature was represented as an idyll that must be protected for future enjoyment. As they were more socially restricted, Blacks did not typically interact with nature outside of their dwelling places (Brown, Murphy, & Porcelli, 2016). They are more concerned with environmental issues that affect their everyday quality of life such as health impacts due to pollution and waste deposits, resource inequities, and geospatial barriers<sup>75</sup> (Mohai, 1990; Schelhas, 2002; D. E. Taylor, 2002). These differing perspectives—the result of historic and current racial disparities—led to distinct environmentalisms, which Turgeon-Dharmoo (unpublished) termed the *romantic* and *justice* approaches. This racialization of nature discourses has been highlighted in order to center the traces of what had been marginalized by the dominant environmental narrative. If researchers and scholars want to productively engage communities of color with environmentalism, they must first attend to their “differential access,

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<sup>75</sup> Of course, this is a simple dichotomy that does not hold across all cases. There are, for example, many rural, White communities who are concerned about environmental exposure to toxins (particularly from hydraulic fracturing) while several African Americans, such as John Francis, were notable figures in the mainstream environmental movement.

needs, privileges and histories” (Finney, p. 4). However, we must caution the reader to avoid conceptualizing these differences from a deficiency perspective. It is easy to center deficiency narratives when discussing race and environment, whether one focuses on environmental disparities, health inequities or historical mistreatment (Brown et al., 2016). However, these narratives often overlook the resilience that African Americans have shown and the ways that they are leading the environmental movement in cities and beyond<sup>76</sup> (Brown et al., 2016; Finney, 2014).

As we have seen, nature spaces and discourses have been historically applied to reinforce Black inferiority; for Blacks therefore, nature often represents what can be called an *uncommons*—or site of non-belonging and disinheritance that soon falls into waste. In Chapter 3, we had incorporated Simms’ (2012, December 5, 2013, March 14, 2014) analysis on the deterritorialization of common spaces into our critical racial analysis. We return to these concepts here to suggest that the romantic and justice approaches to environmentalism may be bridged through a ‘reterritorialization’ of the nature commons. Such a perspective may attend to both global and everyday concerns by interpreting nature as a commons that must be preserved but in ways that are accessible, sustainable and just to all community stakeholders. Simms (2014) claimed that reterritorialization may be achieved through fostering place attachment and communal ownership. However, this sort of ownership would have to be different than the kind implied by colonization, urban renewal and gentrification—all of which necessarily produce deterritorialization. If deterritorialization/uncommoning is the product of displacement, amnesia, erasure and extraction then reterritorialization/recommoning must be accomplished through

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<sup>76</sup> We must resist the ‘urban bias’ (see Chapter 6), which assumes that African Americans in urban areas lack significant early and positive experiences with nature.

centering, memory work, determination, and reparations. This chapter is an attempt at *centering*, in other words, bringing into awareness the ways that environmental impacts (both local and global) disproportionately impact traditionally marginalized populations including communities of color. *Memory work*—the efforts of these last three chapters—refers to efforts to understand people and place through narratives that connect the present (this-story) within a social, cultural and historical framework. What follows is *determination* (see Part II), which is the responsibility to allow participants to define themselves and their own spatial identity. Finally, *reparations* (Chapters 3 and 4) is the cooperative work with communities to systemically eliminate injustices to ensure that all beings have an opportunity to thrive.

We agree with Sulaiman (2017, June 27), who stated that place-making will require more than policies that address walkability, public space, safety etc. Although such strategies are popularized within a tradition that is referred to as ‘New Urbanism’ (Owen, 2010; Speck, 2013), if divorced from an equity perspective, they are ultimately continuations of old positive environmentalism efforts that improved spaces for some while further disenfranchising communities of color and other vulnerable populations. The lesson we must learn from history is to attend to different cultural discourses and engage the public in re-commoning their places. Crucial to these efforts, we must allow for alternative sources of knowledge to inform the way we talk and think about the environment. Researchers and developers are tasked with acknowledging the insecurities communities have felt in their spaces as a result of historical displacement, crime, traumatization, and racial policing. Efforts to re-create the social bonds between neighbors should center the ways that communities have already claimed spaces such as corners and sidewalks as public spaces. Furthermore, the history of a community’s resistance to oppression and injustice should be honored. Finally, re-commoning efforts must consider the

functions that residents want (e.g. youth mentorship, community pride, engaging elders, neighborhood cleanup) in order for their places to feel like a true commons.

Throughout history, Black communities have used a participatory, visceral language to represent public spaces (including nature) as a site of both dwelling and disinheritance (Dungy, 2009). This language, whether through poetry, memoir, song or testimony paves a ‘common ground’, drawing awareness to how others see, hear, feel and live in the land. Accordingly, we will present our study’s findings using descriptive language that is close to our participants’ experiences. A phenomenological perspective—which views place as a gathering of people, history, geography, and otherness as well as a collective of hopes, dreams, and fears—may be one conceptual tool used to re-common people to their places. In the following section, we will look at some environmental programs that have also attempted to re-common the community. This literature review will end with a description of the ETC program and lead into our methods of study (Part II).

### **Green Jobs**

In a municipal report, Pinderhughes (2007) looked at green job<sup>77</sup> training programs across the nation that hired men and women with barriers to employment. From her research we know that successful green jobs programs: 1) provide effective training 2) include case-management and follow-up 3) create pathways to employment by connecting participants with employers 4) establish partnerships with local government and not-for-profit agencies and 5) connect to the local community through outreach. We will briefly review four green jobs

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<sup>77</sup> Green jobs are very broadly defined here as jobs that contribute towards preserving or restoring the environment (e.g. habitat restoration, sustainable infrastructure).

programs in order to identify potential vectors for analyzing the data from our present study on the Emerald Trail Corps program.

### **MillionTreesNYC Training Program**

The MillionTreesNYC Training Program (MTTP) is run collaboratively by the city of New York and a privately funded initiative. It was developed to employ, train and place low-income young adults (aged 18-24) in ‘urban resource management’ positions (Falxa-Raymond, Svendsen, & Campbell, 2013). In addition to general job and life skills training, the program provides participants with experiential learning in “arboriculture, ecological restoration, landscape design and horticulture” (p. 289). Participants are then placed in entry-level green jobs made available through institutional partnerships between the MTTP, municipal government and local not-for-profit programs. Falxa-Raymond et al. (2013) conducted a thematic analysis describing the social and psychological experiences of 16 individuals (12 men and 4 women) who graduated from the program. Five key themes emerged from their data: 1) motivations, 2) knowledge/skills acquired, 3) attitudes, 4) significance of environmental work and 5) challenges faced.

Most participants identified their personal support network as a key *motivator* for why they had sought out and completed the training program. Identified supports included “school administrators, internship supervisors, public housing assistants, family and friends” (Falxa-Raymond et al., 2013, p. 290). Being mentored by supervisors was identified as an important factor that helped participants stay motivated. Other motivations included a need for money or employment and a desire to take pride in one’s work. Almost all participants described *acquiring new knowledge* or skills. The majority of them identified learning physical skills (e.g. use of specific tools or techniques) and gaining environmental knowledge (e.g. plant species identification, general ecological principles) and some also reported improved interpersonal and

office skills. Attitudes were coded towards self, work and/or the environment and were valued as positive, negative or neutral. Just over one half of the participants reported more *positive attitudes towards self*; specifically, feeling more confident, knowledgeable and mature. All employees reported some positive attitudes towards work and a subset identified the “independence and freedom they felt in their green job in comparison to previous entry level positions in other industries” (p. 291). Employee attitudes towards work were positively correlated with their performance ratings by supervisors. However, the study did not follow up with qualitative data to make sense of this correlation. None of the participants reported negative attitudes towards the environment but most of them reported developing more positive attitudes towards the environment as a result of their training. Just over half reported a greater awareness of their local environment including attention to local infrastructure. Participants *valued environmental work*, particularly: working outdoors, performing physical work, having a variety of work, interacting with the public, making a positive difference and expanding environmental stewardship beyond the job. Interactions with the public were seen as positive and welcome opportunities for participants to meet new people and also educate them about the environment. *Challenges identified* included personal life issues (e.g. childcare, financial struggles, difficult living situation), logistics (e.g. commute length or scheduled work hours), lacking job preparation, supervision/management issues and negative workplace relationships. The most common challenges participants faced were related to their personal lives. Common supervision/managerial issues related to the employees perceived lack of skills. However, accounts on what was lacking differed between participants and their supervisors. The participants felt they were underprepared for fieldwork while their supervisors desired more office skills and life skills (e.g. being reliable, staying focused, maintaining professionalism). The researchers acknowledged that the supervisors themselves lacked cultural awareness and

experience working with the demographic of the program participants. Furthermore, employers were unable to hire program graduates without external funding as they had other, more qualified applicants. The researchers suggested that successful green job training programs must be paired with employment opportunities for participants after graduation.

### **Cook County Green Corps Program**

The Cook County Green Corps Program (CCGC) in Chicago was implemented to serve young African American adults from low-income neighborhoods (Hatchett, Ask, Pollard, & Brown, 2010). The program followed a weekly schedule that included three days of outdoor experiential work in a community garden, one day of classroom instruction and one day of life-skills training. Participants also attended field trips throughout the season. A program evaluation was conducted through surveys and a follow-up interview conducted one year after program completion. The participants included 30 men (n=23) and women (n=7) between the ages of 17 to 26 years. The researchers noted four themes from the data: 1) attitude change, 2) community engagement, 3) heartfelt loss, and 4) personal and environmental benefits.

Many of the trainees welcomed the program as a new and surprisingly fun experience. Factors that contributed to this *attitude change* included working as a team, having responsibilities and meeting new people . Additionally, many of the young adults used their experience in the program to inform and educate their families about sustainability and urban environmental issues. The young adults greatly *benefited from positive feedback from the community* as it made them feel good about what they were doing. Some youth believed that their outdoor work re-shaped prejudicial attitudes previously held towards them. In the words of one participant “...they probably think, ‘Oh, they just run the streets’ but when they seen [sic] a lot of kids...doing something positive, it gave them a different look on us” (Hatchett et al., 2010, p. 11). Participants expressed hope that the program would provide them and their community



with future opportunities. When they were told that the program was being terminated the following year, many *lamented the loss* of the program and the garden. One participant felt that people would revert to not caring about their neighborhood space. Participants reported *developing health awareness, teamwork, caring for the community* and a sense of pride in their abilities and work. Hatchett et al. (2010) concluded with recommendations for a future iteration of the program: increase supervision to a minimum 10:1 ratio between participants and staff members; establish a young adult advisory committee that bridges the gap between the staff, trainees and community residents; and provide more access to shade, water and rest when working outdoors. The participants also requested more opportunities for them to present their work to their communities via outreach and recruitment.

### **GreenHouse Program**

Run and administered by the Horticultural Society of New York, the GreenHouse Program (GHP) is a jail-to-street horticulture program (Jiler, 2009). The program is housed on a 2-acre greenhouse facility in Rikers Island Correctional Facility. Here, both male and female inmates work together building garden installations for schools and community groups. They are also provided with vocational skills training. Many are eventually able to transition back to their communities where they seek employment using the skills they had acquired. The GHP also has a community arm that provides newly released individuals with paid internships (e.g. planting trees, building garden installations) while they seek permanent employment. Along with a lower recidivism rate (25% compared to 65% for the general Rikers Island population), program participants reported an increased sense of control over their lives.

### **Sweet Beginnings**

Founded in 2005, Sweet Beginnings is an urban apiary located in the vulnerable community of North Lawndale, Chicago (Keitsch, Sigurjonsson, Nilsen, & Spencer, 2013). The

company is owned by the not-for-profit North Lawndale Employment Network, and provides formerly incarcerated individuals with job and interpersonal skills. Along with providing a useful work history, participants reported increased self-confidence as a result of the program (Goldberg; Guarino cited in Keitsch et al.). Sweet Beginnings has been able to effectively place over 1200 men and women per year into full-time employment. They do this by subsidizing the employment of their participants for 90 days, so that future employers have a financial incentive and assume a lower risk when hiring these candidates. The program has reduced recidivism from the national average of 67.5% to 4.5%. With the cost of incarceration averaging \$60 000 per year, this program provides a service to the public at a fraction of the cost. Sweet Beginnings has a large annual budget (\$1.9 million), and this has been made possible through strong business partnerships (e.g. with Boeing, Department of Corrections, City of Chicago as well as local businesses) and training with professional beekeepers. Although personal training in anger management and communications skills has been offered, it is not mandatory for participants. In addition to being a highly effective green jobs training program, Sweet Beginnings addresses a number of other needs including: 1) a demand for local food 2) preservation of vulnerable bee populations and 3) development and use of previously untenable UGS.

### **Emerald Trail Corps Program/Landforce**

Under the stewardship of the Mount Washington Community Development Corporation's Park and Conservation Committee, the Emerald Trail Corps (ETC) program was developed in Mount Washington, Pittsburgh to hire underemployed and disadvantaged<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> According to a recent ETC grant proposal (Manspeizer, 2015): "Candidates must self-certify that they meet two of the following criteria: low income (as defined by Federal Poverty Levels), on public assistance, formerly incarcerated, military veteran, or no GED or high school diploma" (p. 12).

populations to develop the trail system within the neighborhood's Emerald View Park (Manspeizer, 2013). By committing towards "effectively engaging a wealth of untapped human capacity to realize the true potential of an undervalued space" (p. 9), the MWCDC recognized the opportunity to simultaneously address social and environmental sustainability (i.e. 'just sustainabilities', see Chapter 4) through their ETC. For each year of its operations, the ETC interviewed and hired a crew of approximately 15 individuals. Throughout its five seasons, the ETC had hired and trained over 50 individuals. To facilitate employment and advocate for their program, the ETC had actively sought out partnerships with other community institutions and employers. In previous years, for example, the ETC partnered with the Pittsburgh Trails Advocacy Group to facilitate volunteer trail building days. Every year, the crew worked for approximately 24 weeks completing the Master Trail Plan and providing general park restoration (i.e. dumpsite elimination, invasive plant removal, native plantings, landscaping). In 2015, the ETC took on contracts to work in other municipal UGS as well as residential construction and repair. After every work season, upwards of 75% of crew members entered full or part-time jobs in the city or enrolled in trade schools (Manspeizer, 2015). In November 2015, after two years of planning with partners in the green and workforce sectors, a new organization called "Landforce" was created based upon the Emerald Trail Corps model (Landforce, 2017). In addition to addressing two important social determinants of health (i.e. physical environment and employment), the ETC/Landforce program was developed to provide its employees with self-confidence, perseverance and experience working with a team (Manspeizer, 2015). This program may be distinguished from others in its recognition of psychosocial factors underlying unemployment, however no formal impact measures have been completed to date. Our study will be the first in-depth examination of the lived experiences of its program participants.

## Social and Psychological Aspects of Green Job Programs

We gathered the following themes (Table 5.1) from those studies that examined the social and psychological impacts of their green jobs programs. These themes were fairly consistent across studies although they were obtained using a variety of evidence ranging from thematic analysis to anecdotal observations.

Table 5.1. Social and Psychological Aspects of Green Job Programs

<b>Practical Challenges</b>	Needing to address difficulties in personal life and on the job that may affect performance.
<b>Knowledge/Skills</b>	Skills needed on the job. Specialist knowledge as well as generalist skills (e.g. interacting with colleagues, bosses, public).
<b>Self-Improvement</b>	Pride, self-confidence, positive attitude, maturity, self-control.
<b>Care for Environment</b>	Increased value and concern for the environment. Sense of loss or unease towards disregard of environment.
<b>Care for Others</b>	Increased value and concern for others including ones family, coworkers and community-at-large.

We can see that these programs, which were designed to address multiple determinants of wellbeing, may also facilitate personal transformation. Participants found these programs highly empowering and it allowed many to overcome multiple barriers to employment. When individuals are empowered, personal and social transformation may ensue. In addition to the acquisition of specialist and generalist skills (which are highly transferable to other jobs), individuals experienced self-improvement (i.e. more confidence, maturity, pride). All programs

reported practical challenges that needed to be addressed. In contrast to other employment situations, where factors such as lack of transportation, poverty, mental health issues etc. are not considered employment-related, most green jobs programs had a systemic perspective which allowed these challenges to be conceptualized and worked through as part of the job training. Such a framework may be necessary for repairing systemic inequities but it also requires trust, cooperation between employers and employees, and a good degree of time and social resources. Clearly, there is evidence that these programs have a positive personal impact. However, the most important transformations may be in one's attitudinal investment towards place. Expanding one's field of concern beyond the self towards the fullness of place may be a necessary element of place-making. Such transformations, small as they are, form a necessary part of re-commoning community spaces.

Now we have an appropriate port from which to depart into our own analysis. The themes we have presented here have helped us frame the data into three distinct chapters—on the lived domains of nature (Chapter 7), work (Chapter 8) and identity (Chapter 9). To begin Part II of our study, we will present our research methods, data sources and analytic processes (Chapter 6). This chapter lays the foundation for the following three chapters, in which we will look at participant data on the Emerald Trail Corps program.

## PART II. SORTING THE DATA

## CHAPTER 6. METHODS, DATA & ANALYSIS

### **The Call for Qualitative Data**

Despite the prevailing biomedical model, which defines health in terms of individual behaviors and genetic endowments, psychological research is progressing towards (or returning to) a perspective that considers health and wellbeing as a relationship or balance between individual factors, social units, culture and the broader environment or cosmos (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). Such views, it must be noted, have characterized the healing approaches of much of the non-Western world (Fernando, 1991). It is now prudent to consider how social and environmental interventions impact human health—indeed health impacts could be a reliable metric by which to gauge the success of interventions such as housing developments, early education programs, community policing, and park development. As research begins to study health as a function of broader environmental (i.e. habitat quality, transportation, housing, food access) and social (i.e. education, race, class) factors, we may ask: *What data is needed?*

In 2011, the National Research Council (NRC) developed a research tool called a *Health Impact Assessment* (HIA) in order to “help decision-makers identify the public-health consequences of proposals that potentially affect health” (NRC, 2011, p. ix). HIAs are designed to integrate a complex array ‘big data’ (i.e. GIS data, demographics, health ratings, etc.) and present their findings to different stakeholders so each study is highly localized. While HIAs study the impacts of many different types of interventions, systemic impacts often do not have linear causes and effects. For this reason, it is difficult (if not impossible) to propose causal relationships, although HIAs may fruitfully draw attention to ‘pathways’ or relationships between different factors that underlie health. HIAs are useful for developing policies, programs and research projects that can study health in a highly localized, place-specific manner. They also incorporate a broad and deep range of evidence; so compelling are these assessments that

the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion advocated HIA's as a primary planning resource for their *Healthy People 2020* campaign (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016, September 19).

However, HIAs tend to scale their data down to the quantitative level. This is done so that evidence can be amalgamated and used in statistical operations to predict, control, explain and improve health outcomes. We live in a culture of 'big data' and this information can be used to predict and plan outcomes like never before possible (Rose, 2016). While new technologies and metrics are extremely useful, we turn to history to acknowledge the importance of working *with* communities to create effective change. Such work depends on understanding how people make meaning of their lived experiences. And importantly, it is through listening to stories and making sense of experiences that external stakeholders "engage communities and key stakeholders in a deliberative process" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016, September 19). It is through this communicative process that we can leverage internal resources within the community and mobilize efforts to secure external resources. As the psychologist Wilhelm Dilthey (cited in Moran, 2000) argued more than a century ago, the study of human interactions requires a fine attunement to our motivations and intricately crafted ways of being in and co-creating our world. Through qualitative methodologies, we are able to understand (*verstehen*) and express the desires, hopes, and complexities of human motivations and behaviors. Information collected through phenomenological and thematic methods in particular can usefully supplement HIAs because these methods require a great deal of observation and attention to the experiences and meaning-making processes of community stakeholders. As we move beyond paternalistic approaches towards helping communities develop inner resilience, researchers and planners are encouraged to seek knowledge from the community and present their findings to the community in a manner that is accessible, engaging and empowering. After all, knowledge is



only effective (and just) insofar as it leads to open dialogue between decision-makers, key stakeholders and community residents.

Thus far, our scope of inquiry has been largely theoretical and historical. This was necessary to introduce key concepts and further efforts towards situating psychological research within an interdisciplinary field studying the complex relationships between place, identity, and health. From our review of community-based green job programs we may position our present study as a trail-building venture in its own right, connecting academic research with community action in hopes of affecting social change. Now that we have surveyed the philosophy, socio-historical context and program literature, we can explain our approach to the data. In this chapter we will describe our ethnographic approach and application of phenomenological description and critical thematic analysis. We will outline our rationale for integrating these methodologies and detail our data collection procedures, analysis protocols and presentation strategies. But first, we need to revisit the role of researcher reflexivity, focusing on both individual and systemic factors.

### **Reflexivity and Corruption Pressures**

Critical social research demands reflexivity, which includes an awareness of how we interact with our participants and our data. These interactions are guided by individual factors such as personal experience and assumptions as well as systemic factors such as the researcher's positionality within an academic institution. Taken together, we must consider how all of this may impact our research.

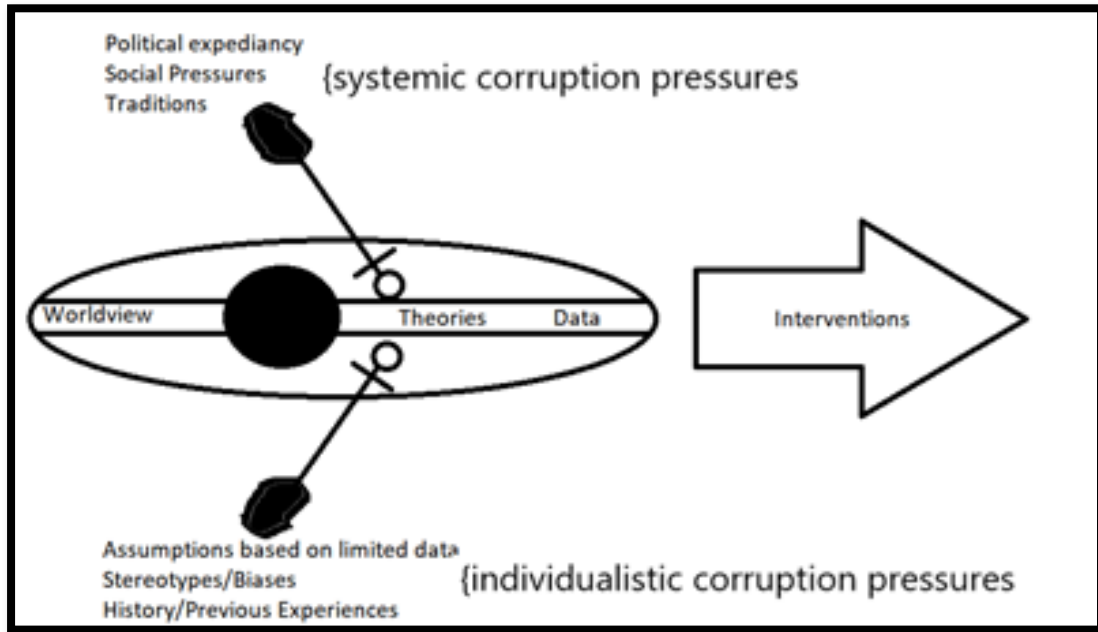


Figure 6.1. Contextual Model of Interventions

Figure 6.1 shows a contextual model of interventions. Based on Suman Fernando's *Context of Diagnosis* model (1991, p. 61), it describes the social and personal contexts of our interventions—whether in research, treatment or policy—including the kinds of biases that may perpetuate injustice and inequity. Like all institutions unfortunately, health research tends over time to become self-circumscribed and self-justifying. This means that new data increasingly conforms to old theories and worldviews, which tend to reinforce one another to the point where working concepts become reified and our analysis of the data confirms the worldviews we already have. In the best case, we have evidence-based research that is one-sided and in the worst we have research-based evidence that is misleading (Boden & Epstein, 2006). To counteract these tendencies mental health researchers, practitioners and policy-makers must attend to what Campbell (1979) called “corruption pressures” (p. 85) in our data, which may be individualistic and/or systemic. This section will speak to both types of corruption pressures within our own data.

On an individualistic level, we acknowledge that information is always incomplete and therefore our interpretations and conclusions are to some extent based on assumptions. These assumptions may be informed by our personal and social history, previous work/research experience and implicit biases. Owing to my own developmental and social history for instance, I—the author—am inclined to assume that nature experiences are positive and healing. As another example, my initial unfamiliarity with American culture, history and particularly African American experiences of nature had initially led me to assume an ‘urban bias’, namely that my participants preferred built environments to natural ones and lacked familiarity with the outdoors. However, I was surprised to learn that most of them had early, positive experiences in parks and nature.

Although examining these basic beliefs and assumptions are a proper element of reflexivity, we are only discussing individualistic factors. Despite our best individual intentions, systemic corruption pressures in our policy, research and interventions may still perpetuate racism, health inequities, and spatial injustice. These pressures include political expediency (e.g. certain research is favored, or certain racializing discourses are used because they have traction to gain funding), social pressures (which may occur from within the institution ‘not to rock the boat’ or from other key stakeholders) and traditions (which constrain the ways that we work in terms of what our peers and mentors have previously researched or concluded). By describing our own systemic corruption pressures, we hope to advance a reflexive model of research that is justice-oriented, which Parker (2005) calls ‘radical research’.

With the publication of the ONE PGH report (2017), there has been an impetus to produce research that is geared towards social and environmental justice. However, as we had seen in the previous chapter, the dominant discourse in much of this research had historically functioned (whether intentionally or not) to: a) legitimize the research/government institution as

benign and helpful b) assure the public that outcomes could be predicted and controlled c) center responsibility on individuals for failing to benefit from interventions and d) portray communities (particularly of color) as lacking the cultural capital and knowledge to advance their own wellbeing therefore rationalizing continued stewardship. We are mindful that our research is an “outside” intervention, just as the ETC is an outside intervention for the crew members, who are not from Mount Washington. Furthermore, we acknowledge that the ETC is mostly run and staffed by Caucasian persons<sup>79</sup> although the clients/crew members have been almost exclusively African American. We hope that this research foregrounds the knowledge and desires of the crew members, whom we believe can be advocates in their own communities for developing healthy, green spaces. The systemic pressure or tension here may be in recognizing that forms of advocacy like the ETC are important while concurrently recognizing that Black communities and interests need to be represented by Black leaders.

A direct corruption pressure occurs in the form of dual-roles. Within community-based research, this sometimes cannot be avoided. Individuals who run programs or organizations are sometimes recruited into research for their expertise or connections with the community. We

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<sup>79</sup> Bear in mind that throughout this analysis, Shawn will be considered as part of the crew although he was by that time employed fulltime as a staff member of the MWCDC. This decision to position him as a crew member and not with the staff was done for several reasons. First, it was not clear to me that Shawn was a staff member as he participated in all the crew activities and programming. This information had been communicated much later. Also, during crew discussions Shawn was always referenced as one of the crew, particularly when discussions involved staff members. Finally, it was important to include Shawn’s perspective as a crew member (albeit as the crew leader) because the interviews with the crew were more in-depth than those with the staff and the crew’s accounts were specifically analyzed for phenomenological themes. However, the analysis as a whole must recognize that staff-crew relations could not—and should not—be simply plotted along a White-Black dichotomy.

must acknowledge here that Dr. Ilyssa Manspeizer is the former executive director of the MW CDC and current director of Landforce. She is also a dissertation committee member who was involved in the development, implementation and presentation of this current study. Dr. Manspeizer certainly occupies dual roles by representing both the program being studied and the study itself. As we are committed to the integrity of this research, the potential conflict of interest was openly discussed between the investigators. Dr. Manspeizer was not involved in the data gathering or analysis, except to provide structural edits and background information (cited as personal communications throughout). She was selected to be on the committee for both her familiarity with the ETC and her extensive international experience working in community-based development and natural resource conservation. Aside from her work in fact-checking the data on the ETC and Mount Washington, Dr. Manspeizer provided invaluable insights on key issues that arise when working with community stakeholders.

This study is perhaps less susceptible to corruption pressures from traditions within empirical clinical psychology because Duquesne's department of clinical psychology has a strong multidisciplinary focus. However, as in other health sciences (e.g. Beedholm, Lomborg & Frederiksen, 2014), research in clinical psychology tends to be prescriptive (i.e. identifying a problem and its treatment) and instrumental (i.e. simplifying complex phenomena in terms that can be measured and controlled). The temptation in this study is to come up with specific and concrete steps that the ETC and other programs can implement. While such outcomes are not undesirable, we recognize that social change is taken up by participants in their own ways and we can allow latitude for these different possibilities.

### **The Opportunities and Challenges of Ethnography**

An ethnographic approach felt intuitive for the project at stake. When the idea of studying the Emerald Trail Corps program was suggested by my advisor, Dr. Eva Simms, we

decided that I (the author and principle researcher) would immerse myself in the daily experiences of the crew members to more fully understand their lived experiences. In June 2015, this study was approved by the IRB and I worked one day per week alongside the crew for the duration of their work season, which ran from the beginning of May until the end of August 2015. On most work days I would attend their morning briefing and accompany the crew to a section of Emerald View Park to hack, rake, root and smooth the earth into walkable trails. Through immersion in the crew members' work, I also participated in their breaks, social banter, and occasionally their team meetings and weekly job training.

Right from the start, the crew members (our ethnographic participants) were identified as stakeholders—and not merely subjects—in the research. We felt it was important to properly acknowledge their contributions as well as promote their ability to self-advocate. Regarding each crew member as a stakeholder also required an attitude of respect for the perspectives, experience and knowledge of each individual. This attitude prevented a complacency in which we, as researchers, might assume the homogeneity of the crew or position ourselves as 'experts' with exclusive access to knowledge. Working alongside the crew was literally humbling [Latin: *humus*, "on the ground"]; by getting down and dirty, I gained their respect and was granted privileged access to the ways they approached their work and each other. As I helped pave the dirt into trails, I also began making inroads into the lives of the men who I worked alongside. In a sense, this study aims to present their vital, compelling stories as trails that others can follow into their personal and social realities within the park. While it would be naïve to think that I had access to their 'true' individual and social identities (as if there were but one central constellation), my position as ethnographer allowed me to approach the crew from a level trajectory where they felt more like collaborators with my research rather than subjects 'studied from above'. This may have allowed me to witness—and later discuss—interactions that would

normally be kept within the confidence of the crew. Through work, the crew and I had a shared experiential context from which we could draw upon in discussing their experiences.

For its virtues, my ethnographic position was also tempered by several challenges. First, I had to gain the trust and confidence of the crew. This was not so easily accomplished as I was initially perceived as an outsider with an ambiguous agenda. At first, some crew members asked me whether I was working with the staff. The program director, Dr. Ilyssa Manspeizer, and her staff had anticipated this concern and during my formal introduction (and also in the IRB consent forms; see Appendix A), we explicitly declared that I would not solicit or pass on any evaluative information whatsoever on behalf of the MWCDC staff. However, this also meant that I, as participant-observer, was in an awkward, in-between position that might be unique to ethnography. Neither a staff nor crew member, I was sometimes unclear on how to be both a participant and an observing researcher. I was also conscious of positioning myself differently when with the crew versus the staff. For instance, when joining with the crew, I presented myself as louder, bolder and more animated in order to fit in; with the staff, I reverted to my more habitually reserved and ‘scholarly’ demeanor. Another challenge involved handling information given to me by different sources. On some occasions, the crew would divulge information about each other or a staff member and I would have to keep track of what information was said in confidence and what information was safe and appropriate to write on. Sometimes the staff would discuss a crew member with me with the implicit understanding that this was for my research, although the information seemed more personal or supervisory. It is important to state that there was no conscious malice by anyone but because my identity as participant-observer was so fluid there was a natural ambiguity about what information was appropriate (and important) to share. Throughout the project, I was also concerned that my ethnographic gaze might make the participants feel as though they were ‘on display’ for my research and curiosity.

As the makers of trails know, it is imperative to work with nature and create a path that appears to “fade into the landscape” (Kohlstedt, 2017). The ethnographic gaze is a trail into the lives of the stakeholders and, like a trail, should be discrete but serve a purpose beyond its own ends. Towards these ends, I took as guiding principles Madison’s (2005) descriptions of the responsibilities of a critical ethnographer, which includes *transparency*, *respectfulness* and *unobtrusiveness* as well as a concern for the consequences of *representation* in research. In community-engaged research, one seeks to build in-roads into the community; it is important therefore to train the academic gaze within the focus of the community. And though I have a significant ideological investment in advancing social and environmental justice, I also have an ethical imperative to remain impartial towards the values and opinions expressed by the crew and staff participants.

I kept a field journal to record daily observations, conversations and anecdotes. These entries were written in a stream of consciousness so as to declare my unfiltered associations, feelings and reactions. The journal served several purposes. First, the writing disclosed my preconceptions, values and opinions; this helped me recognize my biases and maintain a more objective relationship with the data. A self-reflexive journal was also essential to understanding my power and privilege (or lack thereof), when working with individuals from various social and cultural stations (Madison, 2011). Reflexivity becomes especially important as the ethnographic position tends to cultivate an attitude of complacency through which the researcher may elide his/her own cultural assumptions about the participants (Geertz, 1973). Writing in the journal also helped me cultivate an ethnographic attitude, which is necessary for studying complex behaviors in their natural environment. Recognizing that identities, including that of the researcher, are socially and environmentally constructed, Geertz (1994) emphasized that personal, social and cultural experiences must be understood with respect to the context of



places, customs, artifacts and the intentionality of actors. What is desired are ‘thick descriptions’ of the sensory details in which participants interact with their places (Geertz, 1994). Accordingly, the entries from this journal were edited and presented in this study as key episodes.

### **Presenting Phenomenological Themes through Key Episodes**

Chapters 7 (nature), 8 (work) and 9 (identity) will each describe phenomenological themes from the data. These themes will be introduced by a *key episode* from the field journal. These key episodes are written in the form of an anecdote while attempting to describe the body-self-world field of my experiences in Emerald View Park with the ETC. As such, the episodes mostly center on my personal experiences although I have included some interactions with the crew. These episodes will hopefully orient the reader to how I approached the personal and social experiences of the crew. My interactions could be examined for what they reveal about nonverbal behaviors and speech, including what might be unexpressed or absent (Geertz, 1994). The style of writing is mostly prosaic although some sensory details and metaphorical descriptions were included to provide the reader with experiential depth.

Of course writing is an interpretive process which began by identifying and framing my experiences of working with the crew in Emerald View Park. The key episodes are of varying length, content and tone but they share common features: a) they describe events or anecdotes, b) written in everyday language that engages the reader and c) conveys sensory or experiential themes (van Manen, 2007). Van Manen (1989, 1990, 2007) provided detailed guidelines on selecting, editing and presenting anecdotes or key episodes. From these guidelines we may state that the aim of such writing is not to reveal the ‘essence’ of an experience or suggest a master narrative but rather to disclose certain practices or habits that were acquired and to describe how

these habits gathered a world of meaning. And so into the writing we go, which will of course begin with proper introductions.

### **What's in a Name? The Use of Identity in Research**

Respecting our participants (i.e. both crew members and MWCDC staff) as empowered stakeholders, we gave them the option of using their real names or a pseudonym during the study. In clinical interventions and research, it is standard practice to change the names and identifying information of participants to protect them from undue exposure, which may result in feelings of vulnerability and potential for harm (Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2015). However, as a community-minded research project, we thought that participants might want to be recognized as stakeholders in the work and therefore they were given a chance to be represented on any public forum that this research might take.

However, before gaining their consent to participate important precautions were taken. We provided participants with two versions of an informed consent form (Appendix A): one with permission to use their real name (A1, B1) and another in which we would use a pseudonym (A2, B2). The risks of using their real names were explained (i.e. others in the community or in the program may recognize their statements—although this might be true even with de-identified information) but participants were also told that highly sensitive and/or personal information would be either de-identified or not used in the study. All references to non-consenting third-parties were also anonymized. Two participants, Riddles and Cam, chose to use pseudonyms for reasons of privacy. They were of course informed that others in the study might be able to identify them, but they were also assured that sensitive, personal information would be omitted. Cam also declined to be interviewed. All other participants had volunteered the use of their real names. Most participants reported feeling happy about being personally involved in research that they believed would advocate for programs like the ETC. To contextualize the key episodes and

provide some narrative background to the data, I have written brief introductions for each participant stakeholder. To assist the reader, Table 6.1 lists them all along with demographic information.

Table 6.1. Summary of Participant Stakeholders. (\*pseudonyms used to protect confidentiality)

<b>Name</b>	<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Time with ETC</b>
<b>Shawn</b>	<i>ETC Employee</i>	36	<i>African American</i>	<i>Crew Leader</i>	<i>5<sup>th</sup> year</i>
<b>Riddles*</b>	<i>ETC Employee</i>	29	<i>African American</i>	<i>Crew Mentor</i>	<i>3<sup>rd</sup> season</i>
<b>Cam*</b>	<i>ETC Employee</i>	31	<i>African American</i>	<i>Crew Member</i>	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> season</i>
<b>Mike</b>	<i>ETC Employee</i>	52	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Crew Member</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> season</i>
<b>Jim</b>	<i>ETC Employee</i>	60	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Crew Member</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> season</i>
<b>Markus</b>	<i>ETC Employee</i>	23	<i>Biracial</i>	<i>Crew Member</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> season</i>
<b>Thomas</b>	<i>MWCDC Staff</i>	36	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Supervisor</i>	<i>5<sup>th</sup> year</i>
<b>Kathryn</b>	<i>MWCDC Staff</i>	<i>mid 30s</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Program Manager</i>	<i>6<sup>th</sup> year</i>
<b>Judith</b>	<i>MWCDC Staff</i>	<i>mid 30s</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Program Aide</i>	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> year</i>
<b>Laura</b>	<i>MWCDC Contractor</i>	<i>mid 50s</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>Talent Development Specialist</i>	<i>5<sup>th</sup> season</i>

## Shawn

Shawn is a 36-year old, African American male. He is the crew leader and is entering his 5<sup>th</sup> season with the ETC. Shawn has a brawny frame, which was often dripping with sweat from exertions under the sun. Behind his glasses, he has a soft gaze; his toothy grin and booming laugh reveal a jovial, playful demeanor. However, Shawn has a very intense presence on the trail and he seems to work in a time and pace of his own. I have often observed the other crew

members watching him and trying to see how he is working in order to join with him. As a leader, Shawn also facilitates interactions between staff and crew members. He is able to effortlessly switch between friendly bantering with the crew to a more formal discourse on planning and leadership, especially when staff are present. Never punitive or directive, Shawn's approach is to make you feel as comfortable as possible with him ("I'll make you like me!"). This approach however may also blur the structures of authority that most crew members are used to (especially coming from jail) and some have reported being frustrated by Shawn's preference to lead by example rather than direction. Overall however, he is well respected. Shawn is also intensely loyal to the crew, whom he often refers to as "the family." He is also very philosophically-minded and expressed a keen interest in this research. When I first met him, Shawn talked about the restorative capacities of being on the trail and reassured me that, "out here if you make a mistake, things can be fixed." Shawn also mused that individuals are only "partially free" when they leave jail but here in the park, engaged in meaningful work, then they become "totally free."

## **Riddles**

Riddles is a 29-year old, African American male returning for his third season. He has a wiry frame which is usually dressed with baggy pants, his work shirt and a bandana. Riddles is a very affable and humorous man quick to grin and throw back his head in laughter as he 'cuts up' a joke or wisecracks. He has an excellent memory and will often recall things I did or said from weeks ago. Though Shawn is the crew leader, Riddles is the second in command and takes to mentoring newer recruits. When the crew breaks off into two groups (one to clear brush and other to smooth the dirt), Riddles will lead his "dirt crew". Their leadership styles are also quite different with Shawn exerting quiet confidence and raw physicality, while Riddles maintains the

crew's motivation through humor and conversation. Riddles is also quite goal-oriented and is mindful of working at a pace to meet specific goals each day.

### **Cam**

Cam is a 31-year old, African American male. He is now in his second season with the crew. His round face frames wide (often downcast) eyes; though he rarely speaks, his voice is soft. Cam is the most reserved of all the crew members. Thomas and Kathryn had told me that Cam had a slow start in his first year but towards the end of the season he started to open up to the staff and demonstrate initiative in the work. During my first week, Cam was presented with the "worker of the week" award for cleaning up broken glass on the trailhead without being prompted to do so. The award was a small gold-painted shovel that Cam would then pass on to someone of his own choosing the following week. Cam was most at ease with Shawn and it took me a while to initiate conversation with him. Initially, I was unsure whether Cam was unfriendly, shy or very afraid to trust others. One day however, towards the end of the season, Cam took me aside and talked to me about his life, hopes, fears and dreams while we looked over the skyline of Mount Washington. He asked me not to write about what he told me. That was the last we spoke about it, but a very palpable bond of respect had developed between us.

### **Mike**

Mike is a 52-year old Caucasian male starting his first season. Mike has a stout frame that is often wound up and bristling with energy. He looks out with piercing blue eyes and from time to time, will flash me a big smile but mostly he keeps to himself. On the trails, Mike wears headphones or sometimes plays music from his iPod speaker. The blaring hard rock and heavy metal music matches his aggressive work tempo. His favored tool, the "hoelaski" has a long wooden handle with a hoe on one side and an axe blade on the other side of its metal head. The hoelaski is used for chopping and digging. Mike often works out his frustrations using this tool

but on other occasions he will walk off for a smoke. He knows he has a short fuse and tries to maintain his composure towards the crew. When I first met Mike, he had just apologized to Jim “for ripping into him” a few days prior.

### **Jim**

Jim is 60-year old, Caucasian male also starting his first season. His thin face wears thick glasses and long white hair flows under a baseball cap and falls upon his wiry shoulders. Often Jim is also in his own world but when he does look up, he seems eager to engage me in conversation. Jim’s nasally voice carries an almost rural twang. Besides being a good conversationalist Jim makes every effort to help me feel integrated into the crew, likely because he identifies with my position, as an outsider. Among the others, Jim has quietly earned their respect as a solid, dependable worker.

### **Markus**

Markus is a 23-year old biracial (half-Black, half-White) male who started here halfway through the season. A former high school football player, Markus stands out with his tall and hefty frame. Among the crew, he is known for providing the “muscles” required for heavy lifting. Markus likes to talk about his football days as well as his plans for enrolling in business school. With his heavy beard and deep, loud voice, Markus might seem intimidating but on the trails he is a constant joker. It was not unusual to hear his booming chuckle cut through the monotone sounds of metal scraping dirt. Although the largest and strongest man, Markus is also the youngest and he perceives himself as more inexperienced than the others. This has often made him reticent to participate in the work and instead he prefers to sit or stand close to Shawn or Riddles, observing them work. However, Markus is by no means a slouch; every day after work, he catches the bus to his second job, working at the deli counter.

## **Thomas**

Thomas is a 36-year old, Caucasian male. Thomas is the staff supervisor of the crew and like Shawn is in his 5<sup>th</sup> year with the crew. Lanky and tattooed, Thomas speaks with a soft, deep voice and occasionally breaks out his toothy smile. Thomas positions himself as more of a coach and he seems quite comfortable in individual interactions with the crew. Though he occasionally worked with the crew, Thomas most often worked in other sections of the trail or was planning for the next project.

## **Judith**

Judith is a Caucasian female in her 30s. She is a program aide for the MWCDC and not directly affiliated with the ETC program. A brown-haired woman with a robust frame, Judith carries herself with an energetic demeanor and she is well-liked by all of the crew. I have only seen Judith work a handful of times but she enjoys getting involved in the physical work. One day she organized a team effort to build deer fences around a grove of newly planted trees.

## **Kathryn**

Kathryn is a Caucasian female in her 30s. She is the program manager, whom Thomas reports to. Kathryn is a friendly, warm woman who easily interacts with all members of the crew. She is not frequently seen on the trail as her work is more centered on management and operations. However, Kathryn and Judith had coordinated a few work days together, in which flower beds were cleaned or fences were installed.

## **Laura**

Laura is a Caucasian female in her 50s. She is the “talent development specialist” which meant that she was responsible for meeting with the crew every week to help them build resumes, search for jobs and plan for interviews. Laura has soft facial features and her words were almost always gentle and encouraging. Unexpectedly, Laura has found that some of the

crew members have looked to her as a sort of maternal figure. Though her work is not physical, it is also not easy. After working in the heat of the trails, it is sometimes difficult to engage the men when they sit down under the cool, sheltered pavilion. When the work stops, tiredness takes over. Nevertheless, Laura used cheer and praise to motivate them. Though they often look tired or bored, many have taken advantage of the help she offers—and Laura had even continued to work with some crew members after the season had ended.

### **Data Collection and Procedures**

All seven crew members completed an IRB-approved form (see Appendix A) consenting to be observed and interviewed. However, one individual left the program prematurely and another declined to be interviewed. Therefore, a total of five ( $n=5$ ) crew members were interviewed. Each crew member was interviewed on two separate occasions, once in the middle of the season (in July) and again towards the season's end (in late August). Interviews were conducted on-site in a one-on-one format and were each approximately 35 to 45 minutes in length. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed. These interviews took place during the work day, mainly for pragmatic reasons but it also helped capture their fresh experiences. The conversations followed a semi-structured format (see Appendix B) and questions were structured to encourage open-ended responses. Specifically, participants were asked to discuss what they had learned or discovered during the work season concerning their relationships with nature, work, others and themselves. It was hoped that participants would answer honestly and that these interviews would facilitate greater self-awareness and reflexivity. Adopting an *analytic attitude* (Schafer, 1983), I engaged these men in a conversation aimed at elucidating their personal experiences in detail so that we could jointly explore these experiences for the meanings, choices and identities they afforded.



Later that year (in December), I interviewed four MWCDC staff members (n=4) who had planned or participated in the summer work season. The staff were only interviewed once although their interviews were slightly longer, averaging one hour each. The interview questions (see Appendix B) were similar in content to those of the crew but staff were also asked about their relationship with the crew.

In August 2016, a full year after I completed my work with the 2015 crew, I returned to the program to do a ‘ground-truth’ session with the 2016 Landforce crew. Although some aspects of the program were based on the ETC model, there were also significant difference; the biggest being that the program functioned independently as city-wide entity that was no longer a subsidiary of the MWCDC. Under Landforce, the crew had taken on external contracts in other green spaces outside of Mount Washington. The 2016 Landforce crew of 12 individuals was also substantially larger than the previous year’s and was headed by two crew leaders (one being Shawn). There were also some demographic differences between the two crews. The 2016 crew had one female and they were not necessarily formerly incarcerated, however all were underemployed. The racial composition of this crew was mostly African American (with one Caucasian). Other than these differences, the job skills training was still a part of the program and the work requirements were the same. Dr. Manspeizer and I planned for me to share some of my initial interpretations of the data and elicit feedback from the crew. This was done to ensure that the final write-up would represent the experiences of original crew members as accurately as possible. I worked for a half-day with this crew prior to our ground-truth session in order to build rapport and give my time and labor as a short-term exchange of good faith while I made informal observations and re-familiarized myself with the work. This new crew also signed consent forms which allowed me to gather their de-identified feedback, which was incorporated into the data analysis. The ground-truth session was structured as a focus group where I presented to them my

initial thematic findings. I then asked them to respond to these findings with feedback that either confirmed, rejected or revised these understandings. Initially, some crew members were reluctant to participate, however I reminded them that they would not be evaluated in any way for their disclosures and that any feedback—whether positive or negative—would not be directly reported to the staff. I also positioned myself as an advocate for this program. Still, in order to ensure I gained objective feedback, I asked them to be honest in their critiques as this study may be used to improve the Landforce program. After that, most seemed eager to discuss their experiences and were curious about my findings from last year. Together, the ethnographic observations, field notes, recorded interviews, and ground truth notes comprise the study data to be analyzed.

### **Integrating Phenomenology and Critical Thematic Analysis**

This is a phenomenological study that incorporates a specific qualitative unit—interpretive repertoires—that originates from discourse analysis. Although this study is not a discourse analysis, it is worth noting that the study of phenomena (i.e. phenomenology) and the language we use to describe these phenomena each have their own consistent assumptions about reality (ontology) and the kinds of knowledge that can be studied (epistemology). Phenomenological accounts invite the reader into language that calls forth an experiential life world, in which the lived experience of a phenomenon (e.g. of working out in nature) becomes truly alive. A critical thematic analysis of interpretive repertoires, on the other hand, considers how language functions in the social and cultural domain and is particularly concerned with how language is used to include/empower or exclude/disempower individuals and groups. In writing phenomenological descriptions, we get a description of the major structures of experience while a critical thematic analysis produces interpretive repertoires that give us insight into how language structures experience. Among the several reasons that Hood (2016) endorses methodological pluralism, we agree that: 1) new knowledge may be gained from approaching the

data with another framework 2) knowledge synthesized from different approaches may have a greater depth and complexity, thus approaching things as they really are 3) each methodology has a different validity thus we are adding plausibility to our study 4) the study of health concerns both an individual and social/systemic perspective 5) broadening the discussion of findings helps us better connect our data to the literature and clarifies the rationale for undertaking this research and 6) much time, effort and resources was spent obtaining the data, so why not make the most of it?

Phenomenologists assume that reality—or the essential nature of things in the world (i.e. what Heidegger (1962) called Being)—can be articulated provided we faithfully describe what is empirically disclosed to us via intuition, sensation, feeling, and thought. Phenomenologists are suspicious of descriptions that do not come directly from experience (i.e. theoretical descriptions, folk wisdom, and abstract concepts or definitions). The objective of phenomenological research therefore, is to describe the *lived experience* of a given phenomenon (Fischer, 2006).

Phenomenologists recognize that individuals make sense of things within their own, unique experiential context (or lifeworld); that is, no one will experience a phenomenon in exactly the same way. However, the goal of research is to identify common structures of experience that translate from individual to individual, across sociocultural, developmental, racial and gender differences. These structures are not reduced to abstract codes or quantities, but may be represented in the form of a narrative or description that is colored by experiential, evocative language (van Manen, 1990). A good phenomenological description is not only faithful to the participants' experiences but fundamentally involves the reader in a textual experience; the reader suspends his/her learned assumptions about the phenomenon and faithfully allows the writing to recreate the experience so the reader may *know it again, for the first time*.

Phenomenological descriptions may provide insight into how crew members experience nature,

work and each other and can lead to program improvements and aid advocacy efforts. For our study, the phenomenological research question is: **“What is the lived experience of creating trails in an urban park?”**

To critically examine themes, we used the conceptual tool of the interpretive repertoire (IR). Introduced in Chapter 3, interpretive repertoires are units of analysis developed by discourse analysts Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter (1988) to research groups (e.g. teachers, scientists, residents) and highlight their social practices of knowledge production and behavior. Through close—often rhetorical reading—of their everyday texts and language, we look for *function*, *construction*, and *variation* in these discursive accounts. Attending to function highlights the work of the text, which may be to “explain, justify, excuse, blame...” (p. 169). Construction refers to the broader social, historical and political structures that give context to the language used. Part I of this study provides a helpful orientation to this context. Finally, we examine differences in accounts of a thing or experience and how individuals themselves will draw upon varying and sometimes contradictory accounts to describe their position. Such variability demonstrates the deconstructive position, which suggests there are always margins of resistance and ambiguity in any attempt to center meaning (Derrida, 1978; Parker, 2002). While we draw from Wetherell and Potter’s work (1988), this is not a discourse analysis. Instead, this methodology critically identifies thematic elements in the participant interviews that are used to construct IRs that provide insight into the relationship between crew members, staff and the communities they serve. Consequently, the research question that guides our critical thematic analysis is: **“What interpretive repertoires are used and how do they frame identities, activities and relationships?”**

### **Analysis: Writing Phenomenological Descriptions and Interpretive Repertoires**

Our approach to writing the phenomenological descriptions of themes is adapted from van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic phenomenological method. van Manen advocates for "pre-reflective" descriptions of the world as it presents (or discloses) itself to consciousness. In other words, we avoid rendering experience in abstract terms or content units that can be studied apart from their context. The idea is to help the reader develop an empathic or experiential understanding of what the participant has *lived*. Like poetry or art, which may bring the reader/audience into experiential proximity with the author or subject, phenomenological descriptions are, according to van Manen, made accessible through language that is direct, immediate and experiential. Any linguistic styling is done in service of aiding the reader in understanding the crew members' lived experiences. This method is also hermeneutic because we understand that no experience can be accessed without an understanding of its context. Of course, direct experience is not amenable to study as experience is already always being communicated through a series of perceptual filters. In our study, the participants were required to translate their experiences into words, which were in turn recorded, transcribed and retranslated by the researcher. However, phenomenologists since Heidegger (1962) have recognized that our perspectival approach to the world should not be devalued as a bias that can (or should) be eliminated—our interpretation of another's experience is inherently meaningful in that it discloses how we organize (or live towards) our own experiences with a sense of meaning, purpose and agency. This is why phenomenological descriptions do not pretend to be objective, empirical descriptions (though they are gathered from empirical observations); rather, they are descriptions of phenomena that challenge the reader/audience to better understand their own intentions, meanings and values.

Although van Manen (1990) advocated for a guiding method, he maintained that such methods must be selectively composed for the research at hand. For our study, we follow these methods to write phenomenological descriptions:

- a) Obtain descriptions of the crew members' lived experiences via interviews.
- b) Transcribe the interviews.
- c) Read each crew member transcript and code into basic meaning units (see Appendix C).
- d) Sort the codes into experiential themes. In chapters 7 through 9, these themes will be presented under the heading "Participant Interview Theme: ..."
- e) Check these themes through participant feedback (i.e. ground-truthing).
- f) Read all transcripts a second time and select excerpts<sup>80</sup> of interview data according to their relevance to themes.
- g) Read each excerpt line by line and note structures of experience.
- h) Staying as close to the meanings, language and experiences of the crew members as possible, write a brief phenomenological description that summarizes each experience into a general structure, noting who said what.

It is important to mention here that the phenomenological descriptions of trail work were only written from the crew members' (and crew leader's) interviews. No doubt the perspectives of other staff members (i.e. Thomas, Kathryn, Judith) shaped those of the crew members in important ways that were not otherwise stated or explored here. Their voices would likely add additional richness to the 'Participant Interview Themes' in the next three chapters. It is also worth noting that the crews, by design, are meant to function in a way that enables everyone to

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<sup>80</sup> Excerpts were cleaned up by removing redundancies and filler words (e.g. um, uh, like). Errors in pronunciation and syntax were corrected where it was felt to distract the reader from the meanings being conveyed.

be present, and find their own power. Thomas and Kathryn were particularly strong advocates for this. However, we had decided fairly early on to work directly with the recorded experiences of the crew members and let them speak on their own terms. If the reader is wondering why the staff voices are only presented in the ‘Critical Thematic Analysis’, be assured that they were highly valuable sources of information but just not the privileged narratives.

After transcribing the crew members’ interviews, each transcript was read (and re-read) and coded into basic meaning units. These units are small assemblages of meaning which contribute meaningfully to understanding the whole experience and which in turn derive their basic context from this whole understanding. These codes were then sorted and organized into experiential themes. These themes orient us to salient experiences. During the ‘ground truth’ session, this data was shared with the new (2016) crew and their feedback was used to confirm, discard or modify the themes. Following this, the themes were organized by subject (i.e. nature, work, identity) and each transcript was read again so that excerpts could be selected and included under each theme. The next three chapters present these themes as subheadings, and within each theme is a dialogue box containing excerpts from the crew members’ interviews. Each excerpt was read line-by-line, and structures of experience were noted. A brief, general description summarized these structures of experience noting who said what. Each theme will be introduced by key episodes (described earlier), which were taken from ethnographic experiences.

In this era of hard-edged, positivist empiricism such qualitative truth claims may be discounted (e.g. Strasser cited in van Manen, 1989) because they heavily involve the author/writer’s subjective and selective presentation of the facts. However, as psychological researchers know, this skillset is routinely employed in clinical contexts for the purposes of assessment (observation), diagnosis (coding) and case-formulation (thematic description). The validity of these interventions can be gauged by the degree that the patient/participants can

recognize themselves in such descriptions and/or the degree that such descriptions are useful in bringing about positive changes. Of course, the rigor of such methods will depend on the researcher's experience, skills and alliance or familiarity with the participants. Other factors that strengthen the interpretive process include supervision or oversight by a senior advisor and cross-checking the validity of one's findings with the participants. In this case, I have familiarized myself to a high degree with the everyday experiences of my participants (by devoting the greater part of a summer to working alongside them); and I have the guidance of a seasoned phenomenological researcher (Dr. Eva Simms) as well as the director of the Landforce program (Dr. Ilyssa Manspeizer). Most importantly, however, I have checked the themes with a different set of crew members (from Landforce) to get a broader sense of generalizability (i.e. external validity) and to also see whether any important themes were omitted. As a measure of reliability, I had an undergraduate research assistant (Ms. Jenna Marsh) independently code and thematize each of the crew members' transcripts so I could compare her analysis with my own (i.e. inter-rater reliability). Her codes are presented in Appendix D.

To highlight how language frames experience, we explored interpretive repertoires (IRs) used by the crew members and staff to communicate about nature, work and identity. As defined in Chapter 3, IRs are units—usually signified by tropes, metaphors or figures of speech—that we can use to meaningfully assess the *function* and *variability* of discourse (Wetherell & Potter, 1988). By analyzing language, we see that subjective experiences do not represent a stable and fixed identity but are rather a product of functional motivations, both internal and external, and as such may vary according to circumstances. For example, a person may support social welfare programs but she may not feel comfortable seeing such programs with her own community. This person's experience of a community program would likely depend on the context. This individual may also hold different or even contradictory interpretive repertoires to support her



beliefs (e.g. “jobs prevent crime”, “not in my backyard”) while concurrently justifying certain power relations (e.g. some people do not belong in my community). Our critical thematic analysis uses elements of Parker’s (1994) structured, step-wise approach but foregrounds Wetherell and Potter’s (1988) concept of interpretive repertoires:

- a) Obtain descriptions from the crew members and staff about their lived experiences of nature, work, and identity.
- b) Read each transcript and develop a list of themes by category (i.e. nature, work, identity).  
In chapters 7 through 9, these themes will be presented under the heading “Critical Thematic Analysis: ...”
- c) Read all transcripts a second time and select excerpts<sup>81</sup> of interview data according to their relevance to themes.
- d) Read each excerpt line by line and free associate to the text, noting any thoughts, experiences, or cultural artifacts that come to mind in order to develop potential IR’s. See Appendix C.
- e) Write a brief description of each IR noting its function and its various uses by participants.

Creating IR’s is also a highly interpretive endeavor. What we look for is how certain units of speech or language (i.e. idioms, neologisms, descriptions or phrases) have actional effects in the world. We look for how these units function by imaginatively varying the ways one might express or receive these messages, probing for different nuances in meaning. Following this, we may consider which audiences these messages are intended for or for whom they are not. From

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<sup>81</sup> Excerpts were cleaned up by removing redundancies and filler words (e.g. um, uh, like). Errors in pronunciation and syntax were corrected where it was felt to distract the reader from the meanings being conveyed.

this we may construct a network of relationships between crew members and staff. It is noteworthy that both staff and crew members endorsed ‘code-switching’ or adopting different ways of speaking when addressing one another between group as compared to within group. Special attention is given to relationships characterized by an unequal distribution and maintenance of power and privileges. These social realities may be highlighted as representative of a given group. We are also interested in how these messages normalize (i.e. present as taken-for-granted) certain worldviews and note who benefits and who does not from the reproduction of these messages.

This analysis is not intended to encapsulate the broad range and nuanced perspectives of individual crew members and staff but this style of presentation does invite the reader to consider how language may reproduce—or challenge—social realities. As critical thematic analysts, we are interested in what is concealed in plain sight. It is here, at the seams of apparently self-evident experience, that phenomenological inquiry also operates to bring forward fresh perspectives through which we may revisit the phenomenon again and anew.

## CHAPTER 7. NATURE

The following three chapters will be respectively concerned with nature, work and identity. Each chapter will present experiential themes derived from participant interviews (Participant Interview Theme) along with a key episode, written as a personal description, from my ethnographic field journal. These key episodes describe the author's own engagement with the experiential themes reported by the crew members and is written in a style designed to facilitate the reader's transition in to an attitude of phenomenological inquiry. A 'Thematic Summary' of the theme will be followed by 'Thematic Excerpts from Interviews' of crew members. Finally, a 'General Phenomenological Description' of the theme will illustrate its basic structures. These structures were derived from a hermeneutic phenomenological reading of the interviews and field journal.

Each chapter will also engage in a critical analysis of themes (Critical Thematic Analysis) identified in the interviews with crew members and staff. 'Thematic Excerpts' from both crew member and staff interviews will be presented followed by interpretive repertoires (IR), derived from a reading of function, construction and variability within each theme. These IR's will be numbered so readers may be clearer on what they are reading and it might be helpful for future studies to catalogue the IR's.

With the presentation of this data we intend to create dialogue between stakeholders in the community (i.e. employees, employers, residents, funding agencies). To explore the opportunities and challenges of urban green space using a spatial justice perspective is to invite all stakeholders to critically confront their realities and co-create tools, resources and relationships that open such places to more affirmative modes of inhabitation. To this end, the finished study will be presented to the Landforce organization in hopes that the stakeholders will be better equipped to create safe, healthy and accessible urban green spaces. Finally, we write in

this way to elicit an affective, visceral response from the readers; it is on the basis of this response that the ethical call into dialogue and dialogical action is predicated.

### **Participant Interview Theme: Transition Into Nature**

***Personal Description/Key Episode**<sup>82</sup>: Riding my bicycle down Grandview Avenue, I was able to survey the city for the first time. Apart from the breathtaking view of the cityscape—its skyscrapers, interstate highway and three rivers cresting in a fountain on the city's point—Mount Washington offers pedestrians a resplendent green hillside filled with trees, brush and tall grass. Looking across the Monongahela River from downtown, one would see a wall of green.*

*Departing from the incline, I quickly noticed how steep the hilly sidewalks were. As beads of sweat gathered on my forehead, I pondered how I would bicycle back down the massive hillside to make my way downtown. Earlier, when I had driven here, the car seemed to flatten the topography. Now I was out of my seat straining against my pedals and sucking air deeply to crunch up one more hill before coasting down into the alley to meet the rest of the crew.*

*Arriving at the tool shed, I saw Cam who was sitting on a crate. He tilted his chin up in acknowledgment and gazed off. I took a seat beside him. The shed was a small, portable trailer covered with a canvas tarp. It was parked in a shaded gravel lot just outside the park entrance by Republic Street, beneath a small grove of overhanging trees. As we waited for the rest of the crew to arrive, I glanced towards the trailhead. Bursts of sunlight tumbled through lattices of green leaves and splattered on the ground before us.*

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<sup>82</sup> As stated in Chapter 6, these key episodes were derived from first hand experiences and accounts in my ethnographic journal.

*The previous night's rain made the earth wet and its rich humus was accentuated by the rippling green grass, weed and shrubs that formed edges along the trail. Birdsong—so clear and smooth it almost seemed liquid—soaked the air above. I had crossed the threshold and was now immersed.*

**Thematic Summary:** Crew members identified making a transition between their everyday city world and the world of nature.

### **Thematic Excerpts from Interviews**

#### **Riddles**

*You have to be flexible to transition from the manual labor to the nice place where you have to be in front of the public and act in a certain way. You know what I mean? Then when you get into the woods, you're free. And it's just relaxing. You know, no pressure, no nothing.*

#### **Shawn**

*Being a little bit away from all the hustle and bustle of the city sometimes, you just—even though it's still right here in the middle—you're kind of away from all the fast pace of that life.*

#### **Markus**

*You know, like growing up in the city, all you're used to seeing is skyscrapers and buildings and a lot of people around you. And when you go to these woods it's just like walking into a different world.*

#### **Jim**

*I mean it's such a change of gear coming from the bus and dealing with people around you and coming up to here and getting into the woods. That transition is just phenomenal.*

*We start getting off the bus and we got a little bit of a hike down to the shed. That's where you turn the old city stuff off and start embracing the woods.*

*It's like heading from chaos into tranquility [laughing]. There's a portal. You know, and we kind of get submerged into it gradually.*

*I'm going from this hectic fast-paced environment to this—it's fast-paced but it's a whole different thing. It's a lot more peaceful. And I'm not pulled here by all this that's going on around me. I don't have to deal with uh all kinds of people and their different attitudes and traffic and exhaust fumes and busses.*

**Transition Into Nature – General Phenomenological Description:** The built environment was experienced as hectic, fast-paced and chaotic. Note Jim's descriptions (i.e. "change of gear"

“turn the old city stuff off” “bracing” “exhaust fumes and busses”) of city life. These phrases evoke a mechanical, industrial quality to the built environment. The transition away from this into nature was experienced as liberating (“I’m not pulled here...”, Jim; “you’re kind of away”, Shawn). Although still within the city, these pockets of nature spaces offer respite (“tranquility”, Jim; “relaxing”, Riddles). Here, crew members may be free from the busyness, noise and anonymous interpersonal interactions that characterize city life. Crossing the “portal” (Jim) into this nature space, crew members must be able re-attune to themselves and their surroundings (“like walking into a different world”, Markus).

### **Participant Interview Theme: Therapeutic Relaxation**

***Personal Description/Key Episode:** Within seconds of exiting the trail off Republic St. I look out to glimpse the steep, sloping sidewalks that seem to pour towards me before snaking to the side and climbing up another hill. I close my eyes, stand still take another breath. I smell dirt and then open my eyes again. Looking back, into the trail, I notice how dark it is inside. It’s cool slender tree shapes had hid me from the forceful sun and thick air hanging over the city. Just days ago, this trail was busy with children who were volunteering with the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy. Now the silence is almost musical; accentuated by the occasional trill or burst of birdsong.*

*I know I have an interview to conduct and the workday is only half done. My left shoulder reminds me that I am still recovering from a battle with Lyme’s disease. I let my mind wander to thoughts of the tick bite I suffered two weeks ago and the Ray-Ban glasses I lost while clearing brush. Looking back into the trail, I realized that for the better part of 3 hours, I was relatively free from anxiety and discomfort. No romantic sentiments, just the shade, coolness and silence that had stilled the buzzing of my worries and plans.*

**Thematic Summary:** Being in nature was associated with physical sensations of calmness and tranquility.

### Thematic Excerpts from Interviews

#### Riddles

*You know the woods has a lot more to offer than people actually think. On a personal level, working up here in the woods is therapeutic. It's relaxing, it's fun, it's a good environment. That feeling when the wind hits your face, you know?*

*It's therapeutic, especially when you're having a bad day outside of work...if I'm aggravated then I can come out here and swing the tools and feel the wind and feel relaxed.*

*They tell you if you're angry or upset to go walk for a couple minutes or however and the best way to walk is to listen to nature and soothe your soul. Like when you walk through the woods, you hear water dripping, you hear crickets, you hear bugs, you hear birds. You know what I mean? That's therapeutic.*

#### Markus

*I was never really, you know, 'Oh, let's go to the woods! Let's go camping!' I wasn't that type of guy. But now, you know, I have a newfound respect for the woods and I don't mind being out here. I actually kind of like it. It's peaceful.*

#### Shawn

*Now as far as being out here in the trees, in and amongst the nature and stuff, it is very therapeutic. I can honestly say that. It's real relaxing.*

*This is the closest we get to having our own beach. You know, some people who come out here walking probably feel the same way I do when they come out, you know, like... the winds, birds. Winds, birds and the swing of the trees...It's relaxing. It's kind of like a beach with no sand. To hear waves and feel relaxed. It's kind of like our beach!*

*Out here I'm hearing different noises. I could hear the planes coming past and stuff but I don't see nothing modern. No technologies and stuff. I'm on my tranquil.*

*The trail season is important for me because for some reason—like in the winters—I get depressed a lot.*

#### Mike

*I'm much more at peace with myself now that I've worked out in nature. Much more. I have anxiety issues so this really helps to calm me down. Being out in the trees, out in nature, in the woods with the crew working on the trails is very therapeutic to me.*

**Therapeutic Relaxation – General Phenomenological Description:** The moodedness or *befindlichkeit* of being out in nature was described as “relaxing” “therapeutic” and “peaceful”. In the natural world, one’s senses are attuned to the moving, flowing rhythms of life (water dripping, wind, birds, trees swaying...etc.). One’s sense of being may also be synchronized to such rhythms, which are experienced as soothing for the soul (Riddles). Participants used contradictory terms to describe their corporeal orientation in nature space (i.e. “in the woods”, Riddles; “out here”, Markus and “out in nature”, Mike); it is—speaking to the threshold—as if on the one hand, nature is a field that envelops participants into a private, dream-like landscape that is their own (Shawn); while at the same time, nature is a frontier that is outwards, away from the “modern” world and its constricting spaces that co-constitute the moodedness of anxiety (Mike) and depression (Shawn).

#### **Participant Interview Theme: Kinship with Nature**

**Personal Description/Key Episode:** *According to Judith, one of her favorite interactions with the crew was when they were planting wildflowers over in Bigbee Field. She told me that she began that day by explaining to the crew the importance of planting flowers and how they fit into the overall ecosystem of the park. As Judith was explaining things, she realized that for some of them, this would be the first time they had ever planted something. Judith recalled that throughout the workday, she was struck by the way these men showed tenderness, care and concern for the green creatures. She noticed, for example, how they tried to select the right spot for each plant and make sure they followed the correct planting procedures. Over the next several weeks, the crew would see her and ask, 'How are the flowers doing? Are they still alive?' Sometimes, they would even give her updates like, 'Hey, the flowers are blooming right now.' For Judith, she deeply enjoyed seeing how these plants had touched them.*



**Thematic Summary:** The crew reported feelings of closeness, purity and a sense of enjoyment of the natural world.

### Thematic Excerpts from Interviews

#### Riddles

*Go out and enjoy mother nature! Enjoy what it was really like a 100 years ago, you know what I mean? Enjoy what the land brings you. Don't just be sitting inside with all that's man-made and all this goddamn pollution.*

*The trail needs to look completely natural so we try to make it work with mother nature.*

#### Mike

*It's so much different out here because it's more of a natural state. You're dealing with what's here and not what's added to it.*

*I feel a little more closer to nature now and I feel a little more how important it is to the people who live on the planet and how much we need the trees and everything like that. So I'm a little greener.*

*I've taken a tree tending course so I can learn better how to take care of the trees even when I'm not working here anymore.*

#### Markus

*Before, when it came to like bugs and insects and animals, like, I didn't really have no care for them. Now I'm like in their home every day...I don't even want to kill a spider anymore.*

*You know, I think that some people tend to forget just to enjoy the atmosphere that's around them cuz they're so stuck up in the world. You know, stuck in society and reality—what were people doing 2000 years ago? Enjoying the nature, just enjoying the world!*

*We are literally getting back to our roots.*

#### Shawn

*The more you start putting things in like gravel and different stuff for your treads it takes away the natural scene and contours of the earth. I don't want to—I came to walk the trails to see natural things. Like we're just sitting here and you saw a deer and bucks, right? The more natural, the better to me...We try to keep it the same as possible without having to add in things that are man-made like railings and things like that.*

**Kinship with Nature – General Phenomenological Description:** The participants reported feelings of care (Mike), enjoyment (Riddles) and kinship (Markus) towards the natural or non-human world. This attitude, which may develop after prolonged exposure to the natural world

(Markus/Mike), recognizes that human elements may be invasive and need to be carefully considered before being added into the ecosystem. Participants (Riddles, Markus) invoked a mythic past to rationalize the enjoyment they feel towards nature; they experience a connection with the natural world that had been lost, but is now restored. The experience of care, enjoyment and kinship may be a precursor to developing a “vision” (see Chapter 8); a way of seeing that privileges the perspectives of the non-human world (i.e. trees, Mike; animals, Markus; and the landscape, Riddles/Shawn).

### **Participant Interview Theme: Affinity Towards Places**

*Personal Description/Key Episode: The crew had set up their toolshed to connect two parts of the trail that would allow users to traverse around the horseshoe of the park. At the spot, by Wyola Street, I tasted mulberries for the first time from the shady giants that hovered over the shed. Here, I helped make a stretch of trail for the first time. I remember standing back and looking at the finished stretch for what seemed a long time. I wrapped my memory around every texture, detail and sensation so that I would always be connected to this place.*

*Weeks after this, I was working beside Jim and we were putting up some fencing around a grove of newly planted trees. The crew was on a tight timeline and everyone hurried around us. However, I observed that Jim worked at a measured pace making sure that the wiring was even and securely fastened. As I got off my sore knees and prepared to move on, I saw Jim looking at a small part fencing that was bulging out. I was watching as he carefully put in a crimp. I worried that we were slowing the others down. Almost as if to answer my thought, Jim told me that he wanted the fence to look good because, he added, “I’m putting my name on it.” Looking back, I realized that this fence was also etching itself into Jim.*

**Thematic Summary:** There is a deep and lasting affinity towards places where one had been initiated into the work.

### Thematic Excerpts from Interviews

#### Riddles

*So many things happen that you end up naming a trail because of it. Like 'Turkey's Run' because Shawn got like chased by a turkey. You got 'Nia Long' because the trail that it's on grows grass and it's just like knee long! [chuckles].*

#### Markus

*I like the one that I started on when I first got here which is Wyola. You know, that was the first trail I ever did. It wasn't too big of a trail. It was a connecting piece to another trail. But you know, there's a lot of shade over there and it gives you a lot of varieties to how you're moving 'cuz you go downhill and you go uphill and it then it might be flat a little bit and then you're going back uphill. So it gives your body a little workout without you even noticing that you're working out.*

#### Mike

*I actually liked the first trail section that we built where it came up the hill and around and it met with the other trail and came around. That you helped us with. I actually liked that because it was my first build. It was my first real work on the trails. Other than cleaning them and maintaining them. So that's kind of my favorite.*

#### Jim

*I know there's a deeper appreciation for the things that are there because I've had experience in the process of those things happening.*

#### Shawn

*Olympia park was my second season. My second season here and my first time being granted a leadership role, as far as being a crew leader. And I was given a crew and given a position and given directions and things to do in order to make the trails in that area. And with the time frame we had and the crew that we had, I was really impressed by the amount of work that went into that area.*

**Affinity Towards Places – Phenomenological Summary:** Places are not simply spatial openings or even a configuration of people and things. Crew members (Markus, Mike, Shawn<sup>83</sup>) most identified their favorite places as sites where they were initiated into the work. Sometimes places are created because they framed an event (e.g. Riddles' 'Turkey's Run) or offered a

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<sup>83</sup> See footnote on p. 141.

unique way of physically engaging with the world (e.g. Riddles' 'Nia Long' or Markus' Wyola). Shawn described his favorite place as a gathering of space, others, and time where he was given leadership responsibilities and succeeded. For the crew members therefore, places are recognized as features of the land which gathered unique happenings, engagements and opportunities.

### **Participant Interview Theme: Offense Towards Garbage**

***Personal Description/Key Episode:** In just a few days thousands of Pittsburghers will be gathering along Grandview Avenue, to catch the 4<sup>th</sup> of July firework, which is best viewed from the ridge of Mount Washington. On this hot summer day, we are out along the road picking up garbage. When we were working inside the tree line we had respite from the beating sun and the noise of traffic. Now I feel hot and thirsty; I ache each time I bend to pick up yet another can or wrapper. I am near Jim now and as I approach he sighs and turns from me. We are all feeling irritable. I half-jokingly apologize for getting in his space. Later, Jim approaches and apologizes. He tells me that he was trying to keep his pace or else he would have collapsed with exhaustion.*

*Where the greenway drops under the ridge the garbage is densely accumulated. As we get closer to the sidewalk the garbage thins out. Interestingly, the garbage here is mostly foodstuffs that were likely consumed within the area. As we disappear into the deeper, wooded sections of the trail the garbage is different. Here we have seen mattresses, toilets, appliances and yes, even a car engine. These pieces were not usually dumped right by the trail but cast into the hillsides and were eventually covered by the dense brush. Sometimes the crew are excited by what they find there. However, we all hate garbage picking. There is something about this work which fosters exhaustion, impatience and irritability.*

**Thematic Summary:** Through immersion in nature, the crew began noticing their negative reactions to garbage and litter.

### Thematic Excerpts from Interviews

Markus

*When I was a kid I used to hate coming to the park because it was always dirty. Cigarette butts everywhere and stuff like that. It used to make me mad, you know, but now especially.*

*You know, if you could have people just come and be able to clean the park whenever they see it gets real dirty. And that also goes for the neighborhood people. You don't want to litter where you play every day. That's like leaving your room dirty and expecting to have company over there.*

Mike

*When I first started, I was looking at the same thing that the walkers did: I was looking at the scenery. Now I look at like if there's trash laying around. I hate to see trash in the forest.*

*The forest shouldn't have cans and bottles and papers laying around in it and cigarette butts. I hate to see it in the city let alone in the forest. I don't like litter—I've cut that out of my life.*

Shawn

*I noticed that there was a lot of dumping. A lot of trashing and dumping that went on in previous years. And you know, uh after working up here I've kind of got an eye for finding eyesores amongst the city. Like a lot of garbage and waste, it really gets to me now.*

*Some of the garbage can be art that's out here. We come across things like engines, old cars and things like that. And being that this was a steel city, to see those old, rusted parts and stuff, it's like a piece of history that still dwells amongst us.*

*Yeah, there's pieces of history that's overgrown. We can say overgrown pieces of history are right here in the mountains.*

**Offense Towards Garbage – General Phenomenological Description:** Garbage disturbs the visual sense and evokes strong offense. Interestingly, this reactivity to garbage may be stronger in children (Markus) but may be re-acquired or strengthened through prolonged exposure to polluted natural spaces (Mike, Shawn). The offensive feelings are connected to the recognition that garbage does not belong—it offends the visual order precisely because it interrupts the natural landscape (e.g. “the forest shouldn’t have cans...”, Mike). The act of polluting is predicated on a misrecognition of place. As Markus points out, parks are in fact places of

dwelling (i.e. “your room”). Garbage, therefore, is made possible when spaces are not claimed as one’s own and when the world of others is disregarded. Shawn recognizes two distinct types of garbage, some are the “eyesores” that others alluded to (i.e. cigarette butts, bottles, papers) while others are “art” and “history” (i.e. old engines). Nature, as Shawn noted, is the archive of human activities and some activities may testify to our proud heritage (i.e. as a “steel city”, Shawn) while others reveal our misrecognition of spaces and disregard for others.

### **Critical Thematic Analysis: Growing Up in Nature**

#### **Thematic Excerpts from Interviews**

Jim

*Well I grew up in the country. I'm from Washington state and I've lived along the river and along farms and ranches till I was about 12...then I started getting citified!*

*I grew up in foster homes and the reality of the home life was that I was just a visitor there. So I would go out into the woods and wander for hours by myself with the dog. That was my escape. And this [trail work] kind of harkens back to that in a way. My affinity for this probably stems from that it was such a pleasant experience when I was a kid that I could get away from everything. Nothing else existed then except for this bucolic setting, and it was soothing.*

Mike

*When I was a boy, my dad owned a camp. So I spent a lot of time in the woods. I grew up in a very small town with woods surrounding it and a river. So I was constantly in the woods with my friends riding bikes or causing trouble or whatever we did.*

*I spent time in the woods with my father. We owned a cabin. And I used to go fishing and dirt bike riding but I never really spent time walking trails and doing things like that. But it's something I plan on doing now; I'm going to bring my kids.*

*Because once the young people learn and get involved then their children will get involved and their children's children will get involved.*

Markus

*It gives these kids other things to do instead of just being outside and finding other ways to get in trouble. It gives them an opportunity to just go out and see a different part of the world.*

*You can have volunteer days where you got kids programming. Have kids do this type of working. Show them and they'll find a new form of respect for the environment. They might actually want to do more things outside of just sports or playing video games. But they might*

say, 'we can't even go hiking because we have no trails.' Well, maybe we should help build some trails or help plant trees or things like that.

*I've been in the woods doing a lot of exploring when I was a kid but I really wasn't too much of a nature guy before I started here.*

*This is for families. When I was a kid I used to hate coming to the park because it was always dirty. There were cigarette butts everywhere and stuff like that. It used to make me mad—we had trails and stuff like that but they weren't kept up to date.*

#### Riddles

*I think that education would encourage a lot of the younger folks to utilize the trails. Learn what a tree does. Learn what kind of tree it is. That's what MWCDC was teaching some of the residents up here. Come out here and I'll teach you what poison ivy is and what poison oak is and sumac and what those things are. A person with no education is not bad, it's just that they don't have enough information to see the bigger picture.*

*I got nieces and nephews and I can teach them about the woods and show them bugs and snakes the woods around the other neighborhoods...I think kids should experience nature. You should know what nature is. You shouldn't have to go to the Pittsburgh zoo to see an animal or watch PBQE. You can go right into the woods. My daughter loves it.*

#### Shawn

*I've actually been in the outdoors since I was younger. My grandmother had a camp when I was growing up. She had a trailer on a campground and we used to go there quite often during the summers. And I rode bikes, swam, hung out in the woods, campfires, basic camping outdoor things.*

*When I was coming up my mom would always say, 'Get out. Get out the house.' so I would get out the house and go outside and play. So this is what I know and you can see it in me.*

*I go back to relating to the neighborhoods I grew up in. It's not the best growing up in some of those harder neighborhoods and I'm thinking like, 'man things would be a lot different if there was guys picking up stuff around.' You got all this crime and negativity all around but it doesn't have to look that way. Just because it's going on, doesn't mean it has to look like it's going on.*

#### Judith

*I grew up in the woods and it was a really big part of my childhood...I grew up in Germany, in Zelligen. First in Roetgen but later on my parents had a house by itself in the woods. So I would be in the woods all the time.*

#### Kathryn

*It's been a part of my whole life. I grew up not far from Frick Park and all the time we were there. And both of my parents also grew up with a foundation very focused on the outdoors. And so my whole childhood, we were always outside picnicking, hiking in the Laurel Highlands, cross-country skiing, camping...*

*We were always outside so that has been a sort of trajectory in terms of working in parks. I started by being involved in environmental education with children age 3 through the early years of elementary school. And I think to this day, I still react in the same way that they do to the natural world. [laughing] ...I'm always in awe. And so that really was a sweet spot for me, working with kids who were really just discovering the world.*

Thomas

*I spent a fair bit of time in a one-acre area of woodlands directly adjacent to my house. And there I had a tree cabin. A couple trails that were shortcuts for some of the older kids in the neighborhood were there. There was a small marsh and some wildlife and I spent a lot of time playing there. As I moved into my teenage years, I spent a lot of time playing in the woodlands through various activities with friends who also lived nearby. But I had not developed an appreciation for what the woodlands provided other than just a place to go play and use my imagination...It wasn't the same affinity that I have for parks today.*

*By the time I was a late teenager a father of a friend of mine lost his eye because of a branch hitting him and I was also dealing with anxiety issues at the time. So that story really freaked me out and I had a panic attack looking into the woods during that winter. And all I could see was all these things that wanted to poke my eyes out. So that scared me away from wanting to be a part of the woods for a while.*

*When I was about to go to university, I was living within 15 minutes of a state park and the border of the opposite side of this state park had a lot of outdoor recreation activities. And because of friends who had those interests, I think was eased back into being outdoors more often.*

**IR1. A Child's World:** We can see the deployment of this IR through phrases such as "I grew up in..." The participants who reported growing up in the woods also noted that these spaces allowed them to play, get into trouble, use their imagination, escape from stressors and "discover the world". Early life experiences in nature were recalled as constituting healthy child development.

**IR2. Missing Experiences:** This IR also legitimizes nature as a factor in healthy child development. Children who were unable to access nature find "ways to get in trouble" or are stuck in the house "playing video games" (Markus). The world without nature is constricting ("they don't...see the bigger picture") and the participants (Markus) strongly felt that children should be given "an opportunity to...see a different part of the world." However, children cannot



explore nature when parks are dirty (Markus) and crime-infested (Shawn) being; or they are unaware of opportunities (Riddles, Mike). Having negative personal experiences such as panic attacks and anxiety (Thomas) may also cause one to miss out. The crew leader and members—particularly the African American crew members—discussed structural barriers that caused children to miss out while staff focused on personal benefits.

**IR3. The Woods:** “The woods” tend to describe places outside of the city which had rivers, cabins and ranches where recreation (e.g. hiking, swimming, camping) and free exploration were encouraged. City parks, in contrast, were highlighted for being dirty and lacking trails (Markus). Children in the city were seen as lacking education and access to animal and plant life, except in the confined—and largely non-interactive—spaces of the zoo or television (see Riddles). Through the IR of “the woods”, participants might implicitly endorse the view that nature experiences outside of the city are most ideal although Riddles uses “the woods” to describe urban green spaces. Jim explicitly stated that moving to the city was the beginning of his disconnection from the natural world (“getting citified”), which was a soothing escape from his otherwise harsh childhood.

### Critical Thematic Analysis: Community Benefits

#### Thematic Excerpts from Interviews

##### Riddles

*The rest of the city of Pittsburgh should experience the same love that's going on here in Mount Washington. Like if we can take the same love and respect that we get in Mount Washington and transfer it into a different neighborhood, you know, Pittsburgh might become a little bit better.*

*So many people do like nature...I feel that the communities would view it as a positive, given all the violence that is happening at the moment...*

*The community needs to know that just because you live inside the city does not mean that you don't have life outside of your house. And I want them to experience it because life is too damn short. If you're just working all the time and inside your house doing paperwork and shit then you're not living.*

Markus

*A good park to me is a clean, family fun-oriented park. There's basketball courts, there's slides there's swing sets...something for everyone. Maybe you can come bring your dog out. You know, hopefully there can be a pool there for the summer time.*

*Just a sense of, you know, being in the community and being able to see people that you probably wouldn't see because they are too busy stuck in their house. You have to come out to see different people, see different sites.*

*I can't sit here and picture why people wouldn't want this in their community. It's just a good thing to do. Especially if you got kids and it's hot out...They're stuck in the house playing the games or you're stuck in the house just bored. It's nice to go for a walk and enjoy the nature and enjoy the sun.*

Jim

*What constitutes a good park or a good trail is the care and concern of the people that are in charge of it. That's where it initially comes from. And then the community must get involved in it.*

*I think if the community could become aware of what we do they would be more inclined, maybe even inspire themselves to take advantage of what we're doing. Let people know. A lot of them don't even know it's here and I've talked to people who lived in Pittsburgh all their lives and they don't know that this is here.*

Thomas

*A vision for the future, whether it's a shared vision or it's a diverse vision of what people would want –it's all about the demographics I guess. A park is for everyone and if you've got a community behind it being for everyone you get that whole diversified outlook of what the park should be... Community support is probably the starting point for, for creating a park.*

*I think that a good park should have an inviting appeal to it, that you would want to explore it more. But I think that a good park also has these traditional park things: playgrounds or ballfields as well. It's accessible and there's something about it that's unique. And I think that a good park has 10 places in it that you can do 10 different things.*

*Parks are an equalizer. Everyone can be a part of a park and there's no one checking your ID at the door or looking at your financial statements seeing whether you belong there. Seeing many more people of color in parks is great. It's good to notice it's not so homogenous anymore and so that's kind of changed.*

Judith

*A good park is being stewarded by the community. A good park is an integral part of the community. It is part of the neighborhood.*

*Green space can bring community together. Parks can help community members that are maybe a little bit poorer than others...I think that is a very important thing. That it's a free space. You can go to and get the same recreational and educational opportunities.*

*I would really like it if parks would become a real part of the community where all community members are aware that it is there and use it. I would love for the community to also take on restoring the woodlands. But there is a lot of restoration that still needs to be done in the park. It's not a healthy system whatsoever. And that's a big challenge... You know, in a dream world where everybody goes, 'let's get this done and make it happen'*

Kathryn

*The park should support the users around it. Not every park is going to look the same. A park should provide for a variety of experiences so it should be a very dynamic place. There are public spaces where people come and mix with people of all kinds because it's an amazing, free resource. In the park world, people talk about them as the 'great equalizer.' Because if the community has a well-maintained park space then it's free to everyone. It doesn't matter where you come from. Everyone can benefit from opportunities for recreation, for contemplation... The ideal park has lots of different elements that engages all kinds of people, all age ranges and abilities.*

**IR4. Community Support:** Crew members and staff unanimously agreed parks add value to a community and parks need community support. Community support can range from awareness (Riddles, Jim) to use (Markus, Thomas, Kathryn) and even maintenance and direct advocacy (Judith, Thomas). Participants invoke “community support” (Thomas) to argue that “everyone can benefit” (Kathryn) from access to nature and outdoor recreational spaces. Participants agreed that parks must be geared towards engaging “all kinds of people” a wide range of needs. This IR suggests that urban green spaces must be tailored to the community and represent their interests.

**IR5. The Great Equalizer:** This term was referenced by Kathryn and Thomas and the essential message is that open, community space can be a forum that unites people across racial and class divides. Interestingly, while staff members recognize that park development provides equal opportunities to “the community” (in the abstract), the majority of trail work is done in the relatively White community of Mount Washington. However, they are also highly aware of the racialized aspects of the work. Riddles explicitly speaks to a need for “the rest of the city...[to] experience the same love that's going on here in Mount Washington.”

## Critical Thematic Analysis: Crime

### Thematic Excerpts from Interviews

Mike

*Parks need to be safe... I'm going to say to keep it open, I mean open as far as being able to see at distance in the park so there's not a mugger or somebody and you can see 500 or 1000 feet in front of you when you're walking in the park.*

Judith

*It's true that the neighborhood could use more attention with sidewalks or safety but it is not true that the park has taken it away. So there is a misperception. And some people think that having access to the woodlands is just an invitation for crime and that crime is happening there, which is also absolutely not true.*

*I think it's just that nobody's around to see things. Woods are sometimes used for criminal activity, that's absolutely true, because there is nobody around. And I think that the darkness and the unknown—A lot of people mention darkness. You know, darkness is where crime happens.*

*I know that some people see our crew as an element of crime in the park. But not the majority of people, it's just a few people that have weird world views.*

*Some don't like changes, some are afraid of crimes, some are maybe upset about being more neglected by the city of Pittsburgh.*

Thomas

*I've had community member say to me that the parks and trails are only used by child molesters and drug dealers. And that really took me aback. I don't think there's any more sexual impropriety and drug use in the parks than there are on couches. So like why are you demonizing parks and not couches? That's only what a certain part of the population use that for. And it turns into a matter of if someone gets busted for that or if there's rumors going around, those travel a lot quicker and seem to carry more weight. Because it's not going to make the 6 o'clock news that a family of four went hiking and had an amazing time and a little kid saw his first caterpillar and put it in a jar. It's not just the news, it's how people talk about it.*

*Park lovers have this confidence like, 'well we can definitely change your mind' and these people that are apathetic or adversarial towards parks, they have the same mind frame like, 'no they're dirty, they're bad, they're used for dangerous things.' It seems like that's a problem that they have with their perception.*

**IR6. Darkness:** Visibility and darkness were mentioned by Mike and Judith to rationalize the public fear of city parks. that perception of criminality in UGS. Associated with darkness are

themes of fear, crime and the unknown. Perhaps not coincidentally, these web of signifiers are also associated with blackness (see Chapter 3).

**IR7. Demonizing:** Thomas and Judith reframe the belief that parks are a site for crime as a misperception and slander (“demonizing parks”, Thomas). There is a dichotomy declared between those who are “park lovers” and those who are “apathetic or adversarial” (Thomas)—the latter’s views considered “weird” (Judith) and based in fear, misperception and anger over being neglected. Judith says that it is “absolutely not true” that woodlands invite crime but later says that it is “absolutely true.” Her strong language despite being ambivalent on the issue may suggest a strong moral position on the value of parks. This IR frames parks as people as either supporting or demonizing parks with a strong moral connotation that parks are to be valued despite the fear of danger.

## CHAPTER 8. WORK

### **Participant Interview Theme: Physical Release**

***Personal Description/Key Episode:** After lunch, Mike received a call from the employment agency. Within minutes, he seemed visibly frustrated and his voice got louder as he became more upset with the process of speaking to someone and finding them of little help. After the call, Mike turned to me and explained that he had to be very careful about expressing anger or frustration. I asked him why and he told me that someone with a criminal record is not allowed to express anger or frustration as that would “put people off and make them afraid”. Mike added that barriers to employment were a major factor in getting people to “slide back into the criminal life”.*

*That afternoon, we had been working on a stretch of trail and came upon a large fallen tree. It was about one foot in diameter and so it was marked to cut with a chainsaw. Today, however, Mike wanted to do some heavy swinging and I joined him. Together we took turns hacking at our respective ends of the trunk. This cutting was some of the hardest, most physically intense labor I have ever done. With fingers aching, lungs heaving, head trickling sweat, and forearms ready to give out I finally drove my Pulaski through to the dirt on the other side. When we cut down our respective sections of the log we each let out a roar! I was surprised to hear that guttural cry coursing through me. After that initial feeling of triumph and exhilaration the day seemed to go much smoother for the both of us.*

**Thematic Summary:** Most crew members reported that physical activity was helpful in releasing stress and negative emotion.

## Thematic Excerpts from Interviews

Markus

*You know, you've got this tree stump in the way and you're like, 'man, I've got to get this out of here!' And you don't want it to defeat you, you want to defeat your tree! [laughing]...If there was something that you ever did that was so challenging and put up just as much effort as you are putting up against it to not let you succeed in what you're doing. You know, I feel like that's a way to explain it. Like, 'Listen man, this tree right here is the opposite goal in your life that you got to get away from or you know, go over it. Get through it.'...When you're cutting down a tree you want to have that fire and you want to have that fierce anger to get through that.*

*Whenever their minds go—I just say, 'listen man, if you're angry about something, this will be the time to get your anger out.'*

Mike

*When I'm swinging the hoe or I'm swinging the axe--it lets me take out a lot of aggression, a lot of frustration that builds up from different things. So, it's almost therapeutic sometimes...Sometimes, it's just plain hard work but sometimes it's pretty therapeutic. Sometimes it makes me feel better.*

*The hoelaski is the first tool I picked up and I pretty much haven't put it down. I like to relieve my stress and it's a heavy, hard-swinging, destructive tool and I can definitely take out my aggression and relieve my stress with it.*

*I get a lot of stress from a lot of different points in my life. The stress is building up when I'm in a bad mood or when I have bills that are due and I'm not being paid for a few more days. I mean there's a lot of stressors in day-to-day life so swinging the axe and the hoe is an excellent stress reliever.*

*Sometimes to bottle that aggression up is bad. It's bad for your health. It's bad for your mental state. And to be able to just get out there and open up and let go—it's hard to explain unless you've done it.*

*It's a good feeling to be able to destroy something once in a while. Sometimes you just want to get out and tear something apart. And we're actually tearing apart to build.*

*When you're demoing out here, you are actually building. So by using my hoelaski and turning dirt on a hillside, I'm actually creating. Somebody comes behind me with a rake and it's a teamwork thing and I destroy and they come right behind me and fix it.*

*It would change the work to bring in power tools. It would make the work easier but it might take some of the fulfillment out of it.*

Riddles

*If I'm aggravated then I can come out here and swing the tools and feel the wind and feel relaxed.*

*The more I get to sweat and get dirty the more happier I am.*

*You get it all out here and it stays out here.*

Shawn

*You know, they got frustrating things that they go through but when they come out here and they got a project in hand and they got their tools, it clouds the negative things that had been frustrating them.*

*If I'm having a stressful day or I wake up on the wrong side [chuckles]—I don't usually wake up too often on the wrong side but there may be some things as far as within my household that may set me in a different direction. And instead of actually showing that with my crew, which they have no—they don't have anything to do with my personal, outside life—I just try to channel that into my work.*

**Physical Release – General Phenomenological Description:** It is very physically demanding to chop, swing, and dig into dirt. However, participants reported a release of aggression (Mike), frustration (Shawn), anger (Markus), and aggravation (Riddles) from this labor. It is as if the energy that had been “bottled up” or held inside seeks release into the dirt. The “stress” that participants reported was almost always related to challenges outside of work. However, instead of allowing those feelings to become inwardly destructive, the participants used physical tasks to focus their destructive energies into directive (Shawn), creative (Mike) and goal-oriented (Markus) activities. Sometimes, participants seemed to call up anger (“fire...fierce anger”, Markus) that was dormant to deal with the task at hand. The destructive—even violent—movements were embraced as a sort of language to articulate the inner world of challenge, frustration and anger. As the trail smoothed, so did the movements and the feelings.

### **Participant Interview Theme: Slow Time**

***Personal Description/Key Episode:*** *There were many stretches of slow time on the trails. Most often this happened when the crew was between work projects as they had either completed a trail section or were waiting for a staff member. Within the trails, boredom was like a dull, faded part of the background landscape. It could be reliably witnessed*



*when the rhythm of the tools started to break and conversation became muted. During these stretches, the men would wipe their brows and rest; our sense of exhaustion was palpable and was heard by sighs of relief from the back aching labor. As the minutes stretched on however, thoughts would wander to the heat and bugs; eventually the time-hurried impatience of city life would catch each of us. With monotony holding back the current of time, we would begin to pull out our phones or turn to each other and banter—telling jokes, musing and complaining.*

**Thematic Summary:** Crew members felt stuck in time when not busy or when engaged in unpleasant tasks.

#### **Thematic Excerpts from Interviews**

Mike

*And after you've been out swinging the hoelaski all morning, the last thing you want to do is sit down and listen to somebody drone on about how to plan a resume. It's important but at the same time, you're wound—I'm wound, wound up from swinging and working and brought into a situation, a classroom situation where, where I'm all sweaty. I really don't want to be there.*

Jim

*I don't like sitting around because time moves so slow...when I'm not working it drags. I like working, and, uh, the time passes real well.*

Riddles

*Time doesn't fly when, we're not doing nothing or we done did too much work and we done finished the project for the day and we can't start another project. Or we're not here; when we're not out here in the woods doing big work, time goes super slow. And that's when the days gets miserable.*

*Like planting, cleaning up, you know just restoration type of stuff, sometimes it gets kind of boring but it's necessary. It's not physical and we're physical men.*

Shawn

*You know, as long as you continue to work, time goes, you know.*

*A lot of the guys—they like working, and sometimes when they're thrown outside of the work it gets a little frustrating you know.*

**Slow Time – General Phenomenological Description:** When involved in physical tasks such as swinging the hoelaski (Mike), time has a rhythmic and flowing quality (Jim, Riddles, Shawn). It is through exertion that the body is wound to spring forward into the world (Mike). However, the flow is interrupted when participants are “thrown outside” (Shawn) their tasks and the body is comported to slower, more concentrative activities (e.g. sitting, listening, planting). Then, “time goes super slow” (Riddles); its rhythm drones (Mike) and its flow drags (Jim).

### **Participant Interview Theme: Humor**

*Personal Description/Key Episode: The biggest jokesters on the trail were Markus and Riddles. But all the men enjoyed joking about things they had in common—which often had to do with growing up and spending time in jail. They would share stories of gangs, drugs, guns, and jail but these stories were related in good humor, perhaps with some jostling for status. Jim occasionally acted as an interpreter for me, cluing me in to certain terms (e.g. toilet curtains) that could only be coherent to those with an understanding of what it is like to share a small, barren cell with a stranger.*

*The humor was like a private language shared by those who had experienced that kind of hardship and I felt insecure with my lack of understanding. During these times, I would become aware of my own uneasiness, which manifested as irritability and the desire to channel myself into the work. My views changed as I became more intimately acquainted with the dynamics of the team. It seemed possible that the jokesters were actually facilitating the work by diffusing tensions and creating a forum for social engagement, which also helped establish group cohesion and a rhythm when the work was difficult or monotonous. On more than a few occasions, I would see the men have disagreements with one another and then take a walk-off break. Usually, they would*

*resume working together after a joke about one thing or another (e.g. pop culture, women) was produced as a conciliatory offering.*

*One day, the crew and I had completed work at Dead Man's Hollow (a conservation area 15 miles from Mount Washington) and were packing up for the day. Incredulously, a police cruiser drove into the parking lot and our conversation stopped. As the car sidled next to us, a lone officer rolled his window down and said hello. Only Shawn, Mike and Jim spoke while the rest of us looked on or nodded and smiled in agreement. Although it was a cordial conversation, I cannot believe that this was a random encounter. Someone must have called the police to investigate what seemed like suspicious activity on the trail. As the officer left, the conversation resumed. The men began joking about how this was the friendliest encounter they had with a cop.*

**Thematic Summary:** Humor was used to smooth social interactions and help the workflow.

### **Thematic Excerpts from Interviews**

#### **Riddles**

*A typical workday is hilarious! Dirty and funny would be a typical workday for me out here.*

*You know, you have incidents where the muck truck flips over and rolls down a hill. You plan around and you accidentally back up and kick your helmet and it rolls 40 feet down off the trail and you've got to go down there in them jagers to go get it! [laughing]. So many things happen that you end up naming a trail because of it. Like 'Turkey's Run' because Shawn got like chased by a turkey. You got 'Nia Long' because the trail that it's on grows grass and it's just like knee long! [chuckles]. You know, its stuff like that that makes you love the day. And at the end of the day, you sitting here cracking up and it's just a good environment. It's those things that stand out here.*

*When you're out here having fun time flies—when you get that sense of humor and sociability when you're just comfortable with everybody on the trail.*

*Out here you definitely need to be a talkative, hilarious joker that is just a free spirit that can just vibe with anything. That will be an ideal candidate for a crew member at any time. If you could stay out here in the woods and laugh and enjoy yourself the day goes so fast and it makes life a little—a lot easier. You look forward to meeting up in the morning and having that first conversation like, 'hey guys what's up, let's get it. This is what we doing today.'*

Shawn

*I get a laugh out of the group just to show, I'm not intimidating. I'm not a bad person, you know. I try to get people to crack a smile, to laugh all the time man.*

Mike

*It's fun to sit and shoot the breeze with your buddies. It's a tension reliever. If somebody is in a bad mood, it can lift spirits. It's done it for me. Sometimes I don't really want to talk or deal with anybody and one of the guys will start joking around and the next thing you know I'm smiling and laughing and happy and having a better day. So it's mentally effective.*

*Sometimes we smoke and joke. Sometimes...I get frustrated with some of the crew members. Sometimes, some of them really piss me off... We do a lot of bonding when we work as a team. 'Cuz we be yelling at each other, and joking, and kicking. And it brings us closer together.*

Markus

*You know, whether or not I'm having a bad day personally I still try to do my best to not let everybody else feel like I'm having a bad day or let them know I'm having a bad day. I'm always going to continue to be me, which is you know, just happy and trying to be funny.*

Jim

*And so I started weeding like I knew when I was a kid in a garden: you'd take all the weeds and leave the little radishes and pull everything around it. So I was doing everything at that level and all of a sudden there's Shawn coming by and flinging stuff on me with the weed-eater! [laughing] So that was his idea of weeding and my idea of weeding was entirely different so depending on the context, you know, I was doing it right for that particular area. But he was having the weed-eater and that's what he knew was weeding. And I said, 'No! that's a plant. That's not a weed or grass or whatever so...' Yea, that was funny. [chuckling]*

**Humor – General Phenomenological Description:** Humor is not a private event but a shared social interaction. It is felt as a “vibe” (Riddles) that brings individuals closer (Mike) and elevates the spirit/mood (Mike). Humor also performs a number of important functions in the crew’s daily routines. Occasionally, ‘dirty’ humor (“dirty and funny”, Riddles) is used to mark events and places (i.e. as a site where the humorous happened). More often, humor is used to undo the frustrations engendered by mishaps (Riddles), miscommunications (Jim) or misperceptions (Shawn). Humor may be a way to begin daily interactions (Riddles) and—when used to begin meetings—invites individuals to disengage from their private world of concerns and freely join with the shared world of others (Markus).

### **Participant Interview Theme: Vision**

***Personal Description/Key Episode:*** *When the crew enters a section of new development, what they see is trees, shrubs and weeds. Running across the uneven terrain is a line of colored flags standing in the dirt like breadcrumbs in the forest. These flags mark where the trail should be developed. It is up to the crew to translate that schematic into a useable, functional and enjoyable trail that will also be adaptive to the soil, wind, rain and other elements including traffic from hikers, bikers and strollers. It is a task that requires bodily and spatial awareness, creativity, and an aesthetic appreciation. The crew strives to preserve the appearance of the forest and minimize any traces of human intervention. This is why the trails look naturally made.*

*Entering the park as a pedestrian, all I can see is trees, leaves and dirt. I follow the crew and observe them fan out into two groups. The first crew—called the brush crew—moves through the area first using loppers, handsaws, and axe-shovel tools (e.g. Pulaski, Hoelaski) to clear out the brush. Next, the dirt crew moves in with rakes and flat scraping tools (i.e. McLeod) to smooth out the trail. Where there was dirt, is now a trail.*

*On several occasions I have watched Shawn turn a dirt clearing into the beginnings of a path. With a rake in hand, his movements are quick, powerful, and decisive. He is unrelenting in his extensions and pulls of the rake. After the dirt is leveled and packed, he begins smoothing the finish, pulling the rake slowly and with sweeping elegance. In his hands, the clawed instrument is a brush and the dirt is his canvas. With each pull or sweep of dirt, a feature begins to emerge, take shape and clarity. Soon, a turn of the trail is complete.*

**Thematic Summary:** Crew members used a sense of vision to develop a trail and to orient themselves within the forest.

## Thematic Excerpts from Interviews

Jim

*For me, it is being able to see here is what we got to do and I can connect to and I can conceive of that.*

*I have to look at the flag line and kind of envision a finished product. That allows me to grasp the amount of work that's going to be involved in it. And I'm not good at that because I haven't done it before.*

*I look for, 'OK, why is that here?' and I can see in the terrain that the confluence of that hillside and this hillside is going to indicate that there's drainage taking place here. Even if it isn't visible now, the contours of the land kind of define that. So I'm able to see better what all of the visuals that I never really focused on before will lead me to. I'm seeing things that I never saw before, I guess.*

*I can see you know that all that debris that's out there, that's a flood--, when it rains, that's where everything accumulates and so therefore down the road, we're going to have to accommodate that. So there's so much that comes into play.*

Markus

*I want to see what I'm stepping on. You don't know if there's a whole bunch of glass in that area, if it's a whole bunch of rooted area, if it's mushy, you know, if it's clayed out, if there's a lot of vegetation, if there's a whole bunch of poison ivy. Stuff like that. You always want to look at what you're walking on—what you're about to walk through. Second of all, you want to look for overhead hazards.*

*Everybody's mind has a different vision. They're like, 'well, If I was walking through here then I wouldn't want this in the way. Because I want to see, you know, maybe...' Like Mount Washington, for example, some parts you can get a real clear opening of the city line. And sometimes you want to see that as you're walking. So you might want to take down these couple branches or couple trees that's in the way so you can have that view while you're walking through there. So you know, we try to collaborate all in one. Just try to see what that person is seeing.*

Mike

*I walk into where the trail is supposed to be and all we see is brush and a bunch of little orange flags. As we clean out the brush, I can start to get a vision of where the trail is going to run and how it's going to look and what needs to happen in order to make it look that way. When I first started, I couldn't do that. Now I can walk in and see exactly what needs to happen to make a trail walkable and user-friendly.*

Riddles

*That vision comes with just knowing what to do already like knowing what the end result is supposed to look like and then that vision can be revised. It can stay the same or it can shift and move.*

*Even if I'm not working on that specific spot when I walk through the trail, I still keep an eye on things that would normally need to be removed or cleaned or shaped. I still look for the unevenness and imperfections of the trail when I'm walking through it.*

Shawn

*Vision means that I can do things if I can put my mind to it. Because it takes a vision to go into a job and paint the picture. So I feel if I put my mind to it and apply myself then I could do it.*

*I've gotten experience from working out here to the point where I could look at the ground and look at different angles and know how much it's going to take to get it right and how much dirt we're going to need to move in the timeframe that we have.*

*Vision also means leading. To me, to have vision means being a good leader. Being able to explain your vision to your crew to where that they can understand it and they can also picture what you have in your mind in their mind too.*

**Vision – General Phenomenological Description:** The crew members frequently spoke of ‘vision’, which signifies a variety of experiences. Most generally, we can say that vision is the joining of perception and imagination. It is a connective faculty that allows participants to imagine possibilities for creating trails. Shawn relates his vision to that of an artist; he imagines the dirt as the canvas upon which he paints his trail. Another way of understanding vision would be to liken it to reading. Here, the text is the landscape of hills (Jim), trees, roots and sky (Markus). Just as reading opens a hidden world through the text, so too does having vision allow the crew members to create trails that allow others to move through the landscape. Having vision permits them to anticipate (or read into) what is yet to happen—such as the collection and drainage of water (Jim) or desired path of the traveler (Markus). Like reading, vision has social and communicative functions. Vision is taught (Shawn), translated, shared (Markus) and modified (Riddles) to bring together many diverse ways of experiencing the trail. With vision comes an encompassing attitude of concern for the experiences of others (Markus, Mike, Riddles), even when one is not working on the trails.

## Participant Interview Theme: Getting Vision

**Personal Description/Key Episode:** *The beginning of my work was mostly about finding my place. In the woods, everything has its place. I hear birds and trees composing melodies on the wind. The ants, worms and beetles that would incite revulsion within concrete and drywall confines are part of the greater community living in the woods.*

*At first, I was unsure of how I belonged with the crew. Aside from being the obvious outsider with my own agenda, I only worked there one day a week. The others, including those in their first season, were rapidly acquiring skills and moved with fluency and comprehension around the trails. Most seemed to develop a special affinity for a certain tool or activity. Shawn enjoys using the rake to brush the dirt smooth. With each swing of the hoelaski, Mike discharges energy and frustration into a tree or embankment. Riddles is fluent with many tools but he most often uses the McLeod; each chop articulates the shape and structure of the trail. For the first couple of weeks, I was very tentative around handling the tools. I wanted to contribute but I also worried about embarrassing myself and did not want to be reprimanded for making a wrong move. I usually grabbed the loppers and cut off hanging roots. The loppers were the smallest tool—and holding them I also felt small and peripheral. Helpful but also dispensable.*

*One day, a couple of weeks in, we were working in a new section clearing some young trees away from the flag line. Riddles noticed me watching the others hard at work, swinging away. Motioning to a tree in front of us he looked at me and asked, “Is it calling your name?” I heard his question as an invitation: “Look, here is your chance to ‘get involved’ [which, incidentally, is one of Shawn’s favorite catchphrases].” I glanced around and tentatively picked up a Pulaski and approached the tree. I lifted the tool up, feeling its full metal weight hovering precariously above my head. Then I let it fall*



*throwing all my weight behind it. CRACK! The reverberations stung my hands and wrists sending an electric jolt that caught my full attention. I pulled back and went at it again. Riddles stood back and observed; after a few minutes I was dripping sweat and shaking from exertion. He pointed at the trees roots and he told me that I should cut there first and then pull the tree out. A few minutes later, the tree was lying on its side. The rest of the day passed like a breeze. I did some raking with Shawn, sawed off some branches, and moved a heavy tree trunk. Then Riddles began showing me how to scratch a trail and pack it down. Suddenly, I began to see how this little stretch would connect with the rest of the path. After that day, I too felt connected.*

**Thematic Summary:** Vision is a perceptual skill that was acquired through experience and socialization within the crew.

#### **Thematic Excerpts from Interviews**

Mike

*Um, when I first started I was looking at the same thing that the walkers did. I was looking at the scenery and now I look at the trail to make sure it's made right. To make sure it doesn't need any upkeep...Now I can walk in and see exactly what needs to happen to make a trail walkable and user-friendly.*

*If people come out and walk the trail, they'll get a vision. They could get a vision of what goes on to build this. Like the older couple who came out and couldn't believe we don't use power tools.*

Jim

*Starting out here nobody knows what to do except for the crew leader and maybe a guy that was here before. So we got all these tools and I know how to use them but I didn't know what to do with them here in this particular site. And so it took probably two weeks to get adjusted. Initially I didn't know initially the vision and what was required to achieve that vision but then as I got oriented into the job it became less of a chore to think about what can I do and I knew what to do. That makes it all the better and it helps me to feel a part of this thing rather than apart from it.*

*Well I'm pretty much an experiential learner. I like to get an overview, a template I guess and then I like to see how each station in the operation fits into the whole big picture. But I have to do it myself. I can see it and know how it's done but I have to do it as well. And then I get the*

*confidence that I can get in there and do this. I can see it, I can watch it all day long and I know how it's done but I still don't have that confidence that I need or that I want until I've actually done it.*

*And then it comes to believing it can be done and that's where my experience comes in. I have to experience doing it and then I can believe.*

Markus

*I'm more a person that I like to try myself and if I get it wrong then I'd like to be told what I'm doing wrong. But there's also certain things that you can't try because if you mess it up then you really might mess it up. So you want to sit back and watch.*

*I always try to see their vision. Like I was just talking to one of the guys yesterday and I was telling him, 'man, I feel a little bad sometimes because I just sit there and I watch guys work and I don't want to just sit here and watch you work because I wanna work with you. You know, I don't want you to feel like, 'Well he's just sitting there' and 'What is he doing?' But essentially I'm observing and seeing what you guys are doing because I want to see the vision that you see.' Because I don't see it. I just see you dragging dirt and I'm just like, 'what are you dragging this dirt all the way down there for?' or 'why are you cutting this tree down for? It's not in the way' But essentially you just wanted to bring more light into the trails. I didn't see what you have seen that but now I do.*

*Um, I feel like I'm starting to pick it up a little bit, you know. I mean these guys have little bit more time on me. Some of them have been here for a couple years and some of them started a whole month and a half before I did. So they're starting to see it a little bit more than I am. You know, when I first walk in, I don't see what they're looking at as much as they do but when we start working and start scratching, I'm like, 'Alright, well now I see what they're doing, now I see what it's looking like.'*

*I'm still fresh and still new at it so I don't really see as much as some of the other guys might see. But when they start doing work--when we start doing work--when I see how it's starting to shape up, then I can see the vision at hand.*

*I feel like the team has been doing a good job trying to incorporate me and help me see what they're seeing and tell me why it has to be this way. I ask questions. I might not be doing anything but I'm going to sit there and watch you do what you're doing and I'm going to ask you why you're doing that so I know for future reference that it has to be done like this because of this reason.*

*I'm not really too creative, too artsy. I surround myself with people who are so I can feel that and try to see what they see so I can eventually have that ability. I want to be more creative.*

*You'll never learn anything if you don't try it.*

Riddles

*It takes maturity. You can't teach a person that, you know. It has to come natural.*

*Actually there's people who don't have an eye for what the work entails but are dedicated to doing all of it and learning everything to get on the same level. If you're meant to be out here, you'll prosper out here. As past crew members have proven, if you're not meant to be in the woods, the woods will take its toll and you will eject yourself from this project. The woods will fight back with you if you don't belong out here.*

*You would have to feel it. You would have to connect to this. You would have to connect to mother nature. You would have to almost die out here to feel that connection. [chuckles] You know, I almost had trees fall on me, head smacked in the head with tools—all types of stuff.*

*I learned because Shawn was willing to show me what was going on and you know, I came back. And I came back again.*

*I didn't know nothing, I had to be taught and I picked it up real quick. And I started going in and I started loving the dirt and then I could just see it forming in my head before I even cut and now I know exactly what needs to be done.*

*I learned that there's techniques to swinging tools. See just because you throw the tool up and it comes down don't mean it's going to make the cut that you want it make. You might have to angle it diagonally or switch it to the other side. There's techniques to every single thing and there's the right tool for the right job. I learned that. Previously I would just grab any tool. I would finish the job but it created more work... One time I tried to do part of the trail with just the Macleod. I got the job done but I was there all damn day. If I had the right tool for the job, it wouldn't have taken me that long.*

Shawn

*In my first season, I came in blind like pretty much everyone else. But I took to it. I took to it well and I liked it so I took to it. There was some younger guys back in the first season. The crews weren't as big as they are now. In my first season there was maybe three younger guys that was on the crew with me. Between Thomas and them, they showed me the basics of many things. Now I'm constantly working out here it helps me to develop my skill and my vision more.*

*It takes being out here working in order for you to develop that vision. You have to practice, like any other sport [chuckles]. In order to get better at it, you gotta keep doing it.*

*Every year I find a different technique of building on the trails. This year I've discovered quite a few different techniques within myself on building some things.*

*I like when someone notices something and they just go ahead and take the initiative to go in and do it. I like when I see someone paying attention. I know someone has been paying attention because I have to give them less direction on what to do... I think for someone to get the most out of working here they have to pay attention. Everything right will come into play. And if you don't understand something and it's clouding your vision just ask questions. These are two key things, pay attention and ask questions.*

*Everyone has to pay attention. It's not just the boss, supervisor, coworker—it takes everyone to be involved.*

**Getting Vision – General Phenomenological Description:** As mentioned, vision is transmitted socially. First time crew members did not know how trails were created and saw the park merely as “scenery” (Mike). Without vision, the work at first feels like a “chore” (Jim) and the adversarial elements of the woods (i.e. bugs, heat, rain, dirt) “fight back” (Riddles) against newcomers, testing their commitment and connection to “mother nature” (Riddles). To overcome these initial challenges one must be willing to endure setbacks and challenges (Riddles) and be dedicated to improving one’s skills (Shawn). This willingness and dedication cannot be taught but may develop through a process of ‘maturation’ in nature (Riddles). This process is facilitated by observation but mostly by hands-on experience. The sense of being disconnected (Jim) and at a distance (Markus) gives into feelings of connection (Riddles), personal confidence (Jim) and belief in the capabilities of the crew (Jim).

Participants view vision as a creative faculty (Markus) and believe that others with more experienced vision will help them develop their own. In fact, interactions with those who have vision are encouraged (Riddles, Shawn). Notably, vision is not static but requires participants to constantly perceive the park in new and unfamiliar ways—in this manner even seasoned participants “discover” (Shawn) new possibilities for work and develop their vision further.

### **Participant Interview Theme: Leadership**

***Personal Description/Key Episode:*** *One afternoon, we were tasked with clearing an opening for a trailhead. Shawn used the gas-powered weed-whacker to chop down the tall grass and weeds while two others moved behind him, raking the debris. We did not have enough rakes for everyone so we took turns to sit and chat. Time seemed thick and slow and the crew were becoming restless. Someone said that we were “creating work.”*

*Suddenly, Shawn came around and announced he had a “new vision” for the area. He picked up the weed-whacker and went further and further into the tree line while we stood by and watched. Then, without asking us to follow, he put the tool down and yelled for the bow saw and loppers. I delivered the loppers and for a few minutes, Jim, I and the rest looked on as he worked his one-man show. Soon, Jim started nodding and I could tell he was beginning to see what Shawn had been picturing. Next, Jim grabbed his tools and moved in to help. By the time we were done, the place looked transformed. Mike told me that, at first, he had not even realized this was a trailhead. Now, he said he could bring his family here for a picnic.*

**Thematic Summary:** Understanding and sharing another person’s vision is crucial to leadership and cooperation.

#### **Thematic Excerpts from Interviews**

##### **Markus**

*Shawn is our crew leader so he's always walks out in front so we'll see what he's seeing behind him. And then also if we see things like, 'eh, Shawn I don't know if we should go through this way because this right here is not a good thing, it's going to mess the trail up for us' or 'I think we should take it on this side' or you know, different things. And then he might have a rebuttal like, 'nah, you shouldn't do it that way because of this'--it might be something down further down that you're not seeing.*

*Our crew leader, he really sets the tone for us. He comes in and gets to work and he sets the pace. When you got somebody like him that's just going to come in and leave a good example, you have no choice but to follow him.*

##### **Riddles**

*Everybody has their own technique and skill in the woods. You might be able to swing your pick but you might not be able to use the hoelaski. So we pinpoint everybody's skill and this is what you get into. We don't force anybody to go, 'well here pick up this tool and get in the dirt' or 'pick up this and get in the brush.' We don't do that. You select where you want to go and that's what you want to do.*

*This is my third year so I was already ahead of everybody else, so that made me a mentor. We are allowed to have only one crew leader but the crew mentors are next in line...Even with just 6 people, I might take 2 people go do different types of projects.*

*You couldn't just hire a totally fresh crew and a team leader and expect the same results. You have to know what you're doing and it don't come easy. Without Shawn, Emerald Trail Corps would have fell apart.*

*In 2012 and 2014 we had at least 4 trail head openings and like 5 events of volunteer work. I got to teach some kids and I got to teach all types of people about the trails. It was awesome! I felt like I was important because I was the teacher and everybody was focused on me to hear what I had to say. It's actually kind of cool, as a kid I never thought I would try to teaching anybody, anything. But somewhere along the lines, I learned that skill. And it's terrific, like I got people looking to me for guidance or like advice on a project. And I need to make sure I'm on top of my game to make sure I know how to direct them to make sure their work is done right. It makes me feel good to know that I can do that.*

Mike

*If I have a good leader it makes me want to accomplish things so the whole team looks good.*

*I've become way more confident in my work and what I can do. I've had employers that run over and like slap your hand like, 'no, you can't do it this way!' But here I haven't had a problem.*

*Sometimes I feel that the crew should be worked under stricter guidelines. Because sometimes there's too much freedom. I mean we're getting paid good money to do a job and sometimes I feel like the job's slacking. And it could be better. And I think it boils down to some of the leadership...I don't like to rip on people that have given me such an opportunity but sometimes the leadership isn't as strong as it should be and sometimes it slides into the crew's mentality. I mean sometimes we need slack but sometimes I think it's too loose.*

*When I was a boss I gave out instructions to other people and I expected them to adhere to my instructions. So, I have expectations at times which sometimes is not such a good thing. But I try to comply with instructions that are given to me so I understand how that works.*

Shawn

*Vision also means leading. To me, to have vision means being a good leader. Being able to explain your vision to your crew to where that they can understand it and they can also picture what you have in your mind in their mind too...This allows me to be in different areas without having to actually be at each spot to observe what's going on and making sure that it's being done right.*

*Being able to explain what I do and also putting it into action gains the crew's trust. That each one of them will feel like, 'alright, if he is doing it, if he is showing me, I feel like I've got the confidence to go in and do it.' And I say to each one, 'you have a vision. Make it.' You know, for each one of them. So if you got a vision, or something that you know how to do and you want to do it, then go ahead, do that. I allow them to paint a picture whether it comes out wrong or not. And if it does come out wrong, I could point out the things that they've done wrong within their own work and they'll be able to recognize it and correct it.*

*I'd tell guys, when I was young my mom would always say, 'Get out of the house.' So I would get out the house and go outside and play. So this is what I do. And you can see it in me, I enjoy doing this. I try even for those who haven't grown up like that, you know, being outside a lot and being told to go outside, I try to make the environment fun. You know, I try to make it nice to where it's not a stressful work environment. For the most part, they feel that and that's part of the respect I get back from them. You know, I'm not a hard-ass, you know with the guys. They respect it a lot.*

*Each one of them gives me respect, just based on how I handle myself, how I supervise, and how I go about talking to them. And also working with them and being able to back up the things that I say. In the task that's at hand, I'm able to go out and actually do it along with explaining it to them.*

*I look at anything that they do and I go out and I automatically compliment them. You know talk about what they've done and what they've accomplished. And those key words and key things help somebody be motivated.*

*Part of what MW CDC promotes is leadership. Some individuals feel like they may not be a leader but I try to put leadership within, you know, in the job to where it comes out of them. Without them actually even knowing. But they just did something.*

*I feel like my words and things that I can present to somebody may change their life. That's what I like. I like to help.*

*During training and at the beginning of the season I look for each individual's weakness and strengths—and if you're strong in this area then I'll call upon you to do that when it's time for that to be done. I'm not expecting you to do anything outside of that, because you do that well. And if you do that well, then that will help the rest of the picture become complete. Like some guys are good at brushing and some guys are good at dirt. You know, at the end of the day, as long as we all play our role, we can get that picture made.*

*From being out here working for five seasons with different groups every year, I kind of learned how to adapt to different individuals. And I'm with them all day. I mean, I put in more hours with them than some of their families. And I'm not slow to my environment. I'm always observing my environment and I guess I've been told, 'you have a gift of kind of reading people.' So I understand certain weaknesses and strengths that some have.*

*And I don't try to strengthen a person's weakness if they're not willing to strengthen it. Because we're grown men and we don't want to be forced into doing something.*

*Patience is key to being a leader. Patience is everything. And staying humble. And being able to stay humble in moments of pressure. And focus. And quick problem solving, because you know when the spotlight's on you to start the day off, you want to make sure that your crew is focused, that they understand what you're saying, the directions that you're giving, and you are able to get out and play your role and make everything go as smooth as possible.*

*Being a leader has my mind focused more on the positive goals and things that I want in life.  
The things that I plan on doing.*

**Leadership – General Phenomenological Description:** Shawn leads the crew and behind him is Riddles, a senior member, who mentors newer recruits. In developing a vision for the trail, Shawn will first read the landscape and then translate his vision—through conversation (Markus), but more often, leading by example—into something the others can understand and participate in. Shawn and the other crew members (e.g. Markus, Mike) recognize that the leader must set an example that others will want to follow. As morale builds, the team becomes a source of positive identity (Mike). The function of the leader is to hold the crew together (Riddles), and facilitate vision in each one of the crew members (Shawn). To do this requires patience, humility, problem-solving and a keen ability to read people (Shawn) as there are many tasks involved in leadership. Shawn recognizes that, without vision, new crew members may feel disconnected from the work. Therefore, he tries to build on their strengths by carefully assessing what each person naturally takes to and then compliments them on their successes. By helping build confidence and motivation, Shawn is allowing each person to imagine their “role” in the work and he is also creating an environment of “respect.”

Respect is an important theme as it functions to provide crew members with positive, autonomous sense of self (i.e. as “grown men”, Shawn). Through Shawn’s childhood anecdote of his mother telling him to “get out of the house”, he illustrates the balance he must strike as a leader. On the one hand, he must be directive (i.e. get out into the work) while also fostering internal motivation (i.e. making the work fun) and autonomy. In a sense, he approaches the crew as a benevolent parent who provides structure but also support for their developing vision and identity. This balance is difficult to manage. Some crew members (e.g. Mike) have observed



when explicit directions—more typical of employer-employee relations in manual labor—are lacking then crew members begin to feel disconnected from the work.

Shawn believes that leadership must be promoted as a quality within each individual and that this will help them develop a vision for their lives beyond the program (e.g. “being a leader has my mind focused more of the positive goals and things that I want in life...”). In his experience as a leader, Riddles describes how his words and actions become magnified under the gaze of others but he is not ‘de-presented’ (see Chapter 2). Rather, it is through the gaze of others that he recognizes himself as a teacher—something he had never considered before—and strives to be “at the top of [his] game.” In this instance, leadership has paved possibilities for seeing himself before others that had heretofore been undiscovered. As Shawn put it, leadership can be “put within” individuals.

### **Participant Interview Theme: Teamwork**

***Personal Description/Key Episode:** It was raining outside and the crew was hurrying to haul gravel out to the back of the yard. We were working on landscaping a house that the MWDC had acquired. Markus was upset that the crew was asked to do residential landscaping, which he did not recognize as part of their contractual duties. As the crew hauled loads from the truck to the back yard, there was tension as comments were muttered in passing back and forth. Some of the crew—particularly Jim and Mike—were getting irritable watching their large colleague standing aside, looking downcast and sullen. But the main conflict was developing between Markus and Thomas—the staff supervisor. Shawn did not say anything but when he saw me in the back yard, he stood beside me and swept his hand before us, gesturing towards the trees blowing in the wind. He explained that things sometimes get tense at work and when they do, he would close his eyes and imagine the trees moving like waves on a beach. There was something*

*magnificent about these trees, whose massive and seemingly rigid trunks, could tenderly bend and lean with the sudden—and often fickle—impositions of the wind. Several minutes later, Markus was back at work. He was still upset but the team was working as a unit again; working fast to be out of the rain.*

**Thematic Summary:** The crew feel a responsibility towards one another when at work, personal issues are often deferred.

### **Thematic Excerpts from Interviews**

Jim

*The camaraderie of everybody pulling their own weight, it's a nice mesh. It's real gratifying to watch the crew, and be part of—not just observing—but being a part of it all coming together into a real cohesive unit.*

*Interacting everyday with the same people and whatever moods they're in and whatever moods I'm in, I can reflect on how I behave in a way that startles me, 'well, that's because of this and that'. And so I do a lot of introspection anyway and this has been condensed here...*

*I think everybody was pretty good at not bringing their personal things into the work place. And you get a feel for what mood people are in and you make allowance for that to get this job done. Then everybody is pretty much pulling together and all that other stuff kind of just falls by the wayside. It can defer personal issues by getting the job done and tending to the work that needs to be done.*

*There are some inner-city people and there are some that are that are more fringe... They test each other to see where they are coming from because that's real key in establishing relationships. This group is great because the guys on it aren't so ingrained in their opinion or their idea of who somebody else is. They'll let you prove yourself not being what they anticipate you being. The prejudice isn't as deep and I'm not talking racial necessarily but we all prejudge OK. It's been a lot easier to assimilate in this environment.*

*I guess I have preconceived notions of other people's behaviors and a lot of times I will have resistance to doing something in a certain way when I can see a different way might be a little easier. But I consciously set that aside in this job because—a part of that comes from trusting that they've done it, they know how to—because I'll be like 'no, that's not—' but I don't see all of the nuance that they've experienced and gone through and learned by their experiences. So, that's one thing that I've managed to step back from it and say 'OK, I'll do it that way' and find out after a few times of saying 'this ain't working', and finally getting in the rhythm to like 'yea, it does work!'*

*Well, there's two different consciousnesses. There's the one that I bring to it and there's the collective one. The collective one is that 'we've got to do it and we're going to do it' and 'we're good at it'. And that's what was neat about this coming together, this whole cohesiveness of the group. Is that we know we can do it. So let's do it! But each of us individually--I can't speak for anybody else—but I want to see how we can like, 'Jeez, that's daunting, but they say we can do it and they've done it before so I know it can be done.'...At first going in it's like, 'Wow, that's going to be a lot of work'. But it's never as bad as what I anticipate [laughing]! Because we do it piecemeal...*

*I'm part of a group so if I'm not doing my share then I'm letting 'em down. For me, that's a big thing if I needed an incentive to keep going and I didn't really feel like it. It's the same thing in the military...you don't want to let the unit down.*

Mike

*We have a diverse set of attitudes and a diverse set of people. But we all get along.*

*This job definitely involves teamwork. When we're working as a team we bond, I think, a little better than somebody in a warehouse taking a piece off a truck, putting it away, somebody else coming taking a piece of a truck, putting it away. We're not working together, just working. And this job, building the trails—somebody else has to be pulling the dirt and somebody else has to be finishing. And somebody else has to be out front clearing the debris away. It's a team effort.*

*If you got a good team, you're not going to worry about somebody talking about you when you're swinging the tool that you're not familiar with or making fun of you or, 'he doesn't do a good job when he picks that tool up' or whatever. So when you got a good team, and you pick up a tool that you're not familiar with, somebody's going to come and help you.*

*Makes me more positive, it makes me want to come to work. Same way with a bad team. With a bad team, there would be more stress. I would be more apt to let somebody else take the lead rather than me do it. Because if I'm in a team and I trust everybody and I like everybody, I'm gonna step out of my comfort zone and do things that I wouldn't normally do whereas in a bad team, I'm just going to stay in my comfort zone and do what I do best.*

*It takes a team effort to build a trail. If one of the members of the team is not holding up his end of the deal it makes it harder on everybody else...Sometimes it really pisses me off when somebody's sitting down or somebody's cussing about the work...They let it slide. I let it slide. Because if we start bitching at each other then we won't have a crew. So sometimes I feel that way but I don't show it. But sometimes people show it and we just kind of work around them. Pick up their slack. And hopefully when I'm feeling that way, they'll pick up mine.*

*For keeping the unit. Keeping the unit. So I've always let it slide. I've only said something one time and it caused conflict and I'm not going to do that again.*

*Sometimes it bothers me the way that trails are run. Sometimes, it's contradictory to the way I think it should go. Like Tom will make a trail that will shoot up a hill and turn when I think it*

*should shoot down the hill and around. And it seems like it would be easier to build and walk that way. But they do it for a reason but I'm not experienced enough to realize why.*

Markus

*I'm not going to sit there and let everybody else work while I'm not doing nothing just because I got a personal problem with the situation. I know how to put my pride aside and finish working with the group...I'm a good team player. I'm not going to leave my teammate hanging.*

*Everybody has bad days, everybody has good days. We are working with a bunch of people that don't let their bad days affect what they're doing at work and how they treat other people.*

*After you spend a couple days working and you're sweating and just grinding it out with another person, you just earn a different type of respect for them. It just makes life and the work that much easier knowing that you're not out here alone...With this particular job you almost form a brotherhood. Like I'm sitting out here seeing you sweating next to this person and working real hard. This person is working real hard with you and we got to help each other. It's almost like a team. There's like a brotherhood and friendship and a bond.*

*I think it's good, positive energy when we're all out here working...Really it's just like a rhythm. You know, each person has a different role. Some people might have to pick up some slack for some other people but realistically we do it as a team and once you know your specific vision on what you got to do, you can just go ahead about your job and finish it.*

*Everybody has a competitive nature and some people feel like they might be getting shown out by somebody else. Like somebody else is going to be doing something better than them or look like they're putting in more work but at the end of the day you just got to realize that we are a team and we got one goal. You know, this is your goal and this is my goal and we all have one goal. As long as we reach that goal then we all succeed...*

*Everybody's different mind has a different vision. And you just try to collaborate all in one. Just try to see what that person is seeing.*

*Sometimes there could be a personal conflict between two people's vision on what they see for the trail. And that's when we got to incorporate the two visions. And then we make our own vision.*

Shawn

*If I'm having a stressful day or I wake up on the wrong side [chuckles]—I don't usually wake up too often on the wrong side but there may be some things as far as within my household that may set me in a different direction. And instead of actually showing that with my crew, which they have no—they don't have anything to do with my personal, outside life—I just try to channel that into my work.*

Riddles

*There'll be some days in my personal life where work is not where I want to be and sometimes I might forget about my position and the focuses that I'm supposed to be have. And I'll be all*

*into my personal feelings and it will cause a problem because you'll get other people copying that like it's OK and it's really not. That's when the professionalism has to kick in. I've learned to not bring the personal life into the work.*

*Every day you get one realistic goal. Make it from here to there and we're done for the day. Boom! Jobs get done so fast because everybody knows what their goal is. You got a start line, you got a finish line. You're doing everything in your power to make it to that finish line no matter the sweat, blood, tears—make it to that finish line and you're done.*

*Like if I got a team with me and Shawn told me we had 30 water dips to do. I'll say, 'Alright Jim, let's do 15 a day.' We knockin' them out. After we do 16 drainage dips, we ain't doing shit else. And the next day, 'Alright bro, let's do these 15 water dips. Water dips is done, we're cool.' You thought the water dips was going to take us about 4 or 5 days, a whole week, when it only took us 2. Because of a realistic goal. We push ourselves to make that goal and then shut it down.*

**Teamwork – General Phenomenological Description:** All crew members desired to function as a team. Within this “cohesive unit” (Jim), each member was responsible for “pulling their own weight” (Jim) and also helping others pick up slack (Mike). Every member had a role (Mike, Markus) that enabled the success of the group as a whole. To maintain the functioning of the group, each member made a conscious effort to defer personal issues—this was accomplished by suspending private concerns (Markus, Riddles, Shawn) as well as ceding to the judgment of the group (Jim, Mike). This process was especially important for the leaders, Shawn and Riddles, who noted that their leadership abilities would be impaired and adversely affect the team process if they did not defer their own issues.

Working together as a team required “group consciousness” (Jim). Group consciousness may be a corollary to vision; by membership in a team, each participant can envision possibilities for the work that might otherwise seem impossible (Jim). When the group perceives a task together, they are better able to see how it will be accomplished (Jim). Another important element of group consciousness is to break down complex projects into specific, achievable and time-limited tasks (Jim, Riddles). Working in the manner, difficult tasks become much less

daunting—alleviating private anxieties (Jim)—and are usually completed in advance of expectations.

Within a well-functioning crew, individuals may be more willing to “step out of their comfort zone” and acquire new skills (Mike), while poorly functioning groups may inhibit members from trying new things. Group consciousness is not groupthink, there is “a diverse set of attitudes and a diverse set of people” (Mike) and individuals must constantly set aside their prejudices of others and let them “prove themselves” on their own merits (Jim). The crew facilitates this process by encouraging people who were at the “fringes” of other groups (Jim) to take an active role in group consciousness. Through this process of setting aside prejudices and testing one another to find commonalities, relationships are formed (Jim).

Markus describes the experience of this group consciousness, by suggesting a parallel between players on a sport team (Jim likens it to belonging to a military unit). According to Markus, a bond develops—like a friendship or brotherhood—in which one feels connected to another through the rhythm of their laboring side by side. As each member develops their own vision, the formation of a group consciousness helps reconcile differing visions as individuals try to see that the other is seeing. There is a recognition that the success of the group depends on each member, and each member’s success depends on the success of the group.

### **Participant Interview Theme: Communication with Others**

***Personal Description/Key Episode:*** *This was my first day working in a park outside of the city known as Dead Man’s Hollow. At lunch break, Kathryn, the project manager, came by to see how we were doing. Cam complained to her about the bus fare, which he did not have to pay for city work as he rode his bicycle. Kathryn listened to him and her tone was sympathetic and understanding. She reminded Cam that this was a job and as an employee he was expected to find travel arrangements. To my surprise, Cam smiled*

*and nodded. He then asked Kathryn what they would be working on in the park and she pulled out a map and showed us the outline of our project. Cam told Kathryn that it was important for the crew to know what was going on. She agreed and added that he and the rest of the crew should be informed of planning decisions.*

**Thematic Summary:** The crew feel as though they are not consulted enough in planning and development.

### Thematic Excerpts from Interviews

Jim

*When you're right in the middle of something, somebody can't come along and say, 'well, no, we wanted it this way, because...' and give you some information that had you had at first you wouldn't have had to redo something. And that's a frustration.*

Markus

*The trails that are built are already blueprinted<sup>84</sup>. They're already blueprinted so [the planners] want the trail to look like that. So if you took it out of its course then you're changing the trail but sometimes you have to because you never know what challenges are in front of you that stops you from going that course.*

*Sometimes our communication a little shaky when we're doing stuff for the program—outside of the trail work. That's where I feel like the communication gets a little iffy sometimes.*

*I just feel like some people have so much on their plate and just forget. You know that's just human mistakes and everybody makes a lot of mistakes and they don't communicate properly sometimes. They might have 20 things going on at one time and just forgot to tell somebody something ahead of time.*

*I honestly feel like our crew leader, his supervisor, and their supervisor's supervisor all need to come out here when they do the flag lines and map it out. Maybe even have our crew leader digging in the part of the area where they want to tread on and see how that goes. And then everyone can get the same vision. Instead of, 'well they want it this way, and this person wants it this way, but we can't do it this way because something's in the way.' But if they all*

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<sup>84</sup> This seems to be a point of misconception as a 'typical section drawing' was only used for one section of trail (Manspeizer, personal communication). For the most part, the trails in Emerald View Park were created from an approximate line drawn on a map, on-the-ground observations that result in flagging, and then construction. Often, return trips are planned to touch up sections that are not quite right or need maintaining.

*came out when we did the flags and seen it for themselves then they would be able to decipher what we would have been able to do.*

Mike

*The team leader [Shawn] is fine. I think staff has to pre-plan better...It's real important for the crew leader [Thomas] to be way more involved in the planning...For him to be more involved would make the work that go smoother. And we wouldn't have to do so much backtracking. Wait and calling the boss: 'Do we want to do this? Do we want to do that?' We need to get Tom out here to look at this because if he was there when they were flagging, it would be right for both of them [Thomas and Shawn]. Instead of having to argue about it later.*

Riddles

*Well now they want to pull out blueprints on the last week of work. And the blueprints are engineered by engineers and it's not ideal because they don't know the texture of the ground...They don't know none of that. They go out there following GPS maps and say, 'Ok yeah, this is what we need here, this is what we need there' But when you start digging and you find out that the dirt that you thought was solid turned out to be really soft, dry dirt there's nothing we can do about it. Then the engineers are unhappy and that makes us unhappy...it's frustrating.*

*You see what the engineer wants but my vision is telling me that what your engineer is saying to do is only going to work maybe 40% of what you think it is. With my vision I improvise and now we're compromising! So we're even.*

*They pass off information and then the next person passes off more information. We're low on the totem pole.*

**Communication with Others – General Phenomenological Description:** Communication is such an important element of vision, leadership and teamwork so it is not surprising that it is a priority in relationships with staff and planners. However, crew members often feel like they are caught between the competing demands of the engineers and the material realities of the landscape. The challenges here involve translation; the onus is put on the crew members to translate the landscape architect's world of lines and numbers into the language of a trail that is coherent in the world of water, wind, creatures and dirt. Often this translation requires improvisation and a willingness for staff and planners to compromise (Riddles). Sometimes their work is made harder by not being given information up front, often having to learn about plans after work has been done. This is a source of frustration which some (Markus) regarded as “just



human mistakes” while others (Riddles) believe that the crew is not consulted because they are “low on the totem pole”. There is however an expectation going forward that staff will involve the crew leader in the planning (Markus, Mike) so they have all of the information up front and will not have to backtrack.

### **Critical Thematic Analysis: Manual Labor**

#### **Thematic Excerpts from Interviews**

Jim

*I love it because not only is it physically exhausting but it's honest work kind of stuff. You know, just my work ethic growing up and I'm grateful for that...It's exhausting but not an unpleasant kind of exhaustion because I know it comes from honest labor and that I did a good job and that I'm tired but here I am—better at work!*

*My initial thing was I felt guilty because I was getting paid and I wasn't sweating...I have trouble justifying getting paid \$10 an hour to not be doing something. And that's just my history, I don't like cheating. And that's what it feels like. That I'm cheating my employer...And also, it is a responsibility. So not only do I enjoy working, I have a responsibility to do it right.*

*I'm a good worker and I'll get good references because I deserve that.*

Riddles

*The more I get to sweat and get dirty the happier I am. If I leave work clean then I'm not really too satisfied with the day...I feel like, 'yeah, I did me a good day's worth of work today.' I wasn't sitting around doing nothing, I did a nice hard day worth of work. Sweated.*

*Like if I don't come home dirty, I feel like I didn't do nothing. I feel like I'm cheating society if I'm sitting up there and not really busting a sweat working my ass off. All my jobs, I've always busted a sweat.*

*I'm 29 years old and I've been doing manual labor since I was like 14. I've never had a job that I had to dress up nice and go into an office and sit underneath the AC or answer phones—nothing easy. My life has never been easy so me trying to find something like that is going to be difficult.*

Mike

*Sometimes it really pisses me off when somebody's sitting down or somebody's cussing about the work. We have a job to do. We're paid to do this job. This company does so much for us that we shouldn't kick 'em.*

Markus

*I was just talking to one of the guys yesterday and I was telling him like, 'man, I feel a little bad sometimes because I just sit here and I watch you guys work and I don't want to just sit*

*here and watch you work because I wanna work with you. You know, I don't want you to feel like, 'Well he's just sitting there' and 'What is he doing?' But essentially I'm just observing and seeing what you guys are doing because I want to see the vision that you see'.*

Thomas

*I absolutely sleep like a baby at night. Both from the physical exertion and from confidence in knowing that I didn't squander the privileges and advantages I had by serving myself. It was spent in serving parks and serving people. And so it's very rewarding and I have no qualms about that.*

**IR8. Honest Work:** Jim's phrase "honest work" encapsulates the central assumptions the participants have on manual labor. The operating assumptions and values here are that a) physical toil (i.e. "nothing easy", Riddles) is the quintessential human capital b) expending physical labor on work is honest c) withholding physical labor is dishonest (i.e. "cheating" Jim, Riddles), both to self and society-at-large d) being honest is a responsibility of the individual (e.g. "I have a responsibility to do it right...", Jim) and e) honesty leads to rewards such as references (Jim), happiness (Riddles) and self-satisfaction (Thomas). It is significant the degree to which supervision and oversight have been internalized (as discipline) by the crew members regarding their physical labor. This IR functionally establishes both an informal policing of peers (e.g. "I don't want you to feel like, 'Well he's just sitting there'", Markus) and an internalization of supervision (e.g. "I wasn't sitting around doing nothing", Riddles). However, these structures of responsibility and discipline may imply a sense of connection and ownership of the work and do not necessarily apply to other areas of 'work' such as classroom activities. Office work, for example, may be viewed as "easy" (Riddles). By positioning manual labor as tough, honest work and administrative or desk work as easy, Riddles is inverting the traditional hierarchy of labor, which accords white-collar and managerial work more respect than front-line work. Note that the IR of honest work may also be used by Thomas to quell a sense of guilt from having certain "privileges and advantages" which could have been spent serving himself. Instead, his work feels honest because it is physical labor expended in service of others.

## Critical Thematic Analysis: Crew Attitudes Towards Staff

### Thematic Excerpts from Interviews

Jim

*I appreciate everybody but my perspective is probably different from a lot of the other guys because I've been at different levels of organization so I understand their responsibilities. You heard a little bit of conversation today, 'well, he's just doing this...' and I try to feed, 'well, maybe there's another possibility for that.' And I like to have space where I can do that, because I'm planting seeds along the way to consider other options. But there have been times where I have had to do that just because considering the obvious possibilities had caused me too much grief...Tom's got good perspective, he's real good at mediation and his heart's in the right place. As are all the staff as far as I see and I choose to believe that.*

*It means a lot. It really does—the organization and what they are endeavoring to do for me. I'm real grateful for them because [tearing up] my life has been real devoid of that sort of thing. Probably means a lot more to me than for a lot of other people.*

Riddles

*I believe a lot of us that were working on the trail became a lot more mature and responsible through this program. I've learned through this program budgeting plans and what I want to do for the future and what I'm not limited to because of what the world offers. I thank MWDC for opening up my potential and letting me splurge with it.*

*I interact with all the staff including the higher-ups. Actually, I have a personal relationship with the whole higher up squad because I got a future plan in opening a nonprofit organization. So they're going to try to back me. I got them on my side. So it's all good.*

*They had an event for my birthday. Pulled out some cookies and stuff like that. That personal kind of stuff happens all the time. And it makes me feel good because, you know, we're not just employees...it becomes a family and I enjoyed that part.*

*They involved themselves more than—they go above and beyond. They don't have to but they do and it's because of the people that they are. Not because of the company or the corporation, it's because those specific people are just built like that to care. This is just not just a job to them either, this is their life.*

Mike

*We all pretty much treat each other equal...but there's a boss. I'm 52 years old. I've worked in a lot of jobs with a lot of bosses and, in fact, I have been a boss. So, I'm used to, when somebody in a position of authority says, 'You need to do this.' I understand. And I do it. Because that's why they pay me.*

*It helps people that really deserve another chance and want to work hard but have a really hard time finding employment. And once you get employment here and do a good job for this company, they will reference you for life!*

*I want to say a couple words about Laura. I think that the talent development specialist is really important for this seasonal work that we're doing right now. Because she sets us up for what we're going to do following this job. So it's not just about coming out and building trails and getting paid. It's about gaining some work experience for the next job. And I think that's extremely important because, without her, half of us would probably be still lost looking for jobs...Listen to what she says. A lot of the guys don't seem to take to heart what she says. But if you do—like I did—you'll be set up in school or a job or ready to move forward.*

Markus

*I know it's a job but it's also a program. I just feel like sometimes people try to treat us like maybe you are in a summer camp or something like how they talk to you or what they expect for you to do. And we got 6 or 7 grown men out here who just want to provide for our homes. Like not that we're not trying to be better as people, you know, we appreciate the help that you guys are trying to give us by helping us with job interview skills and trying to find us jobs, so I appreciate that. But at the same time, you don't have to make it seem like you were belittling us because we're in a certain predicament.*

*It's not even about what we have to do, it's just how we're told to do it. Like, for instance, say you never met me before and I was trying to park in this parking spot and your car's a little close and I was like, 'Hey, can you move your fucking car over?' And you are looking at me like, 'Dude what is wrong with you? Like why are you talking to me like that? You don't know me like that.' It's just little things like how you're being talked to. You know, the tone of their voice; it's not about what you've said sometimes but it's always about how you say it.*

*I don't think they see me as a bad person or a screwed up individual. I feel like they actually like me and appreciate the fact that I'm here. I just don't look at some of these people different just because of their backgrounds. Like I said, I never even been to jail. I don't have any problems with drugs and stuff like that. I've been college educated—I don't feel like I'm less of a person even if I wasn't educated or even if I went to jail, I'm not less of a person than you are. Because at the end of the day we're the same people and no job or no status is going to change that. At the end of the day, we are all equal people...I feel like they don't understand.*

*I don't want you to take the wrong idea like they treat us bad or like we're second-tiered people. It's not that. It's just sometimes, they let their jobs and what they're being told to do interfere with them being just human...They gotta feel like they have to abide by their staff rules. Which is not a problem, but at the end of the day, you're just human just like I'm human. So if you got something you need to say, you know, say it. You can talk to me regularly. You don't have to be always so professional, like be yourself. I'm always going to be myself no matter what the situation is.*

*The staff are out here trying to help and some people don't want to take a full advantage of that. Some of these [staff] people really have resources and know people. We're in a world now that's not about what you know, it's about who you know.*

**IR9. Higher Ups:** The staff were referred to as “higher ups” by Riddles. In their position, staff were seen to have resources and privileges (Markus) that crew members could take advantage of

“to move forward” (Mike) into future employment. Of course, the term “higher ups” also connotes a certain distance and removal from the level of the crew members’ everyday concerns.

**IR10. Summer Camp:** Markus observes that the crew members are not simply employees but are also clients (“it’s a job but it’s also a program”). This ambiguity in roles creates tension. As clients, crew members are selected for the program because they are “in a certain predicament” (Markus). The ‘summer camp’ IR functions as a point of resistance against the positioning of staff as ‘higher ups’, who then seem to ‘belittle’ the crew members. Markus counters the notion that crew members (as clients) should “be looked at as different”. Markus also remonstrates against the assumption that all crew members are similarly disadvantaged (“I don’t have any problems with drugs...I’ve been college educated...”). For the most part, these complaints are privately fielded and are part of an internal discourse through which the crew can vent to one another and deal with shared insecurities. Crew members are conscious of how staff perceive them and wish to present themselves as professionals. It is in this light that Jim rationalizes the actions of staff by citing his experiences at “different levels of organization.” His understanding is mostly shared by other crew members, however IR of ‘summer camp’ indicates that the crew are very sensitive to tone and language that staff use towards them. Being positioned as employees as well as clients may also create some role confusion.

**IR11. Heart’s in the Right Place:** Despite misgivings, all crew members endorsed positive views of the staff. Crew members recognized staff as having their heart “in the right place” (Jim), and also felt a sense of personal advocacy (Jim, Riddles, Mike) that extended beyond employee-employer relations or even staff-client relations (e.g. “they go above and beyond”, Riddles). This IR positions the staff and crew within a mutual circle of trust and respect (i.e. “it becomes a family”, Riddles). The crew members may use this relational currency to be seen in a

positive light by staff and also remind themselves (Markus) and their peers (Jim) that despite the staff's sometimes problematic ways of communicating, they are deeply concerned for the wellbeing of the crew.

### **Critical Thematic Analysis: Staff Attitudes Towards Crew**

#### **Thematic Excerpts from Interviews**

Kathryn

*I wrote a recommendation letter for one of the crew members who was on trial because he had violated his parole and the judge was going to be deciding whether or not this person would have to go back to prison. And I wrote that working as a team in the outdoors really creates an environment where you're seeing the true person. The person at heart is nurtured and brought out. You may see this person as someone who breaks the law and is violent and does all these bad things but I've seen this person in a completely different light because we've given them a different context in which to exist. This person has really contributed to the world. And if you send them back to prison you are just squashing them.*

*People in the community know the crew and they've proven—and not that they should have to, but the reality of our world right?—they have proven to all the naysayers that they are doing a really, really good job, that they are professional and are adding value.*

*Part of our strategy in some ways became, 'we need to present these people as a professional trail crew', which is what they are. They are employees. And we started talking much less about it being a program and that we're not providing a social service here. We are offering this as an employment opportunity.*

*In a good way there's a certain line where I can't just be like your friend. I have to maintain a certain level of distance and professionalism...Because they can take ownership of it. Not to say that it's always perfect. I definitely have heard comments like, 'Ah, I'm just doing what I'm told!'...*

Laura

*There are rules such as you have to be respectful of each other, be engaged, do your best to listen to other people. Let them talk. Don't interrupt. And if you want to smoke when we're outside, go near the perimeter. I had to talk to them about staying the whole time. They started seeing the training as being like the easy stuff that wasn't as important. And I've had to talk to them about the fact that we're here from 1 till 3. You can't say at 2 o'clock, 'oh, I'm leaving. Goodbye.'*

*It could be that there's a difference in having Thomas and Shawn direct them and having me direct them. Because I'm not saying that Thomas and Shawn are authoritarian but I'm not at all authoritarian so...[chuckles] I learned. And we changed that this year.*

*I think that they developed pride in their work. And I'm not the only one who complements people and brings up their strengths. I think everybody at the MW CDC does that naturally. But I've noticed in the crew, you'll start to see them smile, you'll notice their facial expressions changing. I think they work a little harder because they are being recognized for their contributions...I think it builds their self-esteem. I think that a lot of them have never had somebody tell them what they're good at doing before. They've never been told, 'Hey, you are so creative!' or 'you are really smart.' And I take personal satisfaction out of being able to recognize someone's unique talents and abilities.*

Thomas

*Being a nonprofit, all of my coworkers, all of my teammates here have an immense amount of skill. There is so much knowledge and skill and talent you kind of have to wonder is everyone here really that crazy that we've all decided that monetary gain is secondary to what we can bring to a community or neighborhood? And to know that everyone is here making a sacrifice to work for others, to better the lives of others, to making places better –it's one of those things that I think everyone recognizes that we are all in this together. It becomes an atmosphere where you don't doubt the motivations of someone else. You get where they are coming from, their heart is true.*

*My typical interaction is a coaching interaction, like 'Hey, you're doing really good work and you know I see you dedicated yourself to mastering this. And I'm grateful that you've done that. And I also want you to know that I might be asking you at some point in the future to bring that expertise to a project.' I'm letting people know that there's progress being made. I want them to know that I am satisfied and what they're doing is a big part of the bigger picture and that their skill is at such a level that I want to make sure that I put them into those areas where that skill can really shine. And I need to instill confidence, I need to do that to give worth, I need to do that if it's been a while since someone has heard appreciation towards them.*

*When we take the crew downtown where they get fitted for suits, for interview clothing, oftentimes it's the first time that someone is dressed up in a long time. And when they look at themselves in the mirror, all of a sudden they stand up straight and get a smile on and realize how good they look. And someone else will say, 'man, you look really good!' and I would gladly trade a raise if I could have that day once a week.*

*A lot of these folks have little work experience and very few people have hard labor work experience. And when you're trying to train people to be good workers it can be a challenge but it also has the greatest rewards because you see people's progress. So when I see someone come in that I think is a little soft, I get really excited, because this person's life is about to change. And they're going to be different at the end of it. They're going to know what the work is like and they're not going to be afraid of it anymore, they're not going to shy away from it. They're going to be able to confront those tasks. But they also know how important team work is. They know they need a support group and they need a network. And one of the best aspects of this program is that each year we've gotten better at supplying that support group. That network to all of our people who come in.*

**IR12. Talent development:** Laura’s title as “Talent Development Specialist” suggests an IR that describes how staff most frequently positioned themselves in relation to the crew members. Specifically, staff construct their responsibilities as providing “a support group” (Thomas) that develops and/or recognizes each individual’s “unique talents and abilities” (Laura). Talent development essentializes the “true nature” of crew members as good and productive and suggests that work is redemptive in “bringing [these qualities] out” (Kathryn). This work is constructed as a service to crew members (Laura, Thomas) and as proof (though it ‘should not be needed’) to the community that a criminal background does not define your value (Kathryn).

**IR13. Heart’s in the Right Place:** Thomas invokes this IR to suggest that staff are actually sacrificing “monetary gain...to better the lives of others...” This IR positions the staff as having hearts that are true (i.e. invested in non-monetary interests, Thomas), which includes deriving “personal satisfaction” (Laura) from developing the talents/abilities/potential of the crew members. Like the crew members who discuss their relationship with the program as being ‘like family’, staff also position their relationships with the crew members beyond the bounds of employer-employee relations—as a “support group” (Thomas).

**IR14. Professionalism:** Positioning the staff solely in terms of ‘talent development’ also positions the crew as recipients of a “social service”—which Kathryn chooses to counteract by framing the crew as “professionals” who have proven their value through completing the work. Presenting the crew as employees also legitimizes a certain distance and relationship of authority between staff and crew (Kathryn, Laura). This setting of rules and boundaries is also justified by Kathryn to avoid the paternalism that ‘summer camp’ programming implies.



## Critical Thematic Analysis: Community Support

### Thematic Excerpts from Interviews

#### Riddles

*This community knows what our uniforms or blue shirts mean. And we get congratulated—we get thanked all the time and it makes you feel good that you're being appreciated for this work. They like that we're keeping their community active and trying to keep it clean.*

*The community is going to be happy with the trails again. One of the people brought us some donuts on her way to work, so it's a sign of appreciation for us working hard on a hot day or whatever. It's those little accomplishments I guess I look at.*

#### Shawn

*You know at the end of the day, the biggest part is when we get complimented on it. You know like, 'You guys are doing a good job. It's beautiful. It looks nice.' Today might have been one of my highlights in years. Just to see two moms come out with their kids. One of them got a double-stroller and I don't think she's ever been on the trail but I looked at the wheelbase on that like, 'Ok, she could get through there on that' and that was a highlight for me...Somewhere along the line, it's being spoken about. And they're not talking about it in a bad way, they're talking about it in a good way for people to come out and see what it's about.*

*I like the residents that are around there. Once it was completed they appreciated it a lot...Those that we encounter who are hikers or walkers or bikers give us a lot of credit and respect and praise for the things that we do. We always get the 'you guys are doing a good job' type of thing.*

*The basic, 'You guys are doing a good job' and 'Thanks'; that's good enough for me man. That just shows appreciation...it feels good. It feels great. Especially being an African American and you always got a negative label behind an African American male. You know being judged for one moment as good, to have me as a good guy! Regardless of whatever situation is going on in the world right now, for that moment, you're a good guy. And I appreciate that.*

#### Markus

*When we're up there working they say, 'You guys are the ones building these trails? We love 'em, we appreciate the work that you're doing.' And it just makes you feel that much better. It makes you want to work that much harder in what you're doing.*

#### Jim

*There were one or two people out of the community—and widely separated—but stopping and saying 'Good job.'... Yea, it's real gratifying. And it would be nice if there were more of them but I'm not going to look at that because that would take away from what I would get from those few. Like for example, I was waiting on a bus when I first started and was wearing my work shirt and some young couple drove by and they said, 'Oh, you work for the trail corps! We wanted to thank you. You are doing such a great job. We just moved up here. We use the*

*trail all the time!' If we had more people using the trail and passing that on it would be so good for the crew. But I have learned to satisfy myself with the infrequent reinforcement.*

Mike

*A lot of the people that work on this crew have had shady pasts. And it might show—I don't know if the community sees it—but it might show that there are redeemable qualities in everybody. Look these guys got into trouble but look at them now. They work hard, they're building trails, they're helping our community. That would be the optimal goal to see. But whether they see it or not, I can't tell you that.*

Thomas

*I would say a typical interaction is one of praise from the community. It's one of thankfulness and you know there's excitement and the people that come to approach me are coming from a good place, they are coming to say their thanks. Or they're inquisitive, they want to learn more about it, they want to know what's going on with this project or that project and that's great.*

**IR15. “Community”-as-Group:** ‘Community’ is constructed as a sort of monolithic group (e.g.

“This community knows”, “The community is going to be happy”, Riddles; “they’re talking about it in a good way”, Shawn; “they say...”, Markus; “the community...”, Mike, Thomas).

Most of these statements position the staff and crew members as providing a valuable service that is recognized by the community with gratitude and appreciation. By framing community in this manner, positive interactions are normalized (i.e. “a typical interaction is one of praise from the community”, Thomas) and negative ones (as we shall see in the next section) are considered non-representative of the group but rather individual or subgroup deviations. Interestingly, this positive connotation of “community” seems to have developed over the past year or so as during the first couple of years, the ETC had several really negative encounters which personally affected several individuals (Manspeizer, personal communication). Notably, Jim preferred more community interactions because their support is gratifying.

**IR16. Good Guys:** This IR is employed to suggest that ‘honest work’ is redeeming (Mike) and that one can (temporarily) escape the “negative label” of being Black (Shawn) or having “a shady past” (Mike). While crew members are aware that judgments may vary, Shawn appreciates

even “one moment” of being perceived as a good guy, which defies the stereotypes associated with being an “African American male.”

### **Critical Thematic Analysis: Community Opposition**

#### **Thematic Excerpts from Interviews**

##### **Riddles**

*Yeah, we have a problem over here with that right now. We flagged this front part 2, 3 times, but somebody keeps coming over and ripping them out. Some people in the community don't want them and some people really do like them. We do it for the ones who really likes it.*

*You got to think, these people have been living up here forever and they was in these woods before Emerald View. And some of them takes it personal because they grew up riding dirt bikes in the woods and now that we created the trails, the trails is taking away from that. Emerald View Park don't allow motor vehicles through the trail. So they kind of feel that...they're not allowed in the woods. So they vandalize. Like we had to take down some dirt bike jumps and the family who built the dirt bike jump was pretty upset and they kept rebuilding it and rebuilding it. And then they just start moving flags and ripping out flag lines and messing up the trail and the tread.*

*You got to learn how to be respectable, You got to be open-minded and let people be how they are and be respectable and professional at times. We had a lot of incidents where some residents in Mount Washington don't like Emerald View Park. They vandalized Emerald View Park all the time. Or they don't like the type of employees that they carry, you know what I mean?*

##### **Jim**

*I wasn't there to witness, but people have pulled up the flags numerous times down here. We come to start the trail and the flags would be gone. So they don't want us here... They don't want us diverting the trail apparently. But that's the only real negative that I've had.*

##### **Markus**

*We were doing this one semi-historical leg where some people don't want us to work on the trail. I guess it causes too much traffic in the area they're living in or they're just being childish about the situation...I don't feel like its personal towards the people that's working here. Having a trail being created 40, 50 feet behind your house...They don't want to have people walking through their backyard. Maybe they feel like their privacy is being taken.*

##### **Mike**

*The MWCDC bought a house that they were working on and they were fixing it up to flip and the neighbor was very—negative is a good word. He didn't like the fact that they were changing stuff in the back yard and he was not very receptive to the MWCDC. That's the only time I seen it...It wasn't like picking on a worker. He wasn't happy with what they were doing.*

Shawn

*I mean you got some, there are some that are not too happy with the things that we do...they don't actually come up and express that but we know it as far as flags being pulled up and tools being taken. Some of our trail work may be a little bit damaged when we come in the next day...I don't look at it like, 'you guys are invading' I think it's just a lack of maturity and ignorance.*

*Just come talk to me! [chuckles] Before you judge just come out and have a conversation. Then just go from there.*

Judith

*What gets me emotionally a lot is when people have negative impressions of the park. Residents, yes, community members. Not all of them, obviously, and that's not a regular thing—But that stands out for me. Like when people see me out in the park and are not happy about something. And that might be totally not related to what I'm doing but they all just feel like they still need to talk about it. Some don't like changes, some are afraid of crimes. Some are just maybe upset about being more neglected by the city of Pittsburgh and are not being able to voice that to them so they voice it to me.*

*There's also negative interactions like I'm working on a restoration area and there's this like specific person who just doesn't like it and goes and drives a dirt bike through the park and ruins my fences and kind of threatens the work that I am doing there. You know, although it doesn't really affect that person, or actually it's for their good.*

Kathryn

*I guess you could call it a tension or difference between the generational residents versus the influx of young professionals...I think there's a feeling of—whether its right or wrong, or validated—of entitlement: this is mine, its' not yours, it's been mine for longer. I mean at the same time that can be very positive because maybe they feel a lot more ownership and are willing to really advocate for their community in a way that someone that's only been here a couple years or isn't planning on staying may not be as invested. So there are positives. Where I start to feel the negatives is when they refuse to work with anyone else because they're the only ones that know what's right. Or they are very skeptical about whether someone like me—who doesn't live in the community, but I'm working on behalf of it—whether I have a right to be doing that.*

*Have you ever heard the term carpetbagger? Basically, someone coming in from somewhere else and benefitting in some way and then leaving. It's probably a small percentage of people that live in this neighborhood, but unfortunately sometimes they're the loudest voices. So there's been criticism all over social media and it comes in waves. It comes when there's a surge of people maybe feeling like this organization isn't doing what they think the organization should be doing for the community. And that's when you start getting some of the criticism.*

*I think sometimes you feel like you're being expected to please everybody or people are kind of watching you and you have to show progress and results. For the most part, my relationship with community members is positive and I feel respected most of the time. And I try to be*

*respectful even if I don't necessarily agree with everything...I don't want the community interaction piece to become too negative. I think that one of the biggest things is like being able to have a public face and be recognized and building relationships really is what it is. And that's very important so the skepticism of 'You're an outsider!' begins to melt away.*

Thomas

*If you're a lifelong resident here or if you've been using these spaces as your own for a number of years you kind of have a feeling of resentment. There's a feeling of resentment that exists when some of the traditional park activities—such as dirt bike riding and hunting—are now all a sudden being called illegal and are discouraged...I feel that it's certain residents only and maybe it is the power of their connection with the green spaces, but there's an attitude of elitism where 'This is mine and now I have to share it with other people.' Or 'Now I have to use it by these rules that weren't enforced for a number of years.'*

*Park lovers have this confidence like, 'well we can definitely change your mind' and these people that are apathetic or adversarial towards parks, they have the same mind frame like, 'no they're dirty, they're bad, they're used for dangerous things.' It seems like that's a problem that they have with their perception.*

*Some trails that were existing were shortcut trails that had a lot of problems and we don't think is actually part of our trail system because it's not representative of our quality of work and we want most of those trails down. And sometimes people have been upset because now they have to walk further around to get to where they are going. And so a lot of times I realize that we didn't take enough of community input as to how these trails function in what they do. And so it's a criticism that turns into a jumping off point for how to be better.*

**IR17. Generational Residents:** This IR is the corollary of the community-as-group; the people who oppose the program are often categorized as a subgroup (“it’s probably a small percentage...but unfortunately they’re the loudest voices”) of “generational residents” (Kathryn). This subgroup describes residents who have been living in Mount Washington for many years. Some of these residents have been using an informal network of trails for their own purposes prior to the ETC program; others would never use the trails and do not support the use of resources on creating a park (Manspeizer, personal communication). The staff and crew recognize that they restrict activities (e.g. “dirt bike riding and hunting”, Thomas) which were once freely enjoyed by these generational residents. The phrase “generational residents” is used in contrast to “carpet baggers”, which is a derogatory term for newcomers who enter a community and take advantage of their resources. ‘Generational’ thus connotes residents who are

deeply invested in place but who may also be stuck in the past. The attitudes that characterize “generational residents” are of entitlement (“this is mine”, Kathryn), resentment towards outsiders (Riddles, Kathryn, Thomas) and perhaps immaturity (Markus, Shawn). Riddles references this IR when describing racial prejudices in Mount Washington residents (i.e. “they don’t like the type of employees that [MWCDC] carries”). Regardless of the validity of these claims, this IR positions the program staff and crew members as “respectable” “open-minded” “professional” (Riddles) while generational residents are seen as close-minded, critical and destructive. This IR operates to legitimize the work of the MWCDC and delegitimize criticisms against it. Thomas uses the term “elitism” to characterize the self-righteous attitudes of the generational residents but he also reflexively addresses the elitism within the MWCDC (i.e. “...I realize we didn’t take enough of community input as to how these trails function...”). The recognition of generational residents also foreground discussions of spatial identity and who gets to determine place.

**IR18. Come Talk to Me:** Another IR used to validate the crew’s work is the discursive claim that through open, direct communication, they can persuade anyone—even those who are “apathetic and adversarial” (Thomas)—to accept them and their work (Shawn, Kathryn, Thomas). This IR constructs the staff and crew as having a compelling agenda (“we can definitely change your mind”, Thomas) and confidence in their position. This IR is deployed to create points of encounter; through direct engagement with the community, participants believe that judgments against the program (i.e. as invasive, threatening, or exploitative) may “being to melt away” (Kathryn).

## CHAPTER 9. IDENTITY

### Participant Interview Theme: Getting In Shape

*Personal Description/Key Episode: I was a bit cold when I entered the trail on this August day so I brought my sweater. Within seconds of swinging the hoelaski, I got very warm again and stripped to my shirt. I told Jim I was glad today was cool and shady; he grinned and said I had picked the best day of the week to come. Later that day, a couple of crew members came up to me and expressed surprise and admiration that I would be willing to consistently do this work without getting paid. After that, Thomas stopped by and saw me washing dirt off my hands. He remarked with a smile that I was “the only Master’s student with calluses!” I was dirty and tired and by the end of the day, my body was aching and I was thirsty and exhausted. After work, as I soared down the steep McArdle Roadway on my bike, I felt the wind whipping my face but I could not help smiling; I had earned my place with the crew.*

**Thematic Summary:** The crew members reported getting ‘in shape’ as a process of bodily changes that were mostly positive and associated with health and self-improvement.

#### Thematic Excerpts from Interviews

Jim

*It's keeping me in shape and it's prolonging my life essentially. Well, I was never in bad shape but I'm in better shape than I was and that's nice.*

Markus

*I like cutting down trees! [laughing] I'm a pretty big guy so the fun part of the job for me is kind of getting a workout while working.*

*I think my body's responding quite well. I was an athlete when I was younger so this is just like getting ready for football camp or something like that. Getting ready. Getting stronger.*

*Sometimes it takes a toll on your body too but I'm the youngest guy on the crew so I can't complain too much! [laughing]*

*It is tough labor working this job and I'm thinking like, 'man, I don't know if I could really do this for the rest of my life.'*

*It definitely opened my eyes up more in myself because you're out here on this trail and you're making nothing into something. So why can't you do that with anything else in your life. Like I'm a pretty big guy and I'm almost 300 lbs and I'm not in the best of shape. But in a little while, I turned this trail from nothing into something; I can probably turn my body from nothing into something.*

Mike

*My body's getting stronger by the day but it's sore a lot. I can definitely see the change in my physical appearance. I'm becoming more in shape.*

*It gets you in tune with your body. If you're not when you start, you will be...I need to get my rest. I really need to stay off the caffeine because if I drink coffee before I come to work it wears off. And once it wears off, I wear down. So if I come in a more natural state—like not hyped up on caffeine or whatever, it's better on my body throughout the day. And I have to drink immense amounts of water.*

*Now I can pedal my new bike up over Republic. And I couldn't do that at the beginning of the season. I really couldn't. I'm stronger, I'm in better shape.*

Riddles

*I mean, I lose weight. I lose weight so fast out here. I done dropped 15 pounds in no time. I got more endurance. I can last throughout the day. More stamina, I can last more, I can do more. It's just stressful on my back. The body's only going to take so much [until] it's like, 'uh, I'm hurting.' This is my last year. I'm done.*

*My feet are calloused, the boots are tearing my feet up. It's just stuff like that. I'm having lower back problems now from bending over and swinging tools but it comes with the territory.*

Shawn

*If you use the tools in certain ways it's pretty much like you're working out all day. If you use the tools in the proper motion and use your body, it's working the muscles in the same way.*

*So any tool that I pick up—I don't actually much have a favorite one—I could go from digging, using a pickmatic or using a rake just to drag dirt, which is great for the core! [chuckles] If you want to get a nice core, you can drag dirt all day. It will get your gut muscles together.*

*My body fat percentage is down.*

*You gotta stay physical you know. Stay in shape for good health. Nowadays, it's kinda hard and working out sometimes can get boring. You know, just in one setting, one area. Sometimes it takes different things to actually get a work out, different activities other than just the basic use of weights and gym equipment.*



**Getting In Shape – General Phenomenological Description:** The crew members noticed changes in their physical appearance and capabilities as a result of the work. They all reported being more “in shape” as a result of the hard, manual labor but sustaining this labor required crew members to “get in tune” (Mike) with their body’s needs and its rhythms throughout the day. Crew members (Jim, Markus, Shawn) embraced the rigors of the work in part because of the physical benefits derived from it. However, crew members were also made acutely aware of the “toll” (Markus) on their bodies. Sore muscles (Markus, Mike), calloused feet and bent backs (Riddles) testify to the limits of the body’s ability to respond to desire and will before it inevitably breaks down. While physical work opens up a future of prolonged life (Jim) and possibilities for achievement (Markus, Mike) it also closes upon itself when the “body can only take so much” (Riddles).

#### **Participant Interview Theme: Self-Improvement**

*Personal Description/Key Episode: Jim, Cam and I arrived at the pavilion in Olympia Park where we met Shawn, Riddles and Mike, who were working on another section all morning. Gathered under this cool dome, our exhausted bodies took in the cool breeze and slumped into the benches. We were waiting for Laura to lead her job training seminar.*

*When Laura arrived she gave us a handout that said ‘mind-body-spirit’ on the cover. Though the crew was tired and sleepy, Laura tried to engage us using the handouts and asking questions. Shawn assisted her by relating the lesson to stories from his own life. He talked about the importance of keeping a positive mindset and tied this in with the program theme of integrating mind, body and spirit. One crew member seemed to be falling asleep so Laura asked if he was paying attention. Then the young man started relating his struggles with being in and out of jail and how difficult it had been*

*for him to go back to school or get a job. Some of the others echoed his frustrations noting that people with criminal records were relegated to manual labor jobs or were usually put “in the back”, in warehouses or garbage treatment facilities. Riddles moved the discussion in a positive direction by telling us about his plans to develop a program that would educate and empower young, black youth to take the path towards education instead of turning to the streets.*

**Thematic Summary:** Almost everyone was able to identify ways in which they had grown or improved through this program.

#### **Thematic Excerpts from Interviews**

Jim

*I'm letting this transform me. Because I aspire to be the best I can be and there's a whole lot of things that go into that besides just doing the job. And part of what I've done differently this time is stepping back and listening like, 'OK, I'll do it this way'. And then discovering that during that process my old ways weren't necessarily all that great in some regards or maybe it was limiting to me over the course of my life and that gives me the incentive to be open to change.*

*I've learned to be more tolerant and I've also taken some cues from other people as opportunities to reflect and to modify my method of interacting with other people.*

*I've referenced earlier about interacting with others and getting some insights just with the interpersonal dynamics of it. Interacting everyday with the same people and whatever moods they're in and whatever moods I'm in and how I maybe behave in a way that startles me and I can reflect, 'well, that's because of this and that'. I do a lot of introspection anyway and this has been a condensed kind of thing.*

*The opportunity exists for some real self-improvement and I've seized on that. I'm still open to learning about myself and changing what I identify as things that would be necessary for me to be more comfortable in my own skin. I have to be OK with me. And I am.*

Markus

*It definitely opened my eyes up more in myself because you're out here on this trail and you're making nothing into something. So why can't you do that with anything else in your life... Like trying to get back into school, try to get a career--like I said, turn nothing into something.*

*Being able to use different hand tools and learn knowledge about different things, that's the ultimate accomplishment, because to me that's power. As much as you know.*

*With this type of work, you gotta be patient. Because some things don't go as planned and it might frustrate you that you can't do something so you just got to have patience. I think patience is a new tool.*

Riddles

*They try to make us better and I believe a lot of us became a lot more mature and responsible through this program. I've learned through this program budgeting plans and what I want to do for my future and what I'm not limited to because of what the world offers.*

*I've had to strive but this job made me more dedicated and I feel useful...I see myself as a bit more established and goal-motivated.*

*The resume-building and computer skills gave me a whole new life.*

Shawn

*I turned my negative life into a positive. The story that I'll be able to relate, be able to send back to someone, maybe the troubled youth, I can show them the steps I've taken to improve myself. To be looked at as a different individual. I've done some wrong things but I'm not a wrong person.*

*It took everything to be taken away from me to respect the fact that the little things mean a lot... You know I'm not materialistic or anything, I'm just me. I have my own personality and I feel like it's a good one. And if you got that then that's being rich to me.*

Mike

*This work means an opportunity to get another start. Before I got hired here I didn't have a job so I didn't have an income and I was struggling. This gave me the opportunity to have some money. To actually get ahead. To actually explore some new options that I didn't have before with schooling, which I'm taking advantage of.*

*I did that on my own initiative with the help of the MWCDC.*

*You got to be ready to move forward or you're going to be stuck where you were when you started here.*

**Self-Improvement – General Phenomenological Description:** Through this work, the crew members experienced ‘transformations’ (Jim) on various aspects of their selves: Jim identified being open to change, Markus developed patience while acquiring knowledge, Riddles became more motivated towards personal goals, Shawn developed the positive aspects of himself that

were previously overshadowed by his criminal history<sup>85</sup> and Mike found new opportunities for work and school. In having these experiences, crew members reported being more comfortable with their selves (Jim), developing a sense of identity and direction (Markus), overcoming self-limitations to more fully explore the world (Riddles), moving forward in life (Mike) and deepening self-worth (Shawn). Markus offers a concise analogy of these changes by noting that “...you’re out here on this trail and you’re making nothing into something. So why can’t you do that with anything else in your life?...” The crew are not only building and cultivating paths in the park (which connect people to nature) but are making trails within their own lives, which connect outwards towards worlds of opportunity and inwards towards self-discovery (i.e. a fuller exposition of one’s inner nature). However, one must be willing to work and ‘stay on the path’ so to speak, or “be stuck” in place (Mike).

### **Participant Interview Theme: Accomplishment**

*Personal Description/Key Episode: Bettised! The crew started using this neologism—eponymously named after Jerome Bettis, the renown Pittsburgh Steelers halfback—to refer to someone who comes in and ‘steals the glory’ from another by finishing a project which someone else had started. Towards the end of his career, Bettis was allowed to build his career point total by closing out the last few yards thus getting recognition from the work of his teammates. Sure enough a day came when I was also Bettised!*

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<sup>85</sup> This term itself may be an IR that can be unpacked for its positive and negative racial associations. On the one hand, “criminal history” could be deployed to construct the person in question (i.e. Shawn) as characterologically deviant or developmentally misguided. However, we could also speak to the trauma of what has likely been many years of police harassment and profiling (which was personally witnessed) in addition to his incarceration. It is likely that these latter social and systemic factors have a far-reaching impact in shaping perceptions of self.

*I was working especially hard at taking out a large tree stump that was in the middle of the path. After about 15 hard minutes of swinging and digging, my back was sore and my lungs were aching. I put the Pulaski down to wipe my brow and take a sip of water. As I turned around I saw someone picking up the tool and taking a few hard swings. A few minutes later, he pulled out the stump. It is a good feeling to uproot something so stuck—like undoing a difficult knot—and there is covert competition for such accomplishments, which are recorded as personal triumphs.*

**Thematic Summary:** A sense of accomplishment was associated with feelings of confidence and pride.

#### **Thematic Excerpts from Interviews**

##### **Riddles**

*You feel accomplished when you go into the trail and you see a part that's not been touched. And you have to go through here and when you finish you realize, 'yeah, that looks real good and we did a good job.' That's the best part about it.*

*When they give us a specific time limit and we shut that time limit down by like 4 or 5 days, I be feeling like 'can't touch this, MC Hammer!'*

*In my past, I didn't accomplish a lot, and now that I'm a little bit more mature and getting stability, I want to feel that accomplishment. I want to feel like I did something terrific, like I did something productive.*

*When my daughter walks into the trail she'll look around and say, 'Daddy, did you build this one?' ... her coming out here and looking around and like, 'aw, daddy, this is so cool!' ... It makes me feel like, 'yeah, I'm the man!'*

##### **Jim**

*You know the team accomplishments are nice but the personal ones I can look at and say 'That's my stretch, I shaped it, I sculpted it.' It's a piece of me that I'm leaving out there. There were little segments I did that I secretly look at and say 'ah, that's me!'*

*Growing up in foster homes I didn't get praise for what I did so I would have to give that to myself. And that was sometimes my only solace in having to do things, but it was necessary otherwise I'd have resentments for them making me do this and making me do that. And I still have resentments because a lot of them had me for the work I could do. So I had to provide my own rewards. So that's what I'd do. So everything that I do has my name on it.*

*I can imagine somewhere down the road, somebody is walking down a trail that I helped build. And that's kind of a nice thing if I ever need to buoy my spirits. I try to hoard things like that. You know, because there are times when my spirits aren't so buoyed and if I could fill them up...*

Markus

*When you're raking, you're almost creating artwork with the trail because you want it to look good. And when you walk on it like, 'man, this feels good. This is a good trail.', you get a humbling feeling after feeling after that.*

*Our Dead Man's Hollow trip was a contracted job and we were supposed to be out there for a total of 15 working days and we ended up really finishing it in like 8. So we had a lot of time to pay attention to small little details to make sure it came out really nice. That job showed the resilience of our crew and most of our staff and how serious we take it and get the job done well.*

Mike

*We were working on a bad section of the trail that was built prior to my working with the MWCDC and we were putting the new section in and fixing it. I had a sense of accomplishment because I fixed what somebody else messed up before. Which made me feel better like, 'ah! I didn't know I could do this!' And it gave me confidence working on trails. It gives me a sense of pride.*

*Getting enrolled in school is probably the biggest accomplishment I had during this time. That and the building of the trails that are going to be here.*

*When I do something—no matter how I do it—it seems to come out right. And I think that's one of the plusses of trail building. I don't think there's really a wrong way to do it. So it made me more confident.*

Shawn

*I accomplished putting motivation in different individuals who I felt didn't have quite a big motivation to them. You know, like the spunk to get out and do things. Or even the confidence. I think I built their confidence level up a lot to go out and be successful.*

*I look at anything that they do and I go out and I automatically compliment them. You know talk about what they've done and what they've accomplished. And those key words and key things help somebody be motivated.*

**Accomplishment – General Phenomenological Description:** Shawn, the team leader, considers it a task of leadership to motivate his crew so they will have the confidence to work and accomplish goals. When the crew are successful he will compliment them so they develop pride, which in turn builds more motivation. The sense of accomplishment may be similar to

completing a work of art (“I sculpted it”, Jim; “you’re almost creating artwork”, Markus), which relates to Shawn’s conception of trail building as brushwork upon a dirt canvas. Accomplishment can be experienced as a “buoy” for the spirits (Jim) or “humbling” (Markus). And although team accomplishments are celebrated (Jim), there is a covert competition for personal accomplishments as they strengthen one’s positive self-identity (“I’m the man!”, Riddles) and reflect one’s self in the work (“a piece of me that I’m leaving out there”, Jim)—like the artist’s signature, “everything I do has my name on it” (Jim).

### **Participant Interview Theme: Serving Others**

***Personal Description/Key Episode:** I have regularly observed the crew greeting trail users and they go into and out of the park. One time, a woman had brought the crew a box of Dunkin Donuts and thanked them for their hard work. I have never seen other work crews—like construction crews—greeting or interacting with the public as openly as these men. And the men seem happy and satisfied when they are told about how enjoyable the trails are. Perhaps this function—offering enjoyment—is how the crew members would like to imagine themselves in the presence of the community.*

**Thematic Summary:** The crew sees themselves as offering a service of value to the community and enjoy positive feedback.

#### **Thematic Excerpts from Interviews**

Jim

*But looking at it, the finished product is what I try to envision and the vision that somebody is going to be using that and trying to make it as pleasant an experience for them to do so in the process.*

*I don't know if it's to the degree of immortality but these trails are going to be around for a while. And even if nobody else knows I was a part of it, I do. And I know that people are going to be enjoying it. So I guess I'm borrowing from the future a bit with that...if nothing else, I can go by and look at it and go 'yea, I helped do that.'*

*There's a lot of effort that goes into the finished product but it came out nice and is there for other people to enjoy. That's a real gratifying thing.*

Mike

*I look at the trail to make sure it's made right and that it doesn't need any upkeep. Because I don't want somebody using my trail—that I helped to build—getting injured because I didn't do something right.*

*Like the two ladies you saw come in. With the double stroller. I mean, they wanted to have a nice day in the park and they're not going to do it if the trail is not wide enough for them to push their kids.*

*Now I know exactly how to make the trail user-friendly, which is the most important thing.*

*This work is more rewarding to me because I'm building trails that people can use for 20 or 30 years if they're maintained properly. Working in a warehouse is repetitive and what I do is never really seen or really recognized. But out here on the trails, it's fulfilling because people use it and they understand that somebody built it.*

Shawn

*I don't want any bikers, any hikers being in any type of danger. So as we're walking, we're constantly looking at things like trees that are overgrown with vines and uprooting stuff like that. And maybe rocks that are in the way...If need be we'll make the tread wider so that the traffic isn't on the outside edge of the trail but more so on the inside. And giving it wide enough paths so you can have both directions moving at a safe pace.*

*I think a lot of us like to see the trails being used. When we sit here during the day and see people coming in and out, we like that!*

Markus

*I want everybody to enjoy walking on these trails because I know me and the rest of the crew put a lot of work into it so. To come out here in a couple months or a year or two and see like, 'Man, this trail's really being used. A lot of people are using it.' You know, that should make you feel good about yourself because it could possibly be lasting longer than you live.*

*It's just a good feeling to be able to walk through a park and hear people say, 'This park is really beautiful. Whoever made this really took their time and did a wonderful job.'*

*It makes you feel humbled because you're thinking about something other than yourself.*

Riddles

*I accomplished something here but to know that somebody is going to use it to jog through or ride a bike is even better.*

**Serving Others – General Phenomenological Description:** The crew members identified a sense of accomplishment from constructing a well-made trail but also a deep sense of personal



satisfaction to know that others will use and enjoy their work. This imagining of others becomes a part of the ‘vision’ of making trails (Jim). A few crew members (i.e. Jim, Mike, Markus) perceived a temporal horizon where others will enjoy the trails they created for years to come. Even though the crew members themselves will not be there, they gain a sense of “recognition” (Mike) and even “immortality” (Jim) from imagining their work being enjoyed by others. For Mike, this is a major factor distinguishing trail work from other types of manual labor. The trails serve others while also serving the crew members as monuments of their contributions. Crew members prided themselves on making the trails “beautiful” (Markus)—immersing the users in the park—and “user-friendly” (Mike), allowing walkers to move freely and unencumbered by the hazards of loose dirt below and gripping foliage above (Shawn). Some may feel “humbled” (Markus) by noticing that their attitude of care extends beyond their personal circle towards the world of anonymous, future others. Nature, time, and others are woven into the fabric of ‘vision’, which the crew members use to define the trails and increasingly, themselves.

### Critical Thematic Analysis: Race

#### Thematic Excerpts from Interviews

Shawn

*I feel race definitely comes in. Being African American myself, there's places where sometimes I'm more in fear of the people around me than the people probably are in fear of me. You know, it could be just one false move—and I could be jammed up in a lot of stuff.*

*For example, the ice cream shop. In that situation, I don't know if the guy really felt like I had—the whole reason for you know, there was the female—the young ladies at the window ordering and I try to not stand behind some Caucasian women because I don't want to intimidate them or feel like they got to hold their bag or something when I'm behind them. You know, I'm not here for that or anything. I just don't want to make somebody feel uncomfortable just from standing behind them. So I try to stand more so off to the side of someone, because in situations like that, I just don't know...*

*Those who are judgmental are going to be judgmental and those who are going to be open-hearted are going to show it. You just got to look at yourself as a human being. You know, we're not—sometimes when I'm greeting myself in public places, I always present myself as, 'Hi, my name is Shawn. I'm from Earth!' [chuckles] You know, I'm from Earth! I'm an*

*Earthling! I get a laugh out of the group just to show, I'm not intimidating. I'm not a bad person, you know.*

*The basic, 'You guys are doing a good job' and 'Thanks'; that's good enough for me man. That just shows appreciation...it feels good. It feels great. Especially being an African American and you always got a negative label behind an African American male. You know being judged for one moment as good, to have me as a good guy! Regardless of whatever situation is going on in the world right now, for that moment, you're a good guy. And I appreciate that.*

#### Riddles

*You have to walk and be a certain way when you're with the public because of the way people view it. Being an African American standing on the corner, if you don't have your work shirt on, you got people looking at you and all that...especially up here with crime events.*

*People will scream racial stuff, you know, anything. It comes with it...People don't know they are how they are. I couldn't care less—racial or not—respect me as a man and see me out here trying to get my 9 to 5 and leave me be. And you know, I'm professional. It's like below me to even acknowledge it. It doesn't matter. I'm a hard-working young man: Black, African—it doesn't matter what you want to call me, I'm a hard-working, young man. I pay taxes just as much as you do.*

#### Judith

*I know that some people see our crew as an element of crime in the park. But not the majority of people, it's just a few people that have weird world views.*

#### Kathryn

*We have conversations about like, 'Well, you don't understand what it's like to be a black man and everywhere you go, somebody's looking at you thinking you're doing something wrong.' ... Hearing crew members having really honest conversations every now and again about race, about the African American experience, particularly in Pittsburgh...*

*I have also heard crew members, both individually with me or talking as a group, about how they feel that the crew—up until this last year—was all black except for Thomas. And mostly male. We did have two women at one point. But in those past years, I have heard crew members tell me directly that they feel like this has helped to break down barriers and create some little tiny seed of mutual understanding between people that had initially thought, 'Oh, that crew! They're doing community service or they're on work-release from the jail' or like, 'They're all ex-cons' and this sort of both distrust and blatant racism and prejudice. It wasn't, I don't think very widespread, like most of their interactions are really positive with people but we have had some of those incidences and it's really, really difficult. And that's when some of the most honest conversations have happened as a group.*

*When they were working on one of the dead-end streets, and that was where their shed was for a long time, a community member got a little bit upset that they were on their lunch break and*

*someone had their radio going in the car. Of course it was rap music and they were talking and laughing loudly and this person didn't want them, didn't want to hear that music, didn't want to hear anyone laughing, like, 'you're too loud.' I think that if it had been any other group or a mixed-color or anything else, just based on the way the situation unfolded that it would have been very different. So that's one example. There are other examples of where like, Shawn is in a position of leadership but the person addressing the group is always only talking to the White person in the place.*

*And Ilyssa and I have experienced what we feel is some level of prejudice against us because we're women, like 'How can you be leading this?' But in subtler ways, much subtler ways. One crew member said, 'But we have had this for 5 seasons.'*

Thomas

*They can't hide. You know a leopard cannot change his stripes.*

*The crew wears yellow helmets and Shawn and I carry white helmets—it seems sort of eerie that there's a differentiation of helmet color and status along the crew. And I don't know how many people in the neighborhood would straight up approach Shawn, seeing a white helmet different from yellow helmets knowing that he is the leader or the person they need to be talking to if they are concerned. But when I'm around, then everyone just kind of automatically comes to me or they call me over. So a lot of times I like to sit back and let everyone else talk and only when I'm approached do I actually speak up. I think that its implied to the neighborhood that, 'Well the White guy has to be in charge here.' And that's bothersome so I like to sit outside of that or step away from that if I can.*

*Well you need to have [different helmet colors], if you're on the crew so you know who the crew leader is...And I guess that's why we did it but I guess it seems weird now. It seems kind of unnecessary at this point...I don't know if anyone's thought of it any more than I have. You know it's just kind of—now that I'm saying it out loud and processing it out loud, I'm kind of questioning what's behind it.*

*A couple years ago, the crew took a contract job in Bear Run State Park. And that is in the Laurel Highlands. We finished our work far away from where the crew vehicles were so the staff of the park went to go get those vehicles to come pick us up and we walked along side of the road. And I believe that there were 8 of us, and everyone else was African American. As we were sitting on the guard rail waiting for the vans to come back to pick us up, a large pick-up with a Caucasian driver and his wife were coming towards us. And it looked like he had the wheel jerked as if he were going to hit all of us and the guy pulled back and he had a smile and she had tapped him like, 'Hey that's not nice.' And it was only myself and another person who saw that. And we didn't say it to anybody else. And I checked in with him, 'How did that make you feel?' And I became very conscious of why this person maliciously wanted to jerk the car. And that was a gut check for me. It was something that kind of made me aware of that situation that the crew was then put in. They were no longer in the city in places where they had a support group and there was a societal structure or norms of race relationships and that sort of thing. They were outside of that now, where the dynamics have changed. And I realized that that could be extremely scary. And for this individual driver in the truck, they were the outsiders. But I could blend in with that crowd. He couldn't look at me as like a city boy.*

**IR19. One False Move:** According to this IR, race—for African Americans—the black body is continually being constructed in the public eye as dangerous. This perception creates mutual fear and mistrust and is especially salient in certain places (i.e. “...where sometimes I’m more in fear of the people around me than the people are probably in fear of me”, Shawn). Through informal discussions, all of the African American crew members have experienced this. This IR, which Kathryn notes is part of the “African American experience, particularly in Pittsburgh” considers real dangers that Black people face because they *are* just “one false move” (Shawn) from dire consequences such as arrest or even death. The IR functions as both a declarative statement and an injunction for Black individuals—particularly young, African American males (Shawn, Riddles)—to continuously assess their being-in-context, on penalty of death. The recent and ongoing killings of African Americans by police only adds testimony to this grim reality. While Shawn and Riddles suggest preventative actions (i.e. standing off to the side, instead of behind women or having a work shirt on), they are still not protected from the threatened (and thus murderous) White gaze. Shawn references an “ice cream shop” situation in which he was yelled at by a man for no apparent reason other than perhaps his appearance as a large, Black male.

The White staff may initially be unaware of how pervasive these incidents are. Judith—a relatively new staff member—believes that it is “just a few people that have weird world views.” And this framing of racism as “weird world views” may itself be an IR that constructs prejudice as misinformed, individual beliefs rather than pervasive, culturally sanctioned perceptions. Thomas describes his own “gut check” moment, which occurred a couple of years ago while Kathryn noted that she had started having “really honest conversations” about race only in the past few years. African American crew members however have been socialized their entire lives to these concerns and do not have the privilege of ignorance. As Kathryn noted, the crew members have told her they have “had this for 5 seasons.”

**IR20. Earthlings:** By offering a different response—and deferring a definitive answer—to the question/interrogation, “Where are you from?”, Shawn refuses to have his Blackness contextualized in cultural terms like “from the hood”. His response interrogates the process of racialization. Shawn uses this IR not to deny his Blackness but to take the edge off it, so to speak. To show that he is humorous/non-threatening and therefore not an intimidating bad guy. Riddles employs this IR to dismiss the racialized taunts directed at him. By removing a racial label from his identification (i.e. “Black, African—it doesn’t matter what you want to call me, I’m a hard-working, young man...”) Riddles elevates himself from a one-down position of having to explain, rationalize or defend his Black identity. While it is tempting to equate their position with the “All Lives Matter” IR—as both decenter race as a master-status—the positioning of subjects is very different. As people of color, Shawn and Riddles decenter race to evade or elide the position of inferiority that frames their racialized identity. All Lives Matter, in contrast, is used—whether intentionally or not—by White folk to avoid (or defer) acknowledging their complicity in systems that disenfranchise people of color (especially African Americans).

**IR21. Community Service:** Kathryn noted that (some) community residents contextualized the presence of African American workers in a mostly White neighborhood as a “community service.” This IR is used here to indicate that residents thought the crew were court-appointed to work as part of their rehabilitation from a ‘criminal lifestyle’. The implicit assumptions framing this IR is that the crew were understood—partly for being Black—to a) be criminal b) be working not out of pleasure or self-determination but obligation and c) need to be taught responsibility to society.

**IR22. White Helmets:** Thomas references the white helmets that he and Shawn wear as leaders of the crew. The decision to have different helmet colors was initially rationalized by Thomas

(“so you know who the crew leader is”) but upon reflection he questions the legitimacy of this differentiation—especially when considering that the community residents disregard helmet color in light of skin. By distinguishing a mostly Black crew from a White supervisor, the helmets also perhaps had a pernicious effect of reinforcing the ‘Community Service’ IR. In practice, the white (vs. colored) helmets were deliberately instituted to cue community residents to persons in charge. This was implemented after a handful of negative interactions occurred during the first few years, where African American crew members were felt to be unduly vulnerable to angry residents and crew leaders were not respected (Manspeizer, personal communication). The helmets effectively raised the status of the (African American) crew leader to be on par with that of the (White) crew supervisor, in public places. Interestingly then, Thomas is either unaware of—or, more likely, dismisses—the symbolic status of the White helmet as deliberately connoting power relations. Perhaps his discomfort is due to an artifact being necessary for Black crew leaders to get respect or perhaps it is for being a White crewmember whose already privileged status is further elevated through this artifact. In any event, power relations which are rationalized as in the best interests of the crew may be experienced as uncomfortable by some staff and as a result, some uncomfortable discussions on race and identity may be minimized.

**IR23. City Boy:** Thomas cites this phrase when describing an incident that will not shock any person of color who has ventured outside of big cities. In small towns and state parks, Black crew members are considered “outsiders” while Thomas noted that he could “blend in with that [White] crowd...he couldn’t look at me as a city boy.” The spatial epidermal schemas of such places highlighted Blackness as deviant. “City boy” is itself a derogatory phrase which also has connotations of someone who is unmanly (i.e. a “boy”) and naïve to the ways of rural folk. “Boy” of course, has many historically racial connotations which have functioned to deny Black

folk—particularly men—agency, autonomy as well as social and self-respect. By using “city boy” in this context Thomas constructs race-relations outside of the city (i.e. “...where...there was a societal structure or norms of race relations...”) as much more colonial.

### Critical Thematic Analysis: Masculinity

#### Thematic Excerpts from Interviews

Markus

*I know it's a job but it's also a program. I just feel like sometimes people try to treat us like maybe you are in a summer camp or something like how they talk to you or what they expect for you to do. And we got 6 or 7 grown men out here who just want to provide for our homes. Like not that we're not trying to be better as people, you know, we appreciate the help that you guys are trying to give us by helping us with job interview skills and trying to find us jobs, so I appreciate that. But at the same time, you don't have to make it seem like you were belittling us because we're in a certain predicament.*

*I just watch my nieces and nephews grow up and you see what they're actually becoming. So when you start on this trail, when you start on this project, you start watching it grow. And it just started looking better—it's almost like a kid growing up and becoming a man.*

Riddles

*We're physical men. You know what I mean? We're men and we like to get physical, we like to get dirty. So we'd rather be out there but at the same time, you have to be flexible and transition from the manual labor to where you have to be in front of public and act a certain way and be a certain way.*

*I couldn't care less—racial or not—respect me as a man and see me out here trying to get my 9 to 5 and leave me be. And you know, I'm professional. It's like below me to even acknowledge it. It doesn't matter. I'm a hard-working young man: Black, African—it doesn't matter what you want to call me, I'm a hard-working young man. I pay taxes just as much as you do.*

*And you got people screaming stuff out of their windows about their houses because we're by the trail...in the incident I'm talking about, there was like 3 trail members that actually took it to heart and wanted to start to try to start a physical altercation. But the team leader, Shawn, stepped in and cancelled it all out and kept it moving. Then we stopped working on that side of the trail for a while until the higher ups at the MWCDC had to take care of that. Because, you know, there's a risk because we're men. We're men and we're out here laboring. Yeah, we're in that life of straight labor so we don't want no problems but we're men. You're not going to sit here and disrespect us.*

*You got all this stigma in the world, and to me, coming out here, making my hands real rough, callouses you know, working out my muscles, baking in the sun, yeah it gives you that manly aura. Yeah, I'm out here working hard and taking care of my family. I mean, yeah, I'm a man!*

*[laughing] You know what I'm saying, I'm doing what men are supposed to do. Doing what it takes.*

Mike

*I'm comfortable with the man I am. I just enjoy the work because it keeps me in shape and it gives me a sense doing something physical and manual and seeing a finished product...I mean, I see Judith do it and she's not a man. So, this is just good old-fashioned, physical, hard, rewarding work.*

Judith

*The first difference that comes usually with my job is gender. The perception of women not being to do certain things is pretty persistent and throughout my career I had to deal with this...*

*Just being confident about it and proving that I can, you know, lift things and I try to not give men the chance of like taking things away from me. Like that happens, you know, the tendency of men to try to take away things from women because they think they can't do it. And just not letting them do it. I can also ask for help when I need it. I know my limits. I just have to show that I can do it. That usually helps.*

*A lot of them gave me positive feedback on how they liked that I could pick up work as a man with them. I remember my very first day, I had pick axed a root out and two of the crew members were there because of a volunteer event and apparently they talked to the rest of the crew. And the first impression they got from me was, 'She really pick axed the shit out of the thing!' and they told that to the rest of the crew so it was a really good start! [chuckles] And I didn't really have to prove myself to them all that much.*

Kathryn

*And Ilyssa and I have experienced what we feel is some level of prejudice against us because we're women, like 'How can you be leading this?' But in subtler ways, much subtler ways. One crew member said, 'But we have had this for 5 seasons.'*

Shawn

*Especially being an African American and you always got a negative label behind an African American male. You know being judged for one moment as good, to have me as a good guy! Regardless of whatever situation is going on in the world right now, for that moment, you're a good guy. And I appreciate that.*

*We're grown men and we don't want to be forced into doing something.*

**IR24. Grown Men:** The redundancy in this phrase (i.e. all men are grown) highlights its discursive function as an assertion (or accusation) of how one handles their responsibilities.

The crew members sometimes used this phrase to assert their autonomy (“don’t want to be



forced”, Shawn), agency (“doing what it takes”, Riddles) and responsibilities towards others (“provide for our homes”, Markus; “taking care of my family”, Riddles). This IR re-positions the crew on level with the ‘higher ups’ in terms of development, ability and ambition—if not authority. This IR is also used by both Markus and Shawn as an admonishment to staff to not be patronized/infantilized or talked to in a ‘belittling’ manner.

**IR25. Respect:** Just as ‘grown men’ was used to command respect, the word ‘respect’ was almost always associated with masculine identification. Riddles explicitly frames his masculinity in terms such as “professional”, “hard-working”, and “physical”—which are qualities he expects will command respect from others. Respect therefore is the recognition (from self and others) that unifies this network of signifiers into a cohesive identity of masculinity—what Riddles calls “a manly aura.” On the other hand, to be “disrespected” is to be somehow deprived of the fruits of one’s labor (or to be defrauded of ‘honest work’). Alluding to a dimension of danger in transactions of respect, Riddles states, “...you know, there's a risk because we're men. We're men and we're out here laboring. Yeah, we're in that life of straight labor so we don't want no problems but we're men. You're not going to sit here and disrespect us.” Riddles implies that respect is the currency of masculinity; respect is especially valued in situations where status is salient (i.e. manual laborers or African American men interacting with the public). When disrespect is perceived here, violence becomes a possible recourse to recover one’s status. Aligning ‘respect’ together with ‘honest work’ and ‘grown men’ may also normalize a gendered division of labor and identity—which Mike and Judith explicitly reject. Mike, for example, references Judith to suggest that one does not need to be a man to be respected for “good old-fashioned, physical, hard, rewarding work.” However Judith herself notes she had to first prove herself to the crew and gained their approval because of her ability to “work as a man with them.” Thus, although Judith and Kathryn aim to do their share of physical work—and prevent

the men from taking the work from them (i.e. being ‘Bettised’)—the quality and intensity of their work is respected but also appropriated as ‘manly’.

### PART III. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## CHAPTER 10. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

### **Summary of Phenomenological Themes**

In these next two sections, we will summarize the themes and interpretive repertoires for each of the previous chapters on nature, work and identity. Our hermeneutic phenomenological analysis brought forth meanings the crew members attached to their lived experiences on the trail. Those existential-phenomenological descriptions, which were presented as themes, are summarized here for the convenience of our broad intended audience (i.e. researchers, community organizers, participants).

#### **Nature**

Nature spaces were seen as liminal—or in-between the busy, crowded spaces of the city. In the built urban environment, crew members were caught up in the fast paced movement of social crowds, noise and traffic. Away from—but simultaneously within—the busy mechanizations of the city, the natural landscape of the park offered an escape into a peaceful place. It was, as one participant put it, like stepping into a different world. Even within an urban park close to the heart of the city, the experience of being in nature was felt to be relaxing, therapeutic and peaceful. For the crew members, the transition into these nature spaces involves the simultaneous experience of being-in and being-out. These spaces are interior in that they pull crew members into a private world that seems cut off from the broader world but nature spaces are also exterior (being-out) in that they literally open up a field of perception that liberates participants from their private concerns and anxieties.

In the natural world, the crew members re-attuned to space and time as well as their own bodies and other objects. Specifically, they began orienting to the moving, flowing rhythms of life—of water, wind, birds, and plants. Some crew members made sense of this reorienting by reporting an attitude of care, enjoyment and even kinship with the nonhuman world of animals,

plants, wind, water and earth. There was a greater recognition and appreciation how human activities impact the natural world and a sense of personal responsibility for stewarding nature (e.g. caring for trees, not littering). Most crew members developed a special affinity to one or more places in the park. These places framed personal experiences (e.g. first time they built a trail, site of a humorous event) or offered a unique way of engaging with the world. The act of placemaking gathers a history which tells the stories of crew members—past and present—in terms of their lived experiences, engagements and opportunities. Garbage however disturbs the continuity of the landscape and indicates that places are unclaimed and the concerns of others are disregarded. Discovering garbage is also an act of place-making and some garbage or waste was recognized as monuments of the city's social, industrial and cultural history.

## **Work**

Through engaging in physically demanding tasks such as chopping, swinging and digging into the dirt, the crew members were also able to discharge aggression and feelings of frustration. Instead of allowing those feelings to become inwardly destructive, the participants used physical tasks to focus their destructive energies into directive, creative and goal-oriented activities. As the trail smoothed, so did the movements and inner feelings. This release was not simply cathartic but transformative; their emotional and physical investment was being transmuted into something of value. When fully immersed in the work, time has a rhythmic and flowing quality. However, the flow is interrupted when participants are thrown outside their tasks. When re-orienting to other tasks—which are often slower and more stationary (e.g. job skills training)—the weight/wait of time drags on; tiredness then makes the body feel heavy. However, when working under the heat engaging in repetitive physical labor, boredom and tiredness may also be felt as a background presence.

To lighten the mood and heaviness of labor the crew will often crack jokes and make funny comments. They also do this at the beginning of each workday as a ritual way of initiating a flow into the work. The expectation of humor—usually through an interesting observation, story or cultural reference—is always in the background of every physical task. Among the many functions that maintain a well-functioning crew, humor is essential to diverting attention away from personal frustrations and reconciling crew members after minor conflicts. Humor is thus an invitation into a shared social world. Places are also remembered by humorous events, which are then encoded into the stories (i.e. collective memory) of the crew.

Vision signifies a variety of experiences and performs many functions. We can say that vision is the joining of perception and imagination. Vision is a connective faculty that allows crew members to conceive of their work in the medium of nature and connect to the world of others, who will use these trails for years to come. In this sense, the crew members consider their vision as analogous to the vision of artists. Another way of understanding vision would be to liken it to reading. Here, the text is the landscape of hills, trees, roots and sky. Just as reading opens a hidden world behind the text, so does having trails allow one to move through the landscape and be immersed in the world of nature. Vision also permits crew members to anticipate (or read into) what is yet to happen—such as the collection and drainage of water or the wandering path of the traveler. There is also a social and communicative function of vision. It is taught, translated, shared and modified to bring together many diverse ways of interpreting the trail. With vision comes an encompassing attitude of concern for the experiences of others even when one is not working on the trails.

The process of getting vision exemplified the experience of working on the trails. Vision allows crew members to perceive the gestalt of the trail and its connection to their activities in the here-and-now. Vision allows crew members to work together towards a common goal. It is

also a learned skill that is socially transmitted by senior crew members to newer recruits. New recruits, often lacking in experience outdoors, are tested by the strenuous work, outdoor elements, unfamiliarity with the work and challenges of assimilating to a crew. Crew members who work through these initial difficulties are accepted into collective consciousness of the group. Through indirect observation augmented by hands-on experience, crew members developed feelings of connection and belief in their own capabilities as well as that of the crew. Thus, acquiring vision is considered a part of their maturation process. Even for senior crew members, vision needs to be constantly developed by learning new techniques and ways of planning the trails.

The crew usually works in units where there is one leader and perhaps another senior member who mentors the newer recruits. The leader is looked to as an example for others to follow; to develop their vision for the work. A well-functioning team is a source of positive identity for its members. The crew leader(s) is therefore responsible for maintaining a cohesive crew and facilitating vision in the newer crew members. The qualities that define leadership are patience, humility, problem-solving and a keen ability to read people for their strengths and difficulties. By matching newer crew members to tasks they might succeed in and then praising them for their accomplishments, the leaders build confidence and motivation while creating an environment of respect. Respect is gained when the crew members feel that their peers and staff members recognize and accept their positive identity (i.e. as “grown men”). However each leader has to negotiate a difficult balance between being supportive and directive—and some crew members are frustrated by being told what to do while others desire more explicit instructions. Regardless, individual initiative is heavily promoted and recognized as a skill that crew members must develop to pursue their own career plans after the program. Leaders enjoy being entrusted

with these responsibilities and being seen as a leader by others gives crew members a sense of importance and may help them imagine more possibilities for their futures.

A sense of belonging is also an important source of identity for the crew members. Within a cohesive crew, every member who has a role can envision themselves contributing to the success of the group as a whole. To this end, crew members made a strong effort to defer their private concerns and immerse themselves in the process of working as a group. This process was described by one crew member as “group consciousness”. Group consciousness may be analogous to a shared vision; by looking at projects as a group, participants are better able to see the task at hand, how it will be accomplished and how well it will be done. The task then becomes much less daunting and is usually completed in advance of expectations.

Within a well-functioning group, crew members may be more willing to step out of their comfort zone and acquire new skills. People who were at the fringes of other groups are encouraged to take an active role in the formation of the crew. Crew members have alternatively referred to their social unit as a ‘crew’, ‘family’, ‘team’, ‘unit’ and ‘brotherhood’. These bonds are developed and strengthened by working together. A cohesive group works in a rhythm and is able to work towards a shared vision. Where possible, crew members are encouraged to take ownership over a project and shape it according to their own vision. Through this process, each member—whether a leader or beginner—is encouraged to trust in one another and value different approaches to the work. By emphasizing teamwork as well as individual creativity, there is a shared recognition that the success of the group depends on each member, and each member’s success depends on the success of the group.

Though communication is heavily emphasized within the crew, they often feel left out of the loop with staff and the trail planners. The crew members believe that they—or at least a representative leader—should be involved in ‘higher-up’ conversations about planning because



so much of their work involves translation. To wit, the work of building trails involves translating the engineers' language of lines and numbers into the language of a trail that coheres in the world of water, wind, creatures and dirt. Miscommunication and missing information often led to more work and re-doing of projects—which the crew members all found frustrating. Some attributed these mishaps to individual lapses of judgment while other crew members believed that they were not consulted because they are “low on the totem pole”.

## **Identity**

By engaging in daily, manual labor, crew members began to notice changes in their physical capabilities and appearance. Getting in shape involved hard work and adapting to this work required individuals to attend to their own body's needs and rhythms (i.e. drinking water, avoiding caffeine, getting rest) throughout the day. Although crew members were proud of how healthy and strong they were becoming, the work also taxed their bodies with daily aches and pains. For this reason, some did not see manual labor as sustainable over the long-term.

Acquiring vision for the work also helped crew members develop one for their own future. Through work, the crew members gained confidence and a sense of vision that they could apply to various aspects of their self-identity. Common themes reported included being more comfortable with oneself, developing a sense of identity and direction towards the future, overcoming self-limitations to more fully explore the world, moving forward in life and deepening self-worth. According to crew member interviews, the broader theme of self-improvement was a result of several factors including a) working in a positive team environment b) engaging in work that was meaningful, directly beneficial to others and intrinsically rewarding and c) being in a nature-based environment that was therapeutic and fostered a deeper awareness and appreciation of other-than-human life.

Crew members also relied on a sense of accomplishment to motivate themselves. Leadership at all levels of the program tried to foster this sense of accomplishment by providing regular affirmations and celebrating the growth and efforts of each crew member. Some crew members likened their feelings of accomplishment on the trails to completing a work of art and they experienced this process as uplifting. While team accomplishments are celebrated, crew members crave a sense of personal accomplishment that allows them to recognize themselves in the work—like the artist’s signature brushstrokes on canvas. There is also a humbling aspect to accomplishment as crew members envision a temporal horizon where their work will be seen and enjoyed by countless others for years to come. The trails serve as monuments to the extent that they memorialize the contributions of the crew members. Nature, time, and others are woven into a ‘vision’ that is then translated into canvas of dirt. The crew members use this sense of vision to define the trails and increasingly, themselves.

### **Summary of Interpretive Repertoires**

This section will summarize the interpretive repertoires (IR’s) used by staff and crew members within the broader themes on nature, work and identity. Specifically, we will look at how the IR’s *function* to explain or justify perspectives, which have actionable effects in the world (Wetherell & Potter, 1988). By observing patterns or *variations* of use (i.e. who is speaking, how, and for what purpose) we may see what perspectives, decisions and actions are naturalized (i.e. made self-evident and taken for granted) and which are not. From this, we hope to understand how our participant stakeholders are empowered or not (Madison, 2005). We may also consider connections between IR’s and notice how certain IR’s reinforce one another or, alternatively, serve as sites of resistance towards dominant discursive functions (Banister et al., 1994).

## **Nature**

Both staff and crew members framed being out in nature as both healthy and desirable. Specifically, access to the natural world was seen to facilitate healthy development (A Child's World), and "the woods" was invoked to describe an ideal natural landscape away from the city. These IR's are used to support decisions to build urban green spaces (UGS) in communities so individuals have access to nature. While some members of the crew could identify barriers to being in the outdoors (e.g. dirty parks, lack of education) staff members constructed UGS as a "great equalizer." This idiom is intended to speak to developers and community organizers and communicates that investing in green spaces will lead to personal health and also community engagement with people from different (racial and class) groups. The fear of parks being associated with crime (particularly at night) was discussed by both staff and crew although staff felt that these fears were mostly unfounded and based on attempts to "demonize" UGS. The IR's used here suggest that staff see their program as empowering to communities and oppose those who are seen as having a negative view towards UGS.

## **Work**

The crew viewed manual labor as "honest work" which seemed to naturalize a number of assumptions: real work involves physical labor, withholding physical effort is dishonest, honest work is a personal responsibility and honest work leads to recognition and self-satisfaction. This construction of manual labor functions to motivate crew members as well as establish an informal monitoring network where crew members wished to put forward a good effort or risk being seen as lazy or cheating by their peers. The staff also desire to work hard (i.e. honestly) when with the crew as they do not want to be perceived as exploiting their privileged position.

As mentioned, the crew often refer to each other as a "family" but the use of the phrase "higher ups" distinguishes crew and staff, with the latter being in a position of power and having

resources. The dual nature of the program as both an employer and a training service creates ambiguity in the relationships between crew and staff. Although crew members may occasionally (and privately) complain about being treated like they are in “summer camp” (i.e. treated as children), they all publicly acknowledge that staff members are concerned for their wellbeing and success. Their different ways of framing the staff indicate that the crew is very sensitive *how* they are being addressed, picking up on subtle shifts in tone or language. In turn, crew members also reported using an emotionally-suppressed discourse when addressing staff and other professionals as they were aware that having any criminal record meant that others would be quick to equate anger with dangerousness. It is again worth mentioning that staff-crew relations were not homogenous and some crew members (e.g. Markus) seemed to have more difficulties than others. Although longitudinal data was not available, my own observations of returning crew members and first-timers suggested that the more time individuals spent in the program and with staff (particularly returning members), they more agreeable they were with the staff and had less interpersonal conflicts. This may be due to positive attitudes and relationships fostered over time and/or that certain crew members chose to return *because* they had those initial positive interactions. Attitudes towards the staff were generally positive although the crew maintained a certain private discourse among each other in which they could vent frustrations towards staff (not including the crew leader) and complain about power imbalances. Importantly, through ‘honest work’ the crew centered themselves—and not the staff—as responsible for their success moving through the program.

When engaging with the crew, staff are encouraged to balance their power (which includes upholding rules and responsibilities) with an attitude of trust and respect. For their part, staff see themselves as working to develop the unique potentials and abilities of each individual (Talent Development) while also framing the crew as a legitimate workforce who are expected to

maintain a standard of work in exchange for training and pay (Professionalism). These ways of framing the crew may also generate some tension as the staff endeavor to offer personal support and coaching to the crew members while maintaining a level of distance that enforces their position as supervisors and employers.

Naturally, perceptions of the community vary but positive interactions are normalized and considered representative of the whole while negative attitudes towards the crew or program stand out and are framed as the position of a few, “weird” individuals or those stuck in the past (Generational Residents). Through ‘honest work’ the crew enjoy having moments where they can be valued as ‘good guys’, which defies the trope of an ‘ex-con’ performing ‘community service.’ Framing their relationship with the community in positive terms may not only reflect the lived experiences of the crew but it also establishes the crew members as valued and welcomed in the community—and deflects the criticisms from a few individuals. The crew are also positioned by staff as experts in their work (Come Talk to Me) and as capable and trustworthy of engaging the community in education and advocacy.

## **Identity**

Race is a salient factor in how crew members of color perceive themselves through the gaze of the community and staff. Perhaps most revealingly, Black crew members expressed the fear that they were “one false move” away from being reacted to as a threat to the public. This IR functions as an idiom for young, Black men in particular to continuously assess their environment for the threat of being *seen* as a threat. This vigilance is all the more important in certain places (e.g. White neighborhoods and especially off-city parks) which have spatial epidermal schemas that mark Black crew members as not belonging. Staff are somewhat aware of the difficulties faced by crew members, who do not expect that the staff can do anything about it. This hypersensitivity to perception is framed as just part of the background awareness of being

a Black male. One crew member dealt with these difficulties by trying to make others feel less intimidated around him through humor and friendliness. Others refuse to position themselves as racialized subjects and are wary about discussing their feelings with staff or outsiders.

Many members of this all-male crew emphasized masculinity and associated it with responsibility, ‘honest work’ and ‘respect’. On the trails, masculinity was valued and recognized as a source of pride. The phrase “we’re grown men” functions as an IR to reify masculinity as a social status. Where status is questioned or threatened, there exists the possibility (and danger) for violence. For the most part however these confrontations are skillfully defused by the team and crew leaders and may normalize manual labor as men’s work while the notion of “men’s work” may disempower or displace women from the work. However, crew members explicitly denied being sexist or prejudiced towards women. Interestingly though, the women staff reported experiences of being assessed and tested on their abilities based on their sex.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations Based on the Research**

We felt it was important and relevant to study the Emerald Trail Corps, a community-based program, because these programs—and this one in particular—have the potential to address multiple systemic barriers to health (e.g. employment, education) and spatial justice (e.g. accessing green space). By studying a local program that hired underemployed individuals to work in urban green spaces, we were able to explore how exposure to nature facilitated well-being and how a caring work environment fostered growth and positive identity. The goal of producing this research was to not only broaden the focus on health and justice but to produce research that the participants—as stakeholders—could use as a tool for advocacy within their communities. The final form of this study therefore will be as a presentation to the Landforce organization with the study’s participants invited to attend.

We attempted to present the voices of our participant-stakeholders, particularly the crew members, through both phenomenological description and a critical thematic analysis. In doing so, we have crudely fashioned a trail into their personal and social experiences concerning nature, work and their relationships with each other and the Mount Washington community. We have seen that being in nature (even in the city) was experienced as deeply therapeutic and fostered a sense of nurturance and responsibility for the environment. In working as a team, the values of communication, leadership, and respect were highly emphasized. It is important to note that making trails is a highly interpretive and creative process. To do this work, crew members needed to develop a sense of artistic and empathic vision through which they could work in harmony with nature and each other. Obtaining vision was also a maturational process through which crew members could build a positive identity that they could carry forward. In making trails, the experiences of other users were strongly considered and interactions with the community were mostly (though not always) rewarding and they helped affirm the crew's accomplishments. The interpretive repertoires used by both crew members and staff emphasized the value of nature as well. Both groups also highlighted the caring nature of the program, although there were tensions or conflicts between the roles that crew members and staff had in relation to one another. Mostly however, the crew dealt with their frustrations in private and wished to be seen as reliable workers so they could get good references. Some African American crew members spoke about the reality of racism, although again, they mostly discussed this in private and tried to brush off casually racist encounters when at work. We had also seen that respect and masculinity were positive sources of identity for the crew, although threats to these identities may have led to conflict with staff and the community.

Overall, our findings confirmed the broad social and psychological themes found in the literature on green jobs programs (see Chapter 5). Namely, participants reported overcoming

personal and practical challenges, obtaining knowledge and skills, developing confidence and maturity as well as an attitude of care for nature, peers and staff as well as the community-at-large. What emerged as novel however was the social and developmental process of developing vision as well as the importance of communication based on openness and respect. Racial differences and strategies for negotiating discrimination were also discussed. With these findings in mind, we can provide the following recommendations to the Landforce organization, which continues the work started by the ETC. Although many of the following ideas may be already taken up, these points are worth revisiting in light of what the data revealed.

- 1) **Nature education and awareness.** Most of the participants reported early, positive experiences in nature-based places. Some had also identified a disconnection with nature in adulthood, since becoming “citified.” While all crew members eventually endorsed the therapeutic effects of belonging in nature, first-time members were especially unfamiliar—and oftentimes uncomfortable—with being totally immersed in nature. To facilitate experiences of belonging/kinship with nature and optimize therapeutic benefits, participants could be provided with some basic education on the flora, fauna and landscape features of their urban parks. Some crewmembers (e.g. Riddles) had identified this education as developmentally important for children; it may also be important for adults who are returning to nature. Concretely, this education/awareness could be presented as:

- a. **A nature walk-through** of an urban park either before or after an early project is completed. This will not only allow for experiential learning but may allow crew members—particularly first-timers—to experience the positive aspects of nature (as well as the value of their own labor) for themselves. Crew members reported wanting to provide something of value to



the community; experiencing what that value is first-hand may not only be intrinsically rewarding but may also allow the crew members to better visualize what they are creating for others.

- b. **Guided meditation/relaxation in nature.** This could be set up as a semi-regular part of programming and need not take much time (~5 – 10 minutes). This activity promotes emotional regulation, bodily awareness and positive associations with nature. Having internal regulation skills may also help crew members manage emotionally difficult interactions that are sure to come up on the trail.

- 2) **Personal goals for each crew member should be identified very early in the season.** Staff can then work collaboratively with each crew member and help them work towards their goals. These goals should be SMART (i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-limited) and followed up with routine evaluations (at least at mid-term and end-term). Crew members can also be encouraged to provide specific feedback to staff on how they can be supported in working towards their goals.
- 3) **Celebrate accomplishments and provide opportunities to feed proud.** This already seems to be a strength of the program. Staff—particularly Shawn, Thomas and Kathryn—all tried to provide as much positive feedback as possible and individual accomplishments were routinely celebrated (e.g. with the Golden Shovel). Their efforts are definitely noticed and appreciated by the crew members. Staff are also encouraged to notice when crew members may be under-participating and give them specific opportunities and responsibilities to help them “get involved.”
- 4) **Training in public interactions.** Interactions with community residents are an unavoidable and perhaps critical part of the work experience. Therefore, training

should be provided to all crew members on how to interface with the public—including dealing with hostile situations when the crew leader or other staff are not present. Crew members may also need help in recognizing their own limitations and feelings of anger/frustration (particularly when perceiving disrespect) so they can make adaptive (and not impulsive) decisions.

**5) Dialogical (i.e. two-sided) communications between staff and crew members.**

Although all staff have made a concerted effort to involve the crew members in the planning and discussions on the work, there is a sense—on both sides—of not being heard. Staff may feel defensive when crew members express frustration over not being consulted or when crew members sense their work is devalued because they believe they are seen as “low on the totem pole.” Communication may have also broken down when the work itself was broken into segments, some of which were invisible (e.g. the typical section drawing) to the crew members. Further complicating information transparency is the issue of power and status. Crew members may struggle between seeing themselves as employees and as clients. As we mentioned, these dual roles sometimes create confusion, frustration and insecurity (i.e. “like being in summer camp”). Furthermore, staff roles might also be unclear and the line between being a friend/mentor and boss—especially with the crew leader—may become uncomfortably blurred at times. It then becomes crucial to facilitate dialogical, or two-sided communication.

- a. **Staff are encouraged to frequently check-in.** These check-ins seemed to happen routinely during team meetings but should also be done before every job and after, as part of a debrief. A good check-in might include the following components: Did we give you enough information to do the job? If

not, what was missing? Is there anything else you need us to know at this time? By involving the crew members as active collaborators in communication, staff may avoid re-enacting relationships which de-present them and reinforce distrust and silence.

- b. **Issues of power, authority and respect should be approached early and with regularity.** Dealing with differences in power, authority and status is also an unavoidable and necessary part of job training and development. With that said, most of the crew members are in this program because they found themselves disadvantaged in the job market and many have experienced oppression from individuals with power, authority and status. While positive interactions may be perceived as deeply meaningful and healing, negative ones can reinforce deep-seated beliefs about being mistreated. To facilitate these difficult discussions, staff should first acknowledge their own feelings about their power and authority, and how it is recognized by the public (e.g. as Thomas began to do when discussing White Helmets) and then find ways of talking about it with the crew members. Inevitably, these conversations will also involve race and identity, and may include experiences of incarceration and ex-convict status. These conversations—which, in other settings, are typically enabled as a *reaction* to a critical incident—need not have such negative connotations. Instead, they can be framed as *opportunities for the crew members to educate the staff* on their life experiences and for staff to share with the crew members their process of making decisions—sometimes with and sometimes for—the crew, but always in their best interests.

- c. **Attend to the diversity of opinions and thoughts within the crew.** It can be tempting—as it was in this study—to portray the crew members as homogenous and reduce their multiplicity of voices to a single narrative. However, as we have seen, crew members may have varied and diverging perspectives towards staff and community residents. Critical attitudes towards staff should not be ignored but neither should they be considered as necessarily representative of the crew’s attitudes, as a whole. Staff are encouraged to identify and distinguish situations where the crew are speaking as a cohesive unit from situations where a few individuals are speaking on behalf of their own, personal concerns. Such assessments will help determine whether the intervention will need to take place between a few individuals or involve the entire crew.

These recommendations, taken from the data, are provided in service of future generations of crew members and the staff of the Landforce program. As mentioned, programs like these deserve further study and advocacy because they are part of multi-systemic solutions to the problems of inequity and injustice. Although the suggestions provided here are far from comprehensive, it is hoped that they may engender fruitful discussions between crew members, staff and possibly the community-at-large.

## CHAPTER 11. VERDICT: A CONCEPTUAL INTEGRATION OF RESULTS

This dissertation intends to situate psychological research within a multidisciplinary forum. Our discipline emphasizes strong conceptualizing skills needed to form an understanding of a person in their environment. We can also employ these skills in research to understand how social and structural factors impact health and wellbeing for communities. While psychological work/research towards equity/justice may or may not also involve cross-disciplinary collaboration we should always strive to empower the community through soliciting their cooperation, including key stakeholders in decision-making and being accountable to outcomes that are mutually determined.

Thus far we have completed two parts of a whole and what remains is to articulate their boundary space; that is, to bring together this study's interpretive findings with our theoretical contributions. We will summarize some important theoretical concepts, including our unique contributions to the literature. These ideas are offered as our verdict (truth-sayings), which we hope will stimulate further discussion of our study and contribute towards other psychological efforts aimed at advancing equity and justice with vulnerable populations.

***Reparations as a viable strategy towards integrating health and justice.*** Through our philosophical, social and historical analysis, we have made the case that health equity initiatives (i.e. equal opportunities to healthy outcomes) must also recognize and promote spatial justice (i.e. rights to access, ownership and belonging in places). Health and justice, we argued, are too often considered from individualistic perspectives but we also need to address the systems that perpetuate health disparities and injustice. For example, we had seen that heavily racialized places and communities often suffer from poorer health outcomes, particularly for people of color (especially African Americans). Therefore, we need solutions that are a) multi-systemic and b) measurable in terms of equitable outcomes.

For generations, the concept of reparations has been fatally marked as either infeasible and/or entirely immeasurable and abstract (Coates, 2014, June Issue). Although solutions have been identified (e.g. HR-40, a bill proposed in congress to *study* the effects of slavery) they have been summarily dismissed. The rationale for doing so (i.e. impractical, infeasible) seems especially egregious considering the massive reparative efforts made across the Atlantic, by West Germany to Israel (ibid.), and here, in America, to veterans (i.e. GI bill) and survivors of the Depression (i.e. the New Deal). However, we now have the data to corroborate the stories of the disempowered. And the evidence strongly suggests that centuries of slavery, Jim Crow, segregation and now gentrification have directly contributed to racial disparities in health, education, safety, housing, employment and wealth. We can say therefore that when race is no longer the predictor of significant differences in health, education...etc., then we will no longer need reparations. Working on a definition *via negativa*, we suggest that reparative efforts should be aimed at reducing the racial gap in health, wellbeing and spatial access.

We do not need an actuarial metric to calculate the benefits owed to each descendent of slaves—such calculations, we argue in Chapter 3, can never be quantified regardless. Instead, we already have large data sets (i.e. epidemiology, home ownership, rates of graduation etc.) by which we can accurately assess the need for and evaluate the impact of reparative solutions. For example, a reparations initiative might be spearheaded in District 12 of Allegheny County to bring the Black rates of infant mortality in line with rates of White infant mortality. Strategies might involve providing education, increased access to medical services, and maternal mental health to African American mothers in the area. Of course, these solutions require tremendous coordination between multiple systems and steady funding. The point is, however, that reparations are neither infeasible nor abstract.

To transition from an aid-based model to embrace reparative solutions requires a cultural shift from needing to justify interventions (e.g. welfare, affirmative action) towards deconstructing the justification for disparate outcomes. Through our analysis of historical and current data, we have seen how disparate outcomes in one area (i.e. health) can be predicted by injustices in another (i.e. spatial access). We need a reparative vision that considers the relationships between power, privilege and outcomes across multiple systems. This vision requires dialogue between researchers, clinicians, organizers, developers, policy experts, artists, activists and citizens. Such cooperation and community-building is needed to challenge old ways of thinking (enabled by historical erasure and cultural agnosia) and create places which afford equitable outcomes to all who live there. When the principle of equity is grounded in the reality of place, then the work is aligned with justice.

*Places are inhabited by spatial epidermal schemas.* External providers such as researchers, community programs, planners and developers are encouraged to work collaboratively with stakeholders in the community to create places where residents can develop a sense of positive place identity and feel connected with the broader metropolis. As we have described in Chapters 2 through 4, place is the nexus which gathers peoples, histories, and spatial identities. In demonstrating a fundamental contiguity between people and places it is not so difficult to consider that places may be racialized, gendered or otherwise ‘colored’ by identities that categorize groups of individuals. Just as bodies become enabled or constricted in their actionable space under the cultural gaze (which imposes colonial, patriarchal and imperialistic optics), so too do places acquire schemas which colors our perceptions of its residents, their habits and identities and our interactions therein. To study the confluence of individual identity, culture, history and geography, we introduced the concept of spatial epidermal schemas. We believe that spatial epidermal schemas are a useful theoretical concept by which researchers can

study racial dynamics, group behaviors and internalized attitudes through space and time. These spatial epidermal schemas are so pervasive and influential that one's sense of self (and others) may be differentially gendered or racialized according to the spaces one inhabits. Some places are quite vulnerable to dominant discourses that render them and the communities that inhabit them as inferior. Others have the capacity for 'ontological resistance' (Fanon, 2008) and may even present themselves as a forum where people across different groups can interact in comity and goodwill. Thus, the quality of places crucially informs one's sense of belonging (or non-belonging).

Increasingly, planners and developers are looking to develop urban green spaces in order to leverage their environmental, aesthetic and economic potential. However, these spaces may also be highly valuable social hubs; through development and maintenance, their spatial schemas may afford residents a sense of pride and engender greater connections with the surrounding metropolis. In our study, we found that all participants—but particularly the ETC crew members—reported therapeutic benefits from working in a clean, safe and nature-based urban park. They experienced the boundary space separating the park from the rest of the city as a place of transition where they could temporarily leave behind their habitual worries and everyday concerns. Although almost all of the African American crew members could recall some moments of discrimination working in the neighborhood, they all could also report a number of positive interactions with the community. Through positive work and social interactions, they developed a deep sense of attachment to certain places and took pride in their accomplishments and being of service to others. In accordance with findings from the literature, we can conclude that Emerald View Park was intended to become a cosmopolitan canopy (Anderson, 2004, 2011) characterized by a spatial epidermal schema that outwardly promoted interactions based on trust and civility. However, the place continues to struggle (as it has



historically) with racialized tensions that created feelings of vulnerability and non-belonging, particularly among the African American crew members. Just as recent events in Anderson's own Rittenhouse Square have shown (Dias, Eligon, & Oppel A. Jr., 2018, April 17), even well-established cosmopolitan canopies may become ignited with racialized episodes of incivility and violence towards Blackness. The MWCDC had worked hard to defuse tensions between the community (see White Helmets IR) but yet racism was still perceived by all of the African American crew members, many of whom also perceived these incidents as an affront to their status (i.e. as working, productive men). It must be noted that truly just spaces are highly valued—and can be costly to build and maintain. Researchers and developers working with communities must therefore understand—or at least acknowledge—the place-based elements that constitute spatial epidermal schemas (i.e. patterns of power and privilege, history, language/representation, and views of self and others; see Figure 3.2, p. 49). Our model provides a way of conceptualizing and integrating personal and social identities with history, geography and the socio-cultural topography of communities.

***Places (and their people) suffer from de-territorialization and they need to be re-presented again.*** Perhaps the most damning indictment of White supremacy and a capitalist/colonialist regime is the unquantifiable and utterly irreplaceable theft of life, health and vitality in communities of color—most especially African Americans. Although images of this theft and brutality are penetrating our cultural consciousness owing to films, literature, social media and activism, the dominant discourse on this history woefully neglects its continuing legacy in the present (this-story). In fact, to speak of this regime in the past tense is itself an erasure of history enabled by a cultural agnosia towards White privilege in its many social, cultural, political, spatial, educational and health outcomes. Perhaps future generations will come to regard mass incarceration, underfunded public schools, displacement due to gentrification, and

disparate mortality rates (inexplicable by any other metric than race) with the same shame and condemnation that our (White) liberal imagination reacts to the horrors of slavery and Jim Crow.

We illustrated an ominous—if unsurprising—correlation between the derepresentation of Black/colored bodies by the White gaze and the de-territorialization of Black communities, neighborhoods and places by colonization, segregation, urban renewal and currently, gentrification. Adapted from Simms' (2014) work on the commons, we had specifically identified four factors behind these symbiotic processes: places/bodies are *extracted* for their use-value; places/bodies are *displaced* to the margins of spaces that are considered 'settled', 'civilized', 'cultured', 'renewed'; places/bodies are *forgotten* after being made invisible; no longer in public memory, places/bodies become *erased*—denuded of their own agency and narrative, they are defined in terms of what they are not (i.e. White). While it is tempting to come up with quick technological solutions or counter-narratives, researchers and clinicians are called to *witness* the outcomes: for peoples of color, places—particularly those we regard in the common domain—are, and historically have been, sites of both dwelling (belonging) and dis-inheritance (longing). Attending to this dual, antinomial reality—which race scholars refer to as 'double consciousness' (Du Bois, 1984)—means acknowledging that African American attitudes towards places may differ from Whites (whose privileged bearing allows for and encourages an orientation of possession/mastery or enjoyment/romantic idealism towards such places, i.e. the outdoors).

Although the crew members of our study were not all African American, most were vulnerable by virtue of being literally displaced from their communities while in prison. Being Black and formerly incarcerated marks one as doubly vulnerable to displacement. Despite this, or perhaps in spite of this, by the end of the season all of the crew members were inducted into a powerful socialization process, which the crew leader referred to as 'getting vision'. Quite

literally, crew members were encouraged to witness and assess their present situation and then orient to a healthy team dynamic, develop a positive sense of self and place attachment to situate themselves in the work and later, successfully represent and advocate their skills and abilities for future employers. Naturally, this process was difficult and many initially resisted; one had even dropped out of the program. Over time however—and through the deliberate coaching by both the crew leader and staff—the crew members came to develop feelings of pride and accomplishment in themselves and their work. Vision instituted a community of belonging.

Three examples stand out, which will hopefully illustrate how this quality of vision helped crew members resist de-territorializing discourses. First, when crew members started, they were largely indifferent to garbage in the park. As Shawn put it, “I came in blind like pretty much everyone else.” However, after a few weeks on the trail an attitude of care and even kinship with nature developed such that the presence of garbage bothered pretty much everyone. From our review, we had seen how garbage and litter de-territorialize many communities of color—their presence and familiarity in these neighborhoods also testify to the de-presentation of Black bodies who live there. However, through the mentored process of getting vision, crew members re-sensitized themselves to garbage and re-connected to nature in the park. In so doing, they were also witnessed by (most) community residents as veritable stewards in the commons. Second, the crew members unanimously derived physical benefits from working in the trails. As Markus put it, “I turned this trail from nothing into something; I can probably turn my body from nothing into something...” This determination suggests a new perspective on the body (as well as the trail), re-storying both with depth and possibility. Markus’ re-presentation of his body represents a powerful strategy towards re-commoning Other bodies that are all too easily considered disposable, subhuman and/or worthless. Finally, the staff very deliberately attempted to promote a positive image of the crew members to themselves and to the community. Some of

this work was indeed promotional but the ETC leadership routinely incorporated methods of recognizing and appreciating the skills and contributions of individuals (e.g. the golden shovel award). One aspect of the program which crew members were all thankful for (even as they found it frustrating and/or challenging) was job development training. Through working with Laura to develop their talents and positive identity, crew members were afforded an expanded temporal horizon through which they could envision possibilities that were previously foreclosed (such as going to culinary school for Mike, or Riddles' desire to found a not-for-profit program for Black youth). Although the trauma and perennial return of history (i.e. Morrison's "rememory") cannot—and should not—be forgotten, to re-commune with self, others and world is to pave a clearing for a future inflected with new possibilities.

*Fences are the boundaries between institutions and the community.* It is imperative that researchers and clinicians—or any external stakeholders—resist sounding racial uplift, which has so often characterized previous paternalistic (and failed) approaches. In Chapters 3 and 4, we saw how this discourse is flawed because it takes an individualist approach to systemic problems. There is nothing wrong with encouraging someone to do their best—indeed this was a very effective leadership strategy employed by Shawn, the crew leader. However, it would be a mistake to regard the over-representation of African Americans in the program, or the crews' habitual distrust towards authority in terms of 'bad life choices' or 'immaturity.' In this regard, the ETC staff assiduously avoided characterizing the crew (or any one individual) in terms of what they lacked (i.e. a deficiency narrative). In fact, Thomas had reported a sincere effort—and struggle—in giving up or questioning certain privileges (e.g. the White helmet) while supporting Shawn's leadership of the crew. His efforts are important not only in promoting self-efficacy within the leadership structures below him but it is also a re-commoning effort for crew members to see one of their own represented in a position of authority and respect.

Respect was a key theme in our research and more work is needed to better understand its importance, particularly for disadvantaged men. For example, the crew leaders, Shawn and Riddles, talked about gaining the crew's respect and crew members placed a premium on earning, giving and maintaining respect among one another. Respect was thus an invisible currency in the economy of positive masculine identification. Normally, the crew seemed to maintain the balance of respect through working together (i.e. "group consciousness"), physical release through labor, deferring personal issues when crossing the threshold into work, and humor. Working in nature also offered a degree of quietude, isolation and freedom so when these structures temporarily broke down, the crew members could walk their separate ways and return when emotions had simmered. There were two situations however in which disrespect was perceived from an external threat. The first regards instances in which one or two crew members felt that a staff member had talked down to them, or in a manner in which they felt trivialized if not demeaned. Although the crew members acknowledged that it was generally not the staff's intent to do so, these men were highly attuned to tone and nonverbal communication. For the crew members, such transactions are already characterized by an imbalance of power and status so the added slight of disrespect (as they perceived it) may be experienced as unnecessarily punitive or emasculating (e.g. "like [we're] in a summer camp or something", Markus). For the most part, however, these fences were mended by the good rapport already facilitated between staff and crew, endorsement of staff by crew leaders, and a desire to move through the program. The other occurrence of external disrespect came from infrequent clashes with community residents. Here, the crew members may feel imperiled and "one false move" away from a

confrontation that could potentially escalate into violence<sup>86</sup>. Without the buffer that staff members may provide to mediate such conflicts, crew members relied upon their crew leaders to provide direction. Riddles stated that Shawn has mediated at least one major conflict and Shawn himself described walking away from a potentially explosive situation that occurred between the interviews. A very important part of Shawn's competency here is again, vision; his hyper vigilance to his surroundings and to cues of potential threat is something that he (and other Black men) have been trained in since boyhood. In other words, Shawn seems to avoid violence by anticipating it—and his ability to lead the pace and set an example for the crew on the trail carries over to uncertain situations outside of the trail.

In our research, we explored the double-sided nature of fences. As a boundary between institutions and a group or community, fences are both isolating and protective. While the crew has formed a certain community based on their shared membership, experiences and identification, they may also come to regard outsiders (even staff) with a certain degree of wariness. This distance can sometimes be experienced by the staff with apprehension, concern or a tendency to 'problem'-solve. Sometimes the fences can position even well-liked, supportive

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<sup>86</sup> These findings support research that shows a strong correlation between inequality and homicide rates, almost exclusively with a male population (Szalavitz, 2017, December 8). Researchers have understood this trend to suggest that men who lack economic opportunities already feel their status as threatened and are especially heightened to other threats to their social reputation. Lacking other ways of compensating, violence becomes an accessible and powerful recourse and enforces a code of respect as well as a hierarchy of status.

It must be noted however that the far greater violence—i.e. the systematic killings of Black youth and young men—suggests that in the eyes of the police (which are themselves the arms of the state), these bodies can *only* be seen as violent because it is scarcely conceivable to afford them (regardless of whether the bodies belong to doctors, artists, scholars, teachers) with any other means of gaining respect.

individuals as ‘higher ups’ who are distant from the everyday concerns of the crew members. However, as we have seen, it is vital to support a community’s internal support structures and this may mean strengthening their within-group identity so they can deal with external problems independently. As indicated by our findings on how the crew manages respect, staff are encouraged to train and legitimize internal leadership. When staff supports the autonomy, voices and decision-making structures of the crew, then a cycle of mutual accountability can ensue. Such cooperative work is also to be heeded by researchers, planners and developers who are hoping to meet fences as boundary spaces.

### **Research Limitations**

Our study was limited to studying a small program whose practices may or may not be replicated within other urban areas. Furthermore, our research question was broad and far-ranging (i.e. “What are your experiences of...”) as it encompassed all aspects of being in the program. The lack of focus here also meant that the interview questions were more general and so detailed accounts of specific experiences were not possible. Perhaps we would have gathered more in-depth and richer experiential data by focusing on only one area. The breadth of the surveys meant that I, as researcher, needed to sift through and select information that fitted into the general topic areas of nature (Chapter 7), work (Chapter 8) and identity (Chapter 9). These topic areas were chosen because we felt they were major thematic aspects of the program however other topic areas (i.e. barriers to employment, relationships) could have also been studied.

My position as participant and observer helped me gain information and observe interactions that I might not have had access to if I simply interviewed the crew members and staff. However as a researcher, I was still perceived as an outsider. After all, I only worked with the crew one day per week and even then I was seen as a guest that the crew members had to

accommodate for the day. The crew members were also motivated to keep the program running and therefore may have wished to report their experiences in a positive light or present themselves in a favorable manner. It is likely that these motivations influenced the participants' memories and perceptions—and how they presented them; it is also likely that these motivations facilitated rapport between the participants and myself and deepened the discussion. With that being said, any interview is dialogical and—no matter the method—is already shaped by the intentions, motivations and perceptions of both the interviewer and interviewee towards each other (Gadamer, 1989). Although we cannot be sure that the participants did not respond to some perceived expectations (they also recognized me as an advocate of their program), the data from crew members was cross-validated with the experiences of another crew, who did not know me as well.

From individual interviews and months of ethnographic material, we gathered a lot of information. Of necessity, some data was excluded from analysis or its analysis and interpretation was not translated into the writing. As we had discussed in Chapter 6, the process of selecting data, coding and creating themes is highly individualized and interpretive. Like a clinician formulating a case, each researcher/practitioner may have a different approach although we are guided by some commonly shared assumptions. One such assumption is that the participants were being honest and were not unduly biased by expectations they perceived of either themselves or the researcher. Another is that, despite individual biases, different researchers will arrive at largely similar conclusions by following the data. However, the interpretative nature of this research—and qualitative research in general—may pose challenges to researchers hoping to replicate our findings, even if researching a program of similar scope and size. To ensure some degree of reliability, we ran an independent thematic analysis of the data (see Appendix D).



Another quite important concern of qualitative research—and community-based research in particular—concerns the degree to which we have faithfully re-presented our participants' accounts (Davies & Dodd, 2002). As major theme of this study was to highlight the history in which African Americans were not only marginalized and oppressed, but also de-presented. The public consciousness draws upon familiar tropes—meaningfully understood as interpretive repertoires—to represent the attitudes, values and experiences of the non-dominant, Other group. Often these IRs are reductive, demeaning and inaccurate. When one is speaking on behalf of a group of people—particularly if one does not identify with that group—there is a similar risk that these accounts will be de-presenting as well. We have tried to render the participants—both crew and staff, Black and White—in all their human dignity, portraying both their strengths and limitations. However, in the final analysis, we cannot judge whether their accounts have been fully done justice. This is why a community-based presentation is so important; for if this study can truly bring people to the table and elicit a dialogue based on openness, respect and trust then we will have, by some measure, been faithful to our participants.

Perhaps the main difficulty we had was in developing and presenting two distinct analyses alongside each other. With a simpler and smaller data set, we could have attempted a more systematic approach of writing phenomenological descriptions alongside our critical thematic analyses. It was sometimes difficult to decide what themes were considered more experiential and fit for phenomenological analysis and what themes were more performative and functional and therefore relevant to a critical thematic analysis. Furthermore, by writing participant interview themes for only the crew members and crew leader, we perhaps overlooked the experiences of the other staff members. We hope that the presentation of these two methods of analysis was clear and coherent for the reader.

Finally, our literature review was broad and made many connections that we did not necessarily follow in our data. Our intention here was not to lead the reader to loose ends but to create a sense of context around which the relevance of this study—within clinical psychology—could be better understood and appreciated. The literature could have easily been developed into a dissertation of its own (on health equity and spatial justice); readers who are more interested in the participant experiences may skip the first few chapters and proceed straight to Part II of our study. With these limitations in mind, we believe our analysis and presentation of the data sets forth a valid understanding of our participant/stakeholders' experiences making park trails in an urban green space.

### **Implications for Future Research and Community Work**

Our study is exploratory and open-ended, leading to many trails of inquiry for future research. Such research may advance existing theories of how communities may facilitate individual and social wellbeing. Further studies may also refine and elaborate on our initial findings. For example, we may do a cross-comparative study of job training programs across different venues (i.e. green jobs, construction, clerical work) to get a better sense of the kinds of work and types of environments that people find most rewarding and empowering. Within the Landforce program, follow-up research could investigate how community members responded to the development of their urban green space. For example, it would be particularly noteworthy to explore how programs like this work within Black communities and how external service providers are perceived by the community. This project could also initiate collaborative interventions where community input is sought, valued and used. A collaborative process is encouraged and can also be researched to determine whether working with the community does indeed produce benefits such as a stronger sense of place identity (Evers, 2013). Although our crew members and staff varied by age, race and class we did not get to study the experience of

female crew members. Their experiences, particularly working in the male-dominated field of manual labor, is important in understanding the challenges women face here.

We have also put forward the concept of ‘spatial epidermal schemas’, which we believe can be used to understand how places—even when redeveloped or “renewed”—may be racialized and/or gendered in ways that may discriminate against certain groups of people. Future studies, for example exploring how people of color perceive gentrification affecting their community, can apply this concept and determine its usefulness in understanding spatial justice. We argued for the importance of healthy communities as key hubs for developing spatial justice and improving health outcomes. More research is needed to explore the psychological importance of community for people—particularly in disadvantaged areas—and factors that may vitalize (or damage) this experience of community, connection and belonging. Ultimately, any interventions designed to create positive changes within communities must also consider that community’s social history of and sense of identity.

### **Equity-Based Work with Vulnerable Populations**

Goals without plans are dreams. And plans without resources are delusions. (Aks cyn cited in Morrison, 2018)

Just as we defined four factors responsible for the de-territorialization of Black bodies/places, we also suggested four responsive interventions. Beginning with *centering* awareness into how environmental and health issues disproportionately affect vulnerable communities of color; researchers, planners and policy-makers are encouraged to situate present day realities within a social, cultural and historical framework (*memory work*). These stakeholders are also responsible for allowing people/communities to define themselves (*determination*) and their own spatial identity. Finally, *reparations* can be a recognizable and obtainable outcome when it is defined in terms of “systemic measures aimed at ameliorating

spatial injustice and health inequities that incur the public tremendous moral, social, and financial costs” (p. 96). Of course, this term has its roots specifically in the living history of African American disenfranchisement. A broader term therefore may be equity-based work with vulnerable populations. Within a clinical discourse, equity functions as a powerful interpretive repertoire interpolating systemic and justice-oriented perspectives.

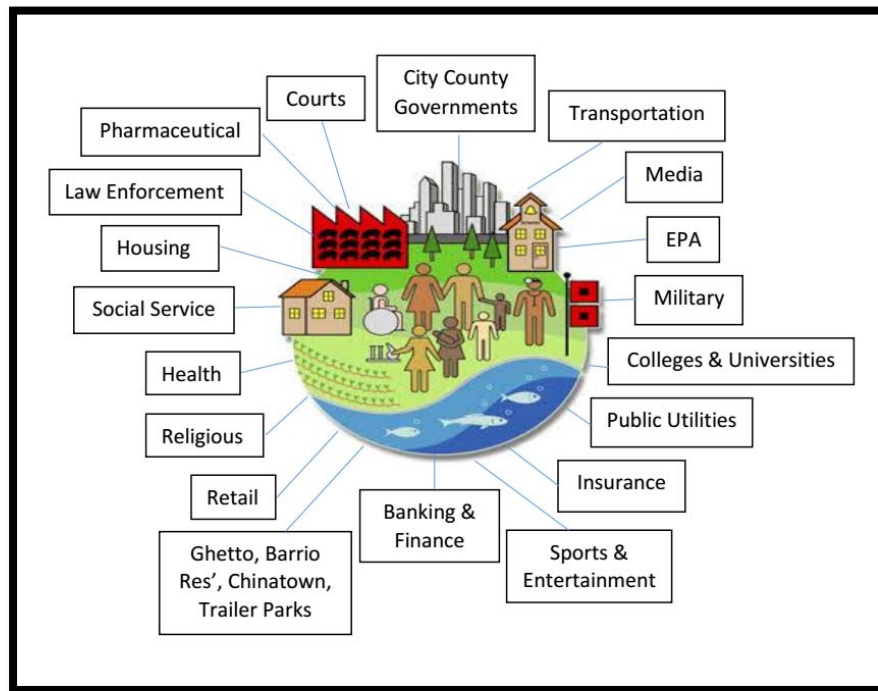


Figure 11.1. Power Analysis (© Joyce James Consulting)

In this Power Analysis figure (taken from a health equity training seminar), we can see the various institutions that have stake in any given community. Although all may be important stakeholders, many may not see their work directly related to reparations. However, we offer four guiding principles for researchers, policymakers, developers and clinicians who are building or considering an equity-based framework for their interventions. The first is to recognize how multiple external systems (and their relationships to one another) interact with a given

community. For example, if clinicians are looking at the prevalence of psychopathology within a community then it behooves them to understand that community's relationships with the health, housing, employment and justice sectors. Such work requires looking beyond individualistic or reductionist explanations to consider the place-based structures of power that impact psychopathology (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). In fact, the relationships between systemic outcomes (e.g. health and spatial/economic development) can only be understood by attending to systemic injustices. Accordingly, external stakeholders should strive to identify how their work may lessen existing disparities (i.e. in health, education, justice, spatial access etc.). Of course, these goals should be defined in terms of specific and achievable outcomes and procedures to ensure accountability to these outcomes are established. Third, the community must be consulted—not only to get their permission for the work—but to enlist them in determining what interventions are actually needed and how they can be involved in the planning, delivery, evaluation and oversight of the process. Moving into the boundary spaces that reconcile different identities, histories and cultures, we are challenged to de-center ourselves from the narrative and ask, *Who really cares the most about what happens here? How do we respect their voices, which may also be diverse and multifaceted?* And finally, as we develop our own visions of how we can move beyond an outreach vehicle to embrace within-reach work, we are called to foster internal community resources. While new services and proposals might be extremely valuable, it is important to determine whether such initiatives exist or have been started previously from within the community. As our history of Pittsburgh's African American communities has shown us, there is a great depth of resources from within. And it is within, and with our eyes, ears, and heart open—willing to receive vision and be humbled on the trail—that we are called to venture.

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## APPENDIX A: IRB-APPROVED CONSENT FORMS

Duquesne University IRB  
Protocol #2015-05-13  
Approved: 6-18-2015  
Expiration Date: 6-17-2016



Please sign **ONLY ONE** consent form. If you do not want your name to be revealed, sign form A1. To give us permission to use your name, sign form A2.

**DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY**  
600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

### CREWMEMBER FORM A1

#### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY (You Do Not Give Us Permission to Reveal Your Name)

**TITLE:** Critical Ethnography Study: The Personal and Social Experiences of Workers in Urban Green Spaces

**INVESTIGATOR:** Arvin Simon, M.A.  
Graduate Student  
Duquesne University  
Department of Psychology, 212 Rockwell Hall  
Pittsburgh, PA 15282  
; [simona1@duq.edu](mailto:simona1@duq.edu)

**ADVISOR:** Eva M. Simms, Ph.D.  
Professor of Psychology  
Duquesne University  
Department of Psychology, 212 Rockwell Hall  
Pittsburgh, PA 15282  
412-396-6520; [simms@duq.edu](mailto:simms@duq.edu)

**SOURCE OF SUPPORT:** This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology at Duquesne University.

**PURPOSE:** You are being asked to participate in a critical ethnographic research project where we want to explore the question: How are social practices and identities produced through working in urban green spaces?

- A researcher will be working alongside the Emerald Trail Corps work crew while making observations and taking notes about the crewmembers' work experiences in the park.
- A researcher will be present during weekly team meetings to observe crewmember discussions. The researcher may respectfully bring up comments and questions during the team meetings related to the process and development of the work crew.
- You might be asked to talk to a researcher in a series (between 1 to 3) of individual interviews, which take 1 to 1.5 hours to

- complete. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed.
- Interviews are expected to begin during the summer work season however you may also be contacted and asked to do a follow-up interview in the fall or winter, after the season has ended.
- You might be asked, if you are interested, to help the researchers with the analysis of some of the transcripts and present the findings at a local or national conference.

These are the only requests that will be made of you.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:**

There is minimal risk in participating in this study beyond those encountered in daily life. *You should know that whether you participate in the study or not will not in any way affect your employment with the Emerald Trail Corps.* Being observed or asked questions about your experiences in nature and urban green spaces may bring to mind some unpleasant or upsetting memories. If that is the case, a member of the research team trained as a therapist or an Emerald Trail Corps staff member will be available for you to talk to, and we will call a friend or family member if you wish. Furthermore, while we will take every possible precaution to prevent your name from being revealed, we cannot completely guarantee that you will not be identified. Staff, community residents or ETC crewmembers may recognize statements made by you even if un-identified in the study. The Emerald Trail Corps staff will not have access to any identifiable information that you may wish to provide about your work experiences. However the staff may wish to use the overall study as one of many ways of evaluating the ETC program. While your engagement and participation pose little danger to you, it may likely benefit your community by providing educational empowerment to you and residents in other communities. It will also provide a forum where adults can voice their knowledge and concerns about work, nature and community development. Your contribution will also help to better articulate how underemployed adults relate to working in nature places.

**COMPENSATION:**

You will not be paid for your participation in this study. However, participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Your name will never appear on the interviewers' notes, on audio tape labels, on transcripts, nor in public discussion of the findings. The researchers will utilize the un-identified descriptions that you have provided, in order to interpret and compare personal and social experiences of working in urban green spaces. A public profile (e.g., web page, brochure, poster) may be created from the study and use some of your words from observations and interview sessions, but your name will not be revealed and any personal information or details that may lead others to recognize you will be changed or deleted. The un-identified transcripts of the interviews will be archived with the Mount Washington Community Development Corporation. An exception where confidentiality may not be

guaranteed in the case where activities or verbal statements may indicate an imminent threat of physical harm to self or others that we would be obligated to report to the appropriate authorities as required by law. The consent forms containing your name and any identifying information will be stored separately from the un-identified data. All consent forms, audio recordings, and transcripts will be stored in separate locked files at Duquesne University with Mr. Arvin Simon. The consent forms containing your name will be destroyed within three years of the completed research. The audio-recordings will be permanently archived with Mr. Simon and they will be identified by the nickname you choose. No part of the audio recordings that will identify you personally will ever be released, but portions of the de-identified sessions and interviews might be used for a future research presentation.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time. In the event that you choose to withdraw your participation from the study after data has been collected, you will be approached by the researcher and asked whether the information already collected can be used (de-identified) or whether you prefer to have all your information excluded from data analysis and destroyed.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**

A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to the director of Mount Washington Community Development Corporation. You may request a copy, at no cost, at any time after completion of the research from Mr. Arvin Simon.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:**

I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Mr. Arvin Simon at \_\_\_\_\_ or Dr. Eva Simms at 412-396-6520. Should I have questions regarding protection or human subject issues, I may call Dr. Linda Goodfellow, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board, at 412-396-6326.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



Duquesne University IRB  
Protocol #2015-05-13  
Approved: 6-18-2015  
Expiration Date: 6-17-2016

# DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

## CREWMEMBER FORM A2

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

You Give Us Permission to Reveal your Name

**TITLE:** Critical Ethnography Study: The Personal and Social Experiences of Workers in Urban Green Spaces

**INVESTIGATOR:** Arvin Simon, M.A.  
Graduate Student  
Duquesne University  
Department of Psychology, 212 Rockwell Hall  
Pittsburgh, PA 15282  
; [simona1@duq.edu](mailto:simona1@duq.edu)

**ADVISOR:** Eva M. Simms, Ph.D.  
Professor of Psychology  
Duquesne University  
Department of Psychology, 212 Rockwell Hall  
Pittsburgh, PA 15282  
412-396-6520; [simms@duq.edu](mailto:simms@duq.edu)

**SOURCE OF SUPPORT:** This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology at Duquesne University.

**PURPOSE:** You are being asked to participate in a critical ethnographic research project where we want to explore the question: How are social practices and identities produced through working in urban green spaces?

- A researcher will be working alongside the Emerald Trail Corps work crew while making observations and taking notes about the crewmembers' work experiences in the park.
- A researcher will be present during weekly team meetings to observe crewmember discussions. The researcher may respectfully bring up comments and questions during the team meetings related to the process and development of the work crew.
- You might be asked to talk to a researcher in a series of individual interviews, which take 1 to 1.5 hours to complete. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed.



- Interviews are expected to begin during the summer work season however you may also be contacted and asked to do a follow-up interview in the fall or winter, after the season has ended.
- You might be asked, if you are interested, to help the researchers with the analysis of some of the transcripts and present the findings at a local or national conference.

These are the only requests that will be made of you.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:**

There is minimal risk in participating in this study beyond those encountered in daily life. *You should know that whether you participate in the study or not will not in any way affect your employment with the Emerald Trail Corps.* Being observed or asked questions about your experiences in nature and urban green spaces may bring to mind some unpleasant or upsetting memories. If that is the case, a member of the research team trained as a therapist or an Emerald Trail Corps staff member will be available for you to talk to, and we will call a friend or family member if you wish. Furthermore, while we will take every possible precaution to prevent your name from being revealed, we cannot completely guarantee that you will not be identified. Staff, community residents or ETC crewmembers may recognize statements made by you even if un-identified in the study. The Emerald Trail Corps staff will not have access to any identifiable information that you may wish to provide about your work experiences. However the staff may wish to use the overall study as one of many ways of evaluating the ETC program. While your engagement and participation pose little danger to you, it may likely benefit your community by providing educational empowerment to you and residents in other communities. It will also provide a forum where adults can voice their knowledge and concerns about work, nature and community development. Your contribution will also help to better articulate how underemployed adults relate to working in nature places.

**COMPENSATION:**

You will not be paid for your participation in this study. However, participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

You consent to have the individual interviews audio-recorded and to have your audio record and/or the transcripts of the interview, with your name and likeness identifiable, archived with the researcher and the Mount Washington Community Development Corporation. The researchers will use the descriptions that you have provided, in order to interpret and compare personal and social experiences of working in urban green spaces. After the research is completed, a public profile (e.g., web page, brochure, poster) may be created of the study. This profile may include some of your words from observations and interview sessions. The un-identified transcripts of the interviews will be archived with the Mount Washington Community Development Corporation. An exception where confidentiality may not be guaranteed in the case where activities or verbal statements may indicate an imminent threat of physical harm

to self or others that we would be obligated to report to the appropriate authorities as required by law. The consent forms containing your name will be stored separately from the data you have provided us. All consent forms, audio recordings, and transcripts will be stored in separate locked files at Duquesne University with Mr. Arvin Simon. The consent forms containing your name will be destroyed within three years of the completed research. The audio-recordings will be permanently archived with Mr. Simon and they will be identified by the nickname you choose. No part of the audio recordings that will identify you personally will ever be released, but portions of the de-identified sessions and interviews might be used for a future research presentation.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time. In the event that you choose to withdraw your participation from the study after data has been collected, you will be approached by the researcher and asked whether the information already collected can be used (de-identified) or whether you prefer to have all your information excluded from data analysis and destroyed.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**

A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to the director of Mount Washington Community Development Corporation. You may request a copy, at no cost, at any time after completion of the research from Mr. Arvin Simon.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:**

I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Mr. Arvin Simon at \_\_\_\_\_ or Dr. Eva Simms at 412-396-6520. Should I have questions regarding protection or human subject issues, I may call Dr. Linda Goodfellow, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board, at 412-396-6326.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



Duquesne University IRB  
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Please sign **ONLY ONE** consent form. If you do not want your name to be revealed, sign form A1. To give us permission to use your name, sign form A2.

**DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY**  
600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

### **STAFF FORM B1**

#### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY** (You Do Not Give Us Permission to Reveal Your Name)

**TITLE:** Critical Ethnography Study: The Personal and Social Experiences of Workers in Urban Green Spaces

**INVESTIGATOR:** Arvin Simon, M.A.  
Graduate Student  
Duquesne University  
Department of Psychology, 212 Rockwell Hall  
Pittsburgh, PA 15282  
; [simona1@duq.edu](mailto:simona1@duq.edu)

**ADVISOR:** Eva M. Simms, Ph.D.  
Professor of Psychology  
Duquesne University  
Department of Psychology, 212 Rockwell Hall  
Pittsburgh, PA 15282  
412-396-6520; [simms@duq.edu](mailto:simms@duq.edu)

**SOURCE OF SUPPORT:** This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology at Duquesne University.

**PURPOSE:** You are being asked to participate in a critical ethnographic research project where we want to explore the question: How are social practices and identities produced through working in urban green spaces?

- You might be asked to talk to a researcher in a series (between 1 to 3) of individual interviews, which take 1 to 1.5 hours to complete. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed.
- Interviews are expected to begin during the summer work season however you may also be contacted and asked to do a follow-up interview in the fall or winter, after the season has ended.
- A researcher will be present during weekly team meetings to observe crewmember and staff interactions. The researcher may respectfully bring up comments and questions during the team meetings related to the process and development of the work crew.

- You might be asked, if you are interested, to help the researchers with the analysis of some of the transcripts and present the findings at a local or national conference.  
These are the only requests that will be made of you.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:**

There is minimal risk in participating in this study beyond those encountered in daily life. Being observed (if you are a staff member in team meetings) or asked questions about your experiences in nature and urban green spaces may bring to mind some unpleasant or upsetting memories. If that is the case, a member of the research team trained as a therapist or an Emerald Trail Corps staff member will be available for you to talk to, and we will call a friend or family member if you wish. Furthermore, while we will take every possible precaution to prevent your name from being revealed, we cannot completely guarantee that you will not be identified. Staff, community residents or ETC crewmembers may recognize statements made by you even if un-identified in the study. The Emerald Trail Corps staff will not have access to any identifiable information that you may wish to provide about your work experiences. However the staff may wish to use the overall study as one of many ways of evaluating the ETC program. While your engagement and participation pose little danger to you, it may likely benefit your community by providing educational empowerment to you and residents in other communities. It will also provide a forum where adults can voice their knowledge and concerns about work, nature and community development. Your contribution will also help to better articulate how underemployed adults relate to working in nature places.

**COMPENSATION:**

You will not be paid for your participation in this study. However, participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Your name will never appear on the interviewers' notes, on audio tape labels, on transcripts, nor in public discussion of the findings. The researchers will utilize the un-identified descriptions that you have provided, in order to interpret and compare personal and social experiences of working in urban green spaces. A public profile (e.g., web page, brochure, poster) may be created from the study and use some of your words from observations and interview sessions, but your name will not be revealed and any personal information or details that may lead others to recognize you will be changed or deleted. The un-identified transcripts of the interviews will be archived with the Mount Washington Community Development Corporation. An exception where confidentiality may not be guaranteed in the case where activities or verbal statements may indicate an imminent threat of physical harm to self or others that we would be obligated to report to the appropriate authorities as required by law. The consent forms containing your name and any identifying information will be stored separately from the un-

identified data. All consent forms, audio recordings, and transcripts will be stored in separate locked files at Duquesne University with Mr. Arvin Simon. The consent forms containing your name will be destroyed within three years of the completed research. The audio-recordings will be permanently archived with Mr. Simon and they will be identified by the nickname you choose. No part of the audio recordings that will identify you personally will ever be released, but portions of the de-identified sessions and interviews might be used for a future research presentation.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time. In the event that you choose to withdraw your participation from the study after data has been collected, you will be approached by the researcher and asked whether the information already collected can be used (de-identified) or whether you prefer to have all your information excluded from data analysis and destroyed.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**

A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to the director of Mount Washington Community Development Corporation. You may request a copy, at no cost, at any time after completion of the research from Mr. Arvin Simon.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:**

I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Mr. Arvin Simon at \_\_\_\_\_ or Dr. Eva Simms at 412-396-6520. Should I have questions regarding protection or human subject issues, I may call Dr. Linda Goodfellow, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board, at 412-396-6326.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date





Duquesne University IRB  
Protocol #2015-05-13  
Approved: 6-18-2015  
Expiration Date: 6-17-2016

# DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

## STAFF FORM B2

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY You Give Us Permission to Reveal your Name

**TITLE:** Critical Ethnography Study: The Personal and Social Experiences of Workers in Urban Green Spaces

**INVESTIGATOR:** Arvin Simon, M.A.  
Graduate Student  
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**ADVISOR:** Eva M. Simms, Ph.D.  
Professor of Psychology  
Duquesne University  
Department of Psychology, 212 Rockwell Hall  
Pittsburgh, PA 15282  
412-396-6520; [simms@duq.edu](mailto:simms@duq.edu)

**SOURCE OF SUPPORT:** This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology at Duquesne University.

**PURPOSE:** You are being asked to participate in a critical ethnographic research project where we want to explore the question: How are social practices and identities produced through working in urban green spaces?

- You might be asked to talk to a researcher in a series of individual interviews, which take 1 to 1.5 hours to complete. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed.
- Interviews are expected to begin during the summer work season however you may also be contacted and asked to do a follow-up interview in the fall or winter, after the season has ended.
- A researcher will be present during weekly team meetings to observe crewmember and staff interactions. The researcher may respectfully bring up comments and questions during the team meetings related to the process and development of the work crew.

- You might be asked, if you are interested, to help the researchers with the analysis of some of the transcripts and present the findings at a local or national conference.

These are the only requests that will be made of you.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:**

There is minimal risk in participating in this study beyond those encountered in daily life. Being observed (if you are staff member in team meetings) or asked questions about your experiences in nature and urban green spaces may bring to mind some unpleasant or upsetting memories. If that is the case, a member of the research team trained as a therapist or an Emerald Trail Corps staff member will be available for you to talk to, and we will call a friend or family member if you wish. Furthermore, while we will take every possible precaution to prevent your name from being revealed, we cannot completely guarantee that you will not be identified. Staff, community residents or ETC crewmembers may recognize statements made by you even if un-identified in the study. The Emerald Trail Corps staff will not have access to any identifiable information that you may wish to provide about your work experiences. However the staff may wish to use the overall study as one of many ways of evaluating the ETC program. While your engagement and participation pose little danger to you, it may likely benefit your community by providing educational empowerment to you and residents in other communities. It will also provide a forum where adults can voice their knowledge and concerns about work, nature and community development. Your contribution will also help to better articulate how underemployed adults relate to working in nature places.

**COMPENSATION:**

You will not be paid for your participation in this study. However, participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

You consent to have the individual interviews audio-recorded and to have your audio record and/or the transcripts of the interview, with your name and likeness identifiable, archived with the researcher and the Mount Washington Community Development Corporation. The researchers will use the descriptions that you have provided, in order to interpret and compare personal and social experiences of working in urban green spaces. After the research is completed, a public profile (e.g., web page, brochure, poster) may be created of the study. This profile may include some of your words from observations and interview sessions. The un-identified transcripts of the interviews will be archived with the Mount Washington Community Development Corporation. An exception where confidentiality may not be guaranteed in the case where activities or verbal statements may indicate an imminent threat of physical harm to self or others that we would be obligated to report to the appropriate authorities as required by law. The consent forms containing your name will be stored separately from the data you have provided us. All consent forms, audio recordings, and

transcripts will be stored in separate locked files at Duquesne University with Mr. Arvin Simon. The consent forms containing your name will be destroyed within three years of the completed research. The audio-recordings will be permanently archived with Mr. Simon and they will be identified by the nickname you choose. No part of the audio recordings that will identify you personally will ever be released, but portions of the de-identified sessions and interviews might be used for a future research presentation.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time. In the event that you choose to withdraw your participation from the study after data has been collected, you will be approached by the researcher and asked whether the information already collected can be used (de-identified) or whether you prefer to have all your information excluded from data analysis and destroyed.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**

A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to the director of Mount Washington Community Development Corporation. You may request a copy, at no cost, at any time after completion of the research from Mr. Arvin Simon.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:**

I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Mr. Arvin Simon at \_\_\_\_\_ or Dr. Eva Simms at 412-396-6520. Should I have questions regarding protection or human subject issues, I may call Dr. Linda Goodfellow, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board, at 412-396-6326.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Crew member Interview Guide – 1<sup>st</sup> Interview

How are social identities and practices produced through working in green spaces? *How does working in the park impact how you see yourself? What does the work mean for you?*

1. Orienting questions: age, how long been with ETC?
  - a. How did you come to be part of the ETC?
  - b. What's been your experience with nature and park space?
2. Describe a typical workday.
  - a. What parts of the workday stand out to you?
  - b. When you mentioned \_\_\_\_\_, can you also tell me about your feelings, mood, thoughts?
  - c. Can you describe the physical aspects of the workday? What do you notice about your body?
  - d. Other thoughts or experiences you might have?
3. What features of the work environment stand out to you? Please describe.
  - a. What you did notice about the place itself?
  - b. Are there places that feel special to you? Please describe.
  - c. Can you tell me about your feelings, moods, thoughts when in that place?
  - d. Are there things or objects in your work that have special significance for you? Please describe.
  - e. Other thoughts or experiences you might have?
4. Describe your typical interactions with the other members of the crew.
  - a. What interactions stand out? Where/when do those interactions happen?
  - b. Describe your feelings, moods, thoughts.
  - c. Are there parts of the work that stand out for the crew? Please describe.
  - d. Describe your feelings, moods, thoughts.
5. Describe your interactions with MWCDC staff.
  - a. What interactions stand out? Where/when do those interactions happen?
  - b. Describe your feelings, moods, thoughts.
6. Describe your interactions with people in the Mount Washington community.
  - a. What interactions stand out? Where/when do those interactions happen?
  - b. Describe your feelings, moods, thoughts.

## **Crew member Interview Guide – 2<sup>nd</sup> Interview**

1. What do you feel you accomplished this work season?
  - a. What personal accomplishments stand out?
  - b. What about group accomplishments?
2. What things, in your opinion, make a good park?
  - a. What kind of work needs to be put into creating and maintaining a good park?
  - b. What does the community get out of a good park?
3. What things, in your opinion, make a good work environment?
  - a. What kind of space and resources need to be put into creating and maintaining a good work environment?
  - b. How might a good work environment affect you? Your work?
4. Can you describe how your vision of parks, nature and/or trails have grown or changed over this past season?
  - a. What do you think has contributed to this change?
  - b. Can you describe for people what its like to go from not having any vision to having a vision of the park and trails that we walk on?
5. Can you describe any other mental, physical or emotional changes you have experienced this season?
6. What would you like to see happen with the program in the next season?
  - a. What are your recommendations now that the season is done?
  - b. What are your plans for the next season?
7. How do you think research like this could be best presented to the public?
8. What did we not discuss that perhaps you were hoping we would?

## Staffmember Interview Guide

How are social identities and practices produced through working in green spaces? *How does working in the park impact how you see yourself? What does the work mean for you?*

1. Orienting questions: age, how long been with ETC?
  - a. How did you come to be part of the ETC?
  - b. What's been your experience with nature and park space?
2. Describe a typical workday in Emerald View Park.
  - a. What parts of the workday stand out to you?
  - b. When you mentioned \_\_\_\_\_, can you also tell me about your feelings, mood, thoughts?
  - c. Can you describe the physical aspects of the workday? What do you notice about your body?
  - d. Other thoughts or experiences you might have?
3. What features of the work environment stand out to you? Please describe.
  - a. What you did notice about the place itself?
  - b. Are there places that feel special to you? Please describe.
  - c. Can you tell me about your feelings, moods, thoughts when in that place?
  - d. Are there things or objects in your work that have special significance for you? Please describe.
  - e. Other thoughts or experiences you might have?
4. Describe your typical interactions with the members of the crew.
  - a. What interactions stand out? Where/when do those interactions happen?
  - b. Describe your feelings, moods, thoughts.
  - c. What role do you think being a staff member played in your interactions with the crew?
  - d. Describe any feelings, moods, thoughts you have about this.
5. What markers of difference, either culturally, socially or racially were you aware of between yourself and the crew?
  - a. Please describe the impact of your awareness of these differences on your interactions with the crew.
  - b. How do you believe the crew responded to these differences?
  - c. Were there places, contexts or situations in which you were more aware of these differences? Please describe. Less aware? Please describe.
6. Describe your interactions with people in the Mount Washington community.
  - a. What interactions stand out? Where/when do those interactions happen?
  - b. Describe your feelings, moods, thoughts.
7. What things, in your opinion, make a good park?
  - a. What kind of work needs to be put into creating and maintaining a good park?

- b. What does the community get out of a good park?
- 
- 8. What things, in your opinion, make a good work environment?
    - a. What kind of space and resources need to be put into creating and maintaining a good work environment?
    - b. How might a good work environment affect you? Your work?
  - 9. Can you describe how your vision of parks, nature and/or trails have grown or changed over this past season?
    - a. What do you think has contributed to this change?
    - b. Please describe what changes you would like to see in parks, nature and/or the trail program.
    - c. How might you personally see yourself involved in those changes?
  - 10. Can you describe any other mental, physical or emotional changes you have experienced this season?
  - 11. What would you like to see happen with the program in the next season?
    - a. What are your recommendations now that the season is done?
    - b. What are your plans for the next season?
  - 12. How do you think research like this could be best presented to the public?

APPENDIX C: CODES FOR PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS AND LIST OF  
INTERPRETIVE REPERTOIRES FROM CRITICAL THEMATIC ANALYSIS

**Codes for Phenomenological Analysis**

- acquiring a vision
  - developing skills
  - hands-on learning
  - leadership
- cohesion
  - dealing with differences
  - humor
- communication
- confidence
- environment
  - ideal spaces
  - pace and time
  - space & environment
  - special places
  - trash
- maintenance & seasonal work
  - unfinished work
- opportunity
  - openness to change
  - outreach
  - self-development
- past developmental experiences of nature
  - country
- physical aspects of work
  - health and therapeutic benefits
  - masculine identification
- previous work experiences
- pride and ownership
  - accomplishment
  - honest work
  - respect
- relationship with community
  - negative interactions
  - racial tensions
  - serving the community
- relationship with program & staff
  - recommendations
- time with program
  - first season
  - found out about this program
  - future plans
- transition into trail work
- trust in others
- typical work day
  - no average day

### **List of Interpretive Repertoires from Critical Thematic Analysis**

- IR's on Growing up in Nature
  1. A Child's World
  2. Missing Experiences
  3. The Woods
- IR's on Community Benefits
  4. Community Involvement
  5. The Great Equalizer
- IR's on Crime
  6. Darkness
  7. Demonizing
- IR's on Manual Labor
  8. Honest Work
- Crew IR's on Staff
  9. Higher Ups
  10. Summer Camp
  11. Heart's in the Right Place
- Staff IR's on Crew
  12. Talent Development
  13. Heart's in the Right Place
  14. Professionalism
- IR's on Community Support
  15. "Community"-as-Group
  16. Good Guys
- IR's on Community Opposition
  17. Generational Residents
  18. Come Talk to Me
- IR's on Race
  19. One False Move
  20. Earthlings
  21. Community Service
  22. White Helmets
  23. City Boy
- IR's on Masculinity
  24. Grown Men
  25. Respect

## APPENDIX D: RESEARCH ASSISTANT'S CODES

### Experience of Nature

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>Shawn</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The outdoors has been a part of his life since childhood – resulted in his work later in life</li><li>• Values the benefits of being out in nature – therapeutic and relaxing</li><li>• Contrast of hustle/bustle of city and being inside park</li></ul>  |
| <b>Riddles</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The woods have things to offer that people aren't aware of</li><li>• Values the benefits of being out in nature – therapeutic and relaxing and free</li><li>• Physical and mental benefits – has lost weight, stress relief</li><li>• Manual labor out in nature is manly</li><li>• Working in the woods gives him an outlet if having a bad day outside of work</li></ul> |
| <b>Jim</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The outdoors has been a part of his life since childhood – was an escape</li><li>• Values the benefits of being out in nature – was a distraction/soothing</li><li>• Contrast of hustle/bustle of city and being inside park – chaos into tranquility</li></ul>  |
| <b>Markus</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some experience as a kid, but wasn't interested until starting working for program</li><li>• New respect for nature – avoids littering, respect for insects/animals</li><li>• Parks provide community with opportunity for positive activities</li><li>• Finds being in nature peaceful</li><li>• Enjoying nature is like getting back to our roots</li></ul>              |
| <b>Mike</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spent a lot of time in nature as kid, takes family camping</li><li>• Feels strongly about keeping outdoors clean, stopped littering</li><li>• Has become more green</li><li>• Feels closer to nature</li><li>• Nature is important/we need it</li><li>• Wants to expose his children to nature</li></ul>   |

## Experience of Work

- Shawn**
- Vision of how to form trail takes experience
  - Manual labor/using tools is like exercise
  - Physical work helps day go fast
  - Size of crew changes timeliness of task completion
  - Good work environment – attentiveness, taking initiative
- Riddles**
- Views manual labor as manly
  - Values small group work
  - Job allows him to contribute to family
  - Frustration with those who do not understand the intricacies of the trails (i.e. the engineers) because they are not “in the trenches”
  - Wants a break from manual labor because it is hard on his body
  - Struggles to see purpose in doing work that is not physical
- Jim**
- Vision of how to form trail takes experience
  - Actively working helps day go fast
  - Maintenance of park throughout year would be most beneficial
- Markus**
- Likes the physical aspect of the work
  - Accomplished a lot over the season, learned how to use new tools/more experience
  - Developed vision over the season by watching others
  - A good work environment makes work enjoyable/day go faster
  - Crew leadership/staff need more collaboration
  - Adaptability to changes/challenges is important
- Mike**
- This work is an opportunity to start over/have more options for future
  - Physical aspect of work relieves stress
  - Work is rewarding because people will be able to use parks for years to come
  - Teamwork creates bond between crew – results in doing better job, doing physical work also helps
  - Looks forward to this job – different than past jobs
  - The other aspects of the program have been helpful for his future



## Experience of Self

- Shawn**
- Stay busy/focus on work/channels negative feelings into his work/gives him structure/stability – helps with depression in winter
  - Physical work has changed his body – lost weight, gained muscle
  - Being praised for work feels good – especially as an African American male
  - Leadership has changed the way he thinks/feels about self – helped focus on goals/what he wants out of life
  - Helping others makes him happy – “rich” not from material things
  - Physical work impacts him as a male – respect for using tools/hands
- Riddles**
- Sees himself as strong, gives him purpose, likes doing this type of work
  - Feels accomplished because of the work, didn’t accomplish much in the past, wants to feel productive
  - This work allows him to do what “men are supposed to do”
  - Working on the trail has developed his professional skills, made him become more mature
  - Takes pride in being a leader/having experience with the trail
- Jim**
- Physical work is exhausting but it’s “honest work”
  - Physical work has changed his body – stay in shape/in good health
  - Experience has helped grow his vision – he is an experiential learner
  - Ownership of work is important
  - Program has helped him to learn about himself/learn new things
- Markus**
- Takes pride in his work being appreciated by the community, it’s humbling
  - Feels like he’s achieving something, makes him want to work harder, turning nothing into something (feels this way about other aspects of life)
  - Physical work serves as stress reliever/gets aggression out, increased patience
  - Still developing vision/learning what to do by watching others
  - Increased self-awareness, tries not to let bad moods affect his work/others around him
- Mike**
- Physical work serves as a stress reliever/gets aggression out
  - Living a healthier lifestyle
  - Confidence in his work helps him do a better job, being praised gives him pride/makes him feel like he accomplished something/increased confidence he can take with him
  - Feels like an asset to the team
  - Has increased peace with self from working in nature/helps with anxiety

## Experience of Others

- Shawn**
- Having vision is important as a leader – setting expectations for the day, fostering others’ strengths
  - Building confidence and motivation in others is important for leadership
  - These are ways to get respect/trust from crew
  - Most of community is supportive of the work they’re doing – some not because of stigma
  - He has learned to deal with views of others from experiences throughout life
  - Community is appreciative of what they’re doing, likes the praise
- Riddles**
- Has a personal relationship with the other crew members, and even “higher ups”
  - Able to talk about personal things with the crew
  - Enjoys coworkers who are outgoing, joke around, easy going
  - Has faced some stigma from the community
  - Relationship with significant other has improved
  - Daughter interested in what he does, she is important to him
  - Takes pride in the work they are doing as it benefits the community
- Jim**
- Has learned to trust others/their experience and see that their way of doing things has merit
  - Community is appreciative of what they’re doing, gratifying
  - Group consciousness – come together to get the job done
- Markus**
- Overall positive feedback from community, some negative
  - Everyone has different vision, but collaboration is important
  - Communication between staff and crew problematic at times
  - Sees others as equals/everyone has a role on the team/crew like a brotherhood
  - Sees value in the community taking advantage of the park – get good things out of it
- Mike**
- Positive and negative experiences with crew, can become angry with others if they are not pulling their weight
  - Crew members help him when in a bad mood
  - Everyone gets along
  - Community has been supportive/grateful for their work/has not had any direct negative experiences with community
  - A good work environment involves teamwork, good leaders, similar desires for accomplishment
  - Community interest in parks starts with educating young people