DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION, INTERGROUP CONTACT, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN U.S. URBAN PARKS

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ABSTRACT

Urban parks have the potential to foster intergroup contact among racially and ethnically diverse visitors, but less is known about the conditions and outcomes related to intergroup contact in parks. This dissertation investigated intergroup contact in urban parks in the United States from the perspective of park users and park leaders. The first chapter of this dissertation provides a background on the study topics and introduces the supporting theory and conceptual framework. Chapter 2 presents a quantitative study of the outcomes of intergroup contact in urban parks for park users, demonstrating the associations between frequent and positive intergroup contact and lower prejudice, higher interracial trust, higher critical consciousness, and higher civic engagement for social justice. Chapter 3 presents a quantitative study of the conditions which support more frequent and positive intergroup contact in urban parks from the perspective of park users, documenting the roles of sense of welcome and belonging as well as equitable/inclusive engagement and representation. Chapter 4 presents a qualitative study of urban park agency leaders' perceptions and management actions related to intergroup contact in parks, demonstrating their recognition of both positive and negative contact, conditions and management practices that support contact, and outcomes of contact. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes key findings and identifies directions for future research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter 1 Introduction

Urban parks are integral recreation assets that provide important contributions to individuals, communities, and societies. Although parks have histories of systemic inequalities as evidenced through inequitable resource allocation, exclusionary practices, and unsafe environments for people of color (Dahmann et al., 2010; Mowatt, 2018a; Rigolon, 2017; Stodolska et al., 2011), they have the potential to be more inclusive and welcoming to all, and in turn, live up to the democratic ideal of public space. Parks have often been touted as diverse, democratic spaces that promote positive interactions across racial, ethnic, and cultural lines, yet the potential for them to do so lies with creating welcoming, safe, and accessible spaces that appeal to diverse users. Advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in urban parks has both ethical and practical merit. Publicly funded park and recreation services have a mission to serve all and doing so requires attention to the factors which influence park experiences among racially and ethnically diverse users (Lee et al., 2019). Furthermore, the value of creating diverse, equitable, and inclusive parks may go beyond improving recreation experiences, and could have broader societal outcomes related to intergroup relations and addressing systemic inequalities.

This dissertation seeks to address these topics and understand not only how parks and recreation can be more equitable and inclusive to all, but also how doing so can facilitate intergroup contact, or contact between individuals of different races and ethnicities. More frequent and positive intergroup contact is typically associated with prejudice reduction and can also increase individuals' awareness of systemic inequalities between groups (Allport, 1954; Hodson & Hewstone, 2013; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019). Furthermore, intergroup contact has been associated with civic engagement in a variety of contexts (Di Bernardo et al., 2019; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Mckeown & Taylor, 2017; Turoy-Smith et al., 2013), and it is

possible that diverse, equitable, and inclusive park environments that support more frequent and positive intergroup contact could increase individuals' awareness of and willingness to address systemic inequalities through their civic engagement. Thus, while my dissertation focuses on a park context, it is situated amongst issues of broader societal interest related to DEI, intergroup contact, social justice, and civic engagement.

The following sections serve as an introduction to this dissertation and provide details on intergroup contact theory, intergroup contact in parks, how intergroup contact is situated amongst DEI, and the current state of knowledge regarding the conditions and outcomes of intergroup contact in urban parks. Finally, this chapter concludes with a recognition of the current gaps in knowledge and limitations of existing studies, leading into a description of the purpose and structure of this dissertation.

Intergroup Contact Theory

Intergroup contact between people of different races and ethnicities can happen in a variety of public spaces, including parks, and such interactions, both negative and positive, can have significant consequences for intergroup relations at the individual, community, and societal levels. Positive intergroup contact has been identified as both a practical intervention and a theoretical framework from which to address intergroup conflict (Hewstone et al., 2006). Originally put forth by Allport in 1954, intergroup contact theory specifically posits that contact between different groups occurring under certain conditions can lead to reductions in prejudice toward members of another group. Allport's (1954) initial theory suggested that conditions supporting positive effects of intergroup contact included equal status, support from authority and institutions, shared goals and cooperation, and development of connections and relationships with members of the outgroup (Allport, 1954). Subsequent evidence has found that not all of

these have to happen together for positive outcomes to occur (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

However, research has repeatedly emphasized the importance of both quantity (i.e., frequency)

and quality (i.e., the extent it is positive or negative) of intergroup contact, suggesting that

favorable outcomes arise from more frequent and more positive contact (Allport, 1954; Hodson

& Hewstone, 2013; Mckeown & Taylor, 2017; Priest et al., 2014).

Although the spectrum of intergroup contact can range from no contact to friendships

developed through repeated positive contact, intergroup contact in public spaces such as parks

can primarily be categorized into two main forms: co-presence and interaction. Co-presence, also

called passive contact, refers to when racially and ethnically diverse individuals share a space,

but do not actually interact (Gehl Institute, 2016). Interactions, on the other hand, can be

characterized as chance contact, familiar strangers, and friendships developed through repeated,

positive contact. Chance contact may include looking or gesturing at someone, smiling, waving,

a short conversation, returning an out of bounds ball, and so forth (Gehl Institute, 2016).

Furthermore, the concept of familiar strangers refers to people who repeatedly visit the same

space, see and acknowledge each other, but do not actually know one another outside of that

space (Paulos & Goodman, 2004). Forms of contact can be either positive or negative, and

positive contact can take forms such as peaceful co-presence, smiling or waving, friendly

conversation, and cooperation. Repeated positive contact over time can result in the formation of

friendships. Negative contact on the other hand can encompass actions such as dirty looks,

unfriendly or racist comments, rude gestures, and physical violence. Research suggests that both

co-presence and interaction-based intergroup contact can impact intergroup attitudes and

associated outcomes, and it is positive contact that typically leads to positive outcomes, and vice

versa for negative contact and outcomes (Christ et al., 2014). Furthermore, even if not everyone

engages in intergroup contact, just the act of seeing others experience positive contact can create positive contact norms and indirectly influence attitudes (Christ et al., 2014; Freeman, 2012).

As evidenced by Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) comprehensive meta-analysis, intergroup contact theory is supported by a large body of work. More frequent and positive intergroup contact has been demonstrated to be a viable strategy to reduce prejudice, increase awareness of discrimination and inequalities, and influence civic engagement attitudes and behaviors related to advancing social justice (Allport, 1954; Mckeown & Taylor, 2017; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Turoy-Smith et al., 2013). Relative to race and ethnicity, intergroup contact has often been studied from the perspective of white individuals, yet evidence suggests contact can be experienced differently by people of color, and these differences relate to broader societal inequalities. For instance, people of color are more likely to experience negative intergroup contact and white individuals are more likely to experience positive contact (Enos, 2017).

Intergroup Contact in Urban Parks

In diverse neighborhoods, communities, and cities, individuals can experience intergroup contact in a variety of community settings such as schools, workplaces, public transportation, recreation centers, parks, and plazas. Positive contact which is more intimate and has the potential for friendship development has been found to have more positive impacts on intergroup attitudes, and as Freeman (2012) asserts, settings where people have shared interests, hobbies, and identities can be highly effective in fostering this intimacy. Recreation and leisure settings where people pursue hobbies or interests of their own choosing can be important settings for intergroup contact, and contact in these spaces can have strong impacts on individuals' intergroup attitudes (Wessel, 2009). In fact, several scholars have suggested that recreation

settings are ideal for examining intergroup contact due to the amount of time individuals spend in them, particularly through repeat visitation (Shinew et al., 2004; Wessel, 2009).

Parks are spaces where intergroup relations are observable in the form of both interpersonal interactions and systemic inequalities, and as such, they have been documented as sites of both positive and negative contact (Harris et al., 2019; Hillier et al., 2016; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Mowatt, 2018b; Peters et al., 2010; Priest et al., 2014). On the positive side, intergroup contact can take the form of peaceful co-presence, intergroup cooperation, and friendship development (Neal et al., 2015; Peters et al., 2010; Seeland, Dübendorfer, et al., 2009). However, parks have been and continue to be sites of negative intergroup contact in the forms of discrimination, conflict, and violence, and fear of these types of experiences can be large deterrents to visiting parks, particularly for people of color (Scott, 2013; Stodolska et al., 2011). These types of negative intergroup contact are situated within the broader sociopolitical context of the country, and as such, it is important to understand the history of parks in the United States relative to race and ethnicity (Camarillo et al., 2019; Harris et al., 2019; Stodolska et al., 2011).

Historically, urban parks in many parts of the country were segregated spaces with inequitable levels of funding (Bryne & Wolch, 2009). Parks for African Americans commonly received less funding, had less acreage, had fewer amenities, and were located in less desirable areas compared to parks for whites (Bryne & Wolch, 2009; McKay, 1954). Other racist policies such as redlining, a practice which effectively limited access to home loans for African Americans and other people of color, further contributed to these inequities through perpetuating a long legacy of public funding disparities (Mitchell & Franco, 2018). In many cities, these

historical practices have resulted in less greenspace and park access in communities of color (Moxley & Fischer, 2020; Nardone et al., 2021).

Furthermore, amidst segregationist policies, efforts by African Americans to integrate parks and recreation spaces were often met with intergroup conflict and violence from white users. Incidents such as the Chicago Race Riots in 1919 and the Biloxi Wade-Ins of 1959-1963 illustrate these experiences (see Mowatt, 2018a). Even after the removal of formal segregationist policies, race-based discrimination and violence remain prominent in recreation spaces. Recent examples of police brutality in recreation spaces such as the Craig Ranch pool party in McKinney, Texas, or the murder of Tamir Rice, a young boy playing in a park in Cleveland, illustrate that park and recreation spaces are positioned in the larger sociopolitical context of the nation and remain settings of negative intergroup contact in the forms of racism, discrimination, and violence (Mowatt, 2018b; Pinckney et al., 2018). If park professionals are to effectively understand how to limit instances of negative intergroup contact (and therefore improve safety and park experiences, especially for people of color), and encourage positive intergroup contact, it is important to understand the conditions under which contact occurs.

Currently, not a lot is known about the conditions which relate to whether intergroup contact in parks is positive or negative. Efforts to understand or promote intergroup contact without understanding the specific conditions associated with contact quality (i.e., the extent it is positive or negative) may be well-intentioned, but could inadvertently lead to negative contact, rather than positive contact. Given the importance of examining both types of contact, the history of parks as contested spaces, and the role of parks as settings of hobbies and shared interests, parks represent an interesting context for the study of intergroup contact. Existing research on intergroup contact indicates connections between contact and aspects of DEI. The following

section outlines these three factors and demonstrates how their intersections may support more frequent and positive intergroup contact in parks.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are often considered together, but each has its own role and meaning. Many park and recreation organizations have DEI focused plans and initiatives, and there is a growing body of research investigating one or more of these concepts in the field. Despite the permeation of the acronym "DEI" or some combination of two to three of these terms, their distinct yet interrelated meanings have rarely been defined in park and recreation research. In the following paragraphs, I discuss the meaning of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and convey how they are defined in this dissertation.

Diversity refers to a mixture or combination of people of different identities and backgrounds and can apply with regard to race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability, and so forth (Cortright, 2018; Extension Foundation, 2021). In this dissertation, the focus is on racial and ethnic diversity, and diversity is used here to refer to a mixture of individuals from different racial and ethnic groups. The term diversity is not used as a synonym for people of color (Cortright, 2018). In a park setting, a park with diverse usership (as defined in this dissertation) would have visitors from multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds using the space. The diversity of park users (i.e., the extent of intergroup co-presence) may be best understood through examining aspects of equity (or inequity) and inclusion (or exclusion).

Equity, broadly speaking, concerns the distribution of resources, and refers to "providing fair access and opportunity, while also working toward eliminating barriers" (Blinded 2, p. 13). Furthermore, equity reflects: "promoting justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures,

processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems," and "tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society" (Extension Foundation, 2021, para 1). In this dissertation, I adopt a definition where equity refers to the promotion of justice and fairness in the processes and distribution of resources, and thus equity can be reflected within an agency by the processes and outcomes of resource allocation. Equity is said to be achieved "when one's identity cannot predict the outcome" (City of Portland Office of Equity and Human Rights, n.d.). In a park context, equity is often operationalized through the distribution of capital and programmatic resources (Nisbet & Schaller, 2019; Rigolon, 2019), and some agencies have specific equity frameworks they use to guide resource allocation. Such decision-making frameworks take into account both outcome disparities (e.g., park access, park quality/condition, environmental indicators, health indicators) and their underlying systemic causes (e.g., systemic racism), and often collate demographic, health, and environmental data to inform more equitable resource allocation (e.g., Asheville Parks and Recreation Department, 2019; Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation Department, 2019).

Next, inclusion reflects an environment "in which individuals can feel safe, valued, and fully engaged, while believing that they can be fully themselves in ways that recognize, honor, and appreciate their full range of social identities" (FerdMan et al., 2010, p. 10). Inclusion also reflects the extent to which individuals have a voice in and opportunities to participate in decision making (Extension Foundation, 2021). An inclusive environment is one in which a "variety of people have power, a voice, and decision-making authority" (Kim, 2020). Collectively these components of inclusion reflect how the concept is defined in this dissertation: inclusion reflects an environment where all individuals are valued and engaged, and a variety of individuals have power and a voice in decision making. Environments and organizations which

are both equitable and inclusive may support greater diversity, or intergroup co-presence, and such co-presence creates the potential for intergroup interaction (Peters, 2010).

It has been suggested that within organizations, the intersections of DEI create the conditions under which individuals can feel a sense of belonging (Burnette, 2019). As Burnette (2019) argues, when any one component (i.e., diversity, equity, or inclusion) is removed from the mix, individuals may be less likely to feel a sense of belonging. Although this assertion has not been empirically investigated, it does have conceptual merit and is corroborated by some existing research from the park and recreation field. In a park context, it is possible that organizational actions supporting DEI could help to stimulate a sense of belonging among park visitors. Some recent research partially supports these connections, demonstrating how greater engagement in decision making (an aspect of inclusion) and safer park conditions (a possible indicator of equity in resource allocation) can support a sense of welcome and belonging in urban parks (Blinded 1). Prior research also indicates that a greater sense of welcome and belonging in urban parks is associated with more frequent intergroup contact (Blinded 1). Given that diversity has been identified as a precondition to intergroup contact (Schmid et al., 2014) and that aspects of equity and inclusion may be indirectly related to contact, the intersections of these three factors may provide conditions supporting intergroup contact in urban park contexts.

Conditions and Management Practices Related to Intergroup Contact in Urban Parks

Research has demonstrated the occurrence of intergroup contact in urban parks, but less is known about the conditions under which individuals experience contact. Prior studies have suggested the importance of several conditions related to DEI including community diversity, psychosocial park perceptions, and actions taken by park managers and stewards (Blinded 1; Hillier et al., 2016; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Neal et al., 2015; Peters et al., 2010). Research

has demonstrated diversity as a precondition to intergroup contact quantity, such that co-presence of diverse racial and ethnic groups is more common at parks located in more diverse neighborhoods (Hillier et al., 2016; Neal et al., 2015; Schmid et al., 2014). Moreover, prior studies have suggested that factors associated with equity and inclusion such as park condition and safety, community engagement in decision making, connection to place, and sense of welcome and belonging can promote more frequent and/or more positive intergroup contact (Blinded 1; Hewstone et al., 2006; Liu et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2010; Selim, 2015). Given research suggesting the importance of inclusive, culturally relevant programming and representation of racial and ethnic diversity to fostering a sense of belonging in parks (Byrne, 2012; Camarillo et al., 2019; Plane & Klodawsky, 2013; Stodolska et al., 2019), these factors may have an indirect influence on intergroup contact. However, the interconnected and potentially mediating relationships between aspects of DEI and intergroup contact have yet to be explored from the park visitor or park leadership perspectives. It is possible that, like belonging, frequent and positive intergroup contact could occur at the intersection of DEI. Similar to Burnette's (2019) assumptions about how the absence of either diversity, equity, or inclusion would undermine belonging, the absence of any of these factors may undermine contact, either through reducing its frequency or its quality (i.e., leading to negative contact). The potential interconnections between diversity, equity, inclusion, and intergroup contact are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual Intersections of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In the absence of diversity, no intergroup contact would occur, effectively limiting contact quantity. Furthermore, research has suggested that having well balanced representation across diverse groups can support more positive intergroup contact, particularly for members of minority groups (a term used by the authors discussing contact broadly; Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013), and in this dissertation's context, greater diversity may support higher quality contact for people of color. Therefore, diversity may impact not just quantity of contact, but also quality. Without either equity or inclusion, diversity may be more limited, as some individuals may not feel as strong of a sense of welcome and belonging and therefore may be less likely to use parks.

Although contact could occur, without supporting conditions associated with equity and/or inclusion, it may not occur under ideal circumstances.

Some of Allport's (1954) initial suggested conditions may be supported by efforts to increase equity and inclusion. For example, Allport's condition of equal status may be supported by equitable resource allocation and well-balanced power and voice in decision making across racial and ethnic groups. In addition, Allport's (1954) condition of shared goals and cooperation may be supported by inclusion efforts to engage racially and ethnically diverse individuals in programs and decision-making opportunities. Moreover, as multiple researchers have argued, it is important to identify other conditions related to contact in particular settings (Lee & Scott, 2013; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). For instance, sense of welcome and belonging's positive influence on intergroup contact quantity not only represents an important identified condition (Blinded 1), but also one likely supported by the intersections of DEI (Burnette, 2019).

It is possible that the intersections of DEI could provide some of the conditions identified in previous intergroup contact literature (e.g., Allport, 1954; Hodson & Hewstone, 2013; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) as well as some identified specific to the park context (e.g., Blinded 1; Neal et al., 2015; Peters, 2010). Based on the theory that certain favorable conditions support more frequent and positive contact, the interrelationships between DEI may relate to both contact quantity and quality. This conceptual understanding of DEI and intergroup contact, derived from theory and prior research, serves as a guiding framework for this dissertation.

Outcomes of Intergroup Contact in Urban Parks

The conditions under which contact occurs can affect its quantity and quality, and in turn, the outcomes. A small body of qualitative research, primarily stemming from European contexts, indicates that park-based intergroup contact can have both negative and positive outcomes, and

that outcomes could be related to the conditions under which the contact occurred and the quality of the contact (Amin, 2002; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Neal et al., 2015; Peters & de Haan, 2011; Seeland, Dubendorfer, et al., 2009; Valentine, 2008). With regard to positive outcomes, studies suggest that intergroup contact in park settings can increase intercultural awareness, reduce prejudice, support the development of intergroup friendships, and improve outgroup attitudes (Neal et al., 2015; Peters & de Haan, 2011; Seeland, Dubendorfer, et al., 2009). However, with regard to negative outcomes, other research suggests intergroup contact in parks is often fleeting and therefore can reinforce pre-existing stereotypes or have little effect on outgroup attitudes (Amin, 2002; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Valentine, 2008). Moreover, particularly for people of color, negative contact in parks may result in direct discrimination, violence, or physical harm (Camarillo et al., 2019; Harris et al., 2019; Mowatt, 2018b, 2018a). One potential explanation for the variation in documented outcomes of park-based intergroup contact is that studies have occurred in different countries and therefore different social, political, and cultural contexts may have influenced their findings

Furthermore, existing research on the outcomes of park-based intergroup contact has largely examined attitudinal outcomes and has yet to investigate potential connections between intergroup contact and actual behaviors. While research from other disciplines has found that intergroup contact can affect awareness of systemic inequalities and in turn, social justice oriented civic engagement (Laurence, 2019; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Mckeown & Taylor, 2017; Ruck et al., 2011; Turoy-Smith et al., 2013), these relationships have yet to be tested in a park and recreation context. Given various connections between parks and civic engagement in urban contexts including the role of parks as spaces for expressing opinions, participating in

protests, and attending political gatherings (Arora, 2015; Blinded 3), this relationship is an important avenue for empirical investigation.

Limitations of Existing Research

Although researchers have begun to explore the conditions under which intergroup contact occurs in urban parks as well as its outcomes, existing studies have several key limitations. First, investigations have primarily been limited to studies conducted at individual parks or in single cities, many of which have occurred across different cultural and geographic contexts. Most of the research on park visitors' experiences with intergroup contact has been qualitative, meaning generalizable knowledge on park-based intergroup contact is limited. A majority of the scholarship on intergroup contact in urban parks stems from Northern Europe, and few studies have specifically examined park-based intergroup contact in a United States context, where intergroup contact may be inherently different based on historical and contemporary sociopolitical factors. Next, the few quantitative studies of park-based intergroup contact (e.g., Hillier et al., 2016; Blinded 1) have often focused only on the quantity of contact, neglecting to examine contact quality (i.e., the extent it is positive or negative). Given Allport's (1954) initial theory that more frequent and positive contact would lead to a reduction in prejudice, it is critical to examine intergroup contact as a two-dimensional construct incorporating both quantity and quality. Finally, despite evidence to suggest the importance of intentional management efforts to encourage intergroup contact in parks (Hillier et al., 2016; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Peters et al., 2010), there has been a lack of research on perceptions of and actions taken regarding intergroup contact from the park management/leadership perspective. There are currently national initiatives (e.g., Reimagining the Civic Commons) that are suggesting the promotion of intergroup contact in urban parks, but there remains limited

evidence on the outcomes of contact, the factors which stimulate contact, or the management practices of urban park agencies surrounding intergroup contact. To inform evidence-based investments and management practices, a more comprehensive assessment of intergroup contact in urban parks in the United States is needed.

Dissertation Purpose and Structure

The goal of this dissertation was to investigate intergroup contact in parks from the perspective of both park users and park leaders. This mixed-methods dissertation incorporates three separate but related studies that address many of the limitations of existing park-based intergroup contact research in the United States. Study 1, presented in Chapter 2, is a quantitative investigation of the outcomes of intergroup contact at urban parks among park users. Study 2, presented in Chapter 3, is a quantitative investigation of the conditions relating to intergroup contact at urban parks for park users. Finally, Study 3, presented in Chapter 4, is a qualitative exploration of the perceptions and actions taken by urban park leaders regarding intergroup contact at urban parks.

Researcher Positionality

I wish to acknowledge my positionality on the subject of DEI and intergroup contact (particularly relative to race and ethnicity) in urban parks. I am a white woman and I recognize the privilege that I have in general as well as in park and recreation spaces. For me, intergroup contact is generally positive, and I do not experience racism or discrimination through contact. I generally feel welcome in most spaces- I believe largely as a result of my white privilege. My own positive intergroup contact experiences throughout my life (relative to race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) have been very impactful. I have often been surrounded by people who are different from me in some way (often because of

experiences I have sought out), and I believe it is my own experience with intergroup contact that initially sparked my interest in this area of research. Relative to this dissertation's focus on intergroup contact regarding race and ethnicity, I wish to acknowledge and thank my friends, colleagues, program participants, and students of color who have shared with me their own intergroup contact experiences, both positive and negative, over the years. While I myself do not experience racism or race or ethnicity-based discrimination, I am actively aware of the everyday experiences of people of color in our society. Coupled with knowledge of our nation's history and the legacy of and continued systemic racism that transcends our society, I am a strong advocate for social justice, both in general and in the park and recreation field. As such, in the park and recreation realm, I have been studying topics related to DEI for several years. I value the applied nature of my work and its potential to advance DEI in the park and recreation field. I hope that my work will have a positive influence on practice and help to inform more equitable and inclusive management of park and recreation spaces which are safe and welcoming to diverse users, especially people of color. I believe intergroup contact is a key component of DEI that is often overlooked, and thus I seek to better understand its connection to various aspects of DEI as well as social justice. I have been studying intergroup contact for several years and am well versed in the theory and existing literature. Finally, I am familiar with the operations and challenges at public park and recreation agencies, having been a scholar in the field for nearly eight years and worked in collaboration with a variety of public agencies at the local, state, and national levels.

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Chapter 2 Can Intergroup Contact in Urban Parks Reduce Prejudice and Support Civic Engagement for Social Justice?: An Assessment of the Attitudinal and Behavioral Outcomes of Intergroup Contact in U.S. Urban Parks

Abstract

Urban parks have long been discussed as spaces of diversity and democracy with the potential to foster intergroup contact among racially and ethnically diverse visitors, but the outcomes of contact in parks are less well understood. This survey of racially and ethnically diverse U.S. urban residents investigated the relationships between intergroup contact in urban parks, prejudice, interracial trust, critical consciousness, social justice civic attitudes, and social justice civic behaviors (n=931). Results demonstrated that more frequent and positive intergroup contact in urban parks was associated with lower levels of prejudice, higher levels of interracial trust, higher levels of critical consciousness, stronger social justice civic attitudes, and greater engagement in social justice civic behaviors, with many of these relationships robust in comparisons across racial and ethnic groups. Park agencies, community organizations, and supporting foundations seeking to stimulate intergroup contact with these factors in mind should focus on creating environments conducive to frequent, positive contact through providing safe and welcoming parks with diverse features/amenities and advancing equitable and inclusive engagement, representation, and resource allocation.

Introduction

Conflict between different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups in the United States remains prevalent and problematic. Both historically and contemporarily, there have been innumerable incidents of violence and racially charged conflicts. Even just in recent months, we have seen many incidents of police brutality against African Americans, racism and discrimination towards Asian Americans associated with COVID-19's origins in China, and increased scrutiny and policies with regard to immigration (ADL: Anti-Defamation League, 2020; Cohen, 2020; Hill et al., 2020; Kambhampaty, 2020; Strochlic, 2020). Such issues of prejudice, racism, and discrimination related to intergroup conflict and systemic inequality are concerns for individuals, communities, and society as a whole (Priest et al., 2013; Reitz & Banerjee, 2007). Frequent and positive intergroup contact between people of different races and ethnicities can help address these concerns and has been demonstrated to be a viable strategy to reduce prejudice, increase awareness of discrimination and group inequalities, and influence civic engagement attitudes and behaviors related to advancing social justice (Allport, 1954; Di Bernardo et al., 2019; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Mckeown & Taylor, 2017; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Ruck et al., 2011; Turoy-Smith et al., 2013).

Although much of the prior research on intergroup contact has focused on attitudes, the practical value of intergroup contact for advancing social justice lies in its connection with not just attitudes, but behaviors (Dixon et al., 2012; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Wright & Lubensky, 2013). Improved intergroup attitudes may help address interpersonal issues and reduce individual incidents of racism or discrimination, but it is collective action-based civic engagement that offers an avenue to address the systemic inequalities impacting people of color. A more equitable and just society relies on interventions that address both interpersonal and systemic

discrimination, and intergroup contact has the potential to advance social justice through both channels (Dixon et al., 2012; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Wright & Lubensky, 2013).

In diverse communities, individuals can experience intergroup contact in a variety of public spaces, including parks. In fact, initiatives such as Reimagining the Civic Commons report intergroup contact (termed "socioeconomic mixing") as an explicit goal of park investments (Reimagining the Civic Commons, 2020). However, there remains limited evidence on the consequences of intergroup contact in parks (and initiatives to stimulate contact), particularly in the United States. Urban parks have long been touted as spaces of diversity and democracy, but they have also had histories of violence and interracial conflict (Harris et al., 2019; K. J. Lee & Scott, 2016; Stodolska et al., 2011; Wessel, 2009). Leisure spaces can be manifestations of power and control, and the systemic inequalities that exist in society transcend these spaces (Mowatt, 2018b, 2018a). For example, parks are spaces where intergroup relations are evident both in the form of interpersonal interactions and systemic inequalities; as such, parks have been documented as sites of both positive and negative contact (Harris et al., 2019; Hillier et al., 2016; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Peters et al., 2010; Priest et al., 2014). While positive contact may take the form of peaceful co-presence, waving, smiling, or friendly conversations, negative contact can include occurrences such as dirty looks, rude gestures, racist comments, or violence (Harris et al., 2019; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Peters et al., 2010; Stodolska et al., 2011).

It is important to understand the consequences of intergroup contact in urban parks, as they could either improve or undermine intergroup relations and larger social conditions. Given their unique role and history, parks are a compelling context for the study of intergroup contact and its outcomes. However, relatively little research has actually investigated intergroup contact

in parks or its relationship with social justice outcomes like prejudice, interracial trust, civic attitudes, or civic behaviors. A better understanding of the outcomes associated with intergroup contact in parks could help to inform evidence-based management practices in parks and recreation, especially given potential connections between intergroup contact and behaviors to advance social justice. Therefore, this study investigated the effects of intergroup contact in parks upon various attitudinal and behavioral outcomes relevant to intergroup attitudes and social justice.

Literature Review

Intergroup Contact Overview

Positive intergroup contact, discussed in this paper as contact between people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, has been identified as both a practical intervention and a theoretical framework from which to address intergroup conflict (Hewstone et al., 2006). Originally put forth by Allport in 1954, intergroup contact theory specifically posits that contact between different groups occurring under certain conditions can lead to reductions in prejudice toward members of another group. Allport's (1954) initial theory suggested that conditions supporting positive effects of intergroup contact included equal status, support from authority and institutions, shared goals and cooperation, and development of connections and relationships with members of the outgroup (Allport, 1954). Subsequent evidence has found that not all of these have to happen together for positive outcomes to occur and that there may be other context specific conditions that can support more frequent and positive contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Research has repeatedly emphasized the importance of both quantity and quality of intergroup contact, suggesting that favorable outcomes arise from more frequent and more positive contact (Allport, 1954; Hodson & Hewstone, 2013; Mckeown & Taylor, 2017; Priest et

al., 2014). Within various community settings, more frequent and positive contact has been shown to increase empathy, reduce prejudice, reduce stereotypes, and increase intergroup trust (Allport, 1954; Freeman, 2012; Hewstone et al., 2006; Hodson & Hewstone, 2013; Neal et al., 2015; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013). These positive outcomes arise as a result of several processes, including learning about an outgroup, changing attitudes and behaviors toward an outgroup, developing relationships with members of an outgroup, and critically reflecting on one's own group (Hodson & Hewstone, 2013; Pettigrew, 1998). As evidenced by Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) comprehensive meta-analysis, intergroup contact theory is supported by a large body of work.

It is important to remember that Allport's (1954) theory specifically focuses on contact that occurs in favorable conditions, and while research has shown that not all of these conditions must occur simultaneously, the conditions under which contact occurs are still critical. Positive intergroup contact is generally associated with a reduction in prejudice, but when contact occurs in unfavorable conditions, it can lead to increases in prejudice, stereotypes, and negative attitudes (Barlow et al., 2012; Laurence, 2019). The focus of most intergroup contact scholarship has been on the relationship between contact and prejudice. This relationship is thought to be cyclical-more contact leads to a reduction in prejudice which typically leads to more contact (Freeman, 2012). This finding relates to the contact bias concept, such that more prejudiced people avoid contact. Although this connection can be true, it has been largely invalidated as a criticism of intergroup contact theory, with ample research suggesting the positive effects of contact outweigh any potential selection biases (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Similarly, scholars have often emphasized that contact has a stronger effect on prejudice than prejudice does on contact (e.g., Hewstone et al., 2006).

Much of the research on intergroup contact and prejudice has focused on the perspective of more advantaged populations, which in the context of race and ethnicity is typically white individuals. The contrasting terms advantaged, disadvantaged and majority, minority frequently appear in intergroup contact studies, likely because they can broadly encompass groups when intergroup contact theory is applied to different contexts, like race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, immigration, or religion. For instance, the term majority has been used synonymously with white, heterosexual, being a native-born resident of a particular country, or belonging to a certain religious group (Hewstone et al., 2006; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Reimer et al., 2017; Ruck et al., 2011). In some cases, a majority population may be the more advantaged group within a sociopolitical context, but this is not always the case– a systemically disadvantaged group may be or become the numerical majority. The terms majority and minority imply not just numerical position, but also social position of a group (Hewstone et al., 2006). Given the focus of this study on a particular country (United States) and context (race and ethnicity), I felt it more suitable to use descriptive terminology to reflect those who have been systemically advantaged or disadvantaged- whites and people of color, respectively. Therefore, when discussing differences in intergroup contact explicitly among different racial and ethnic groups, these terms are used. When citing intergroup contact studies from other contexts not focused on (or not exclusively focused on) race and/or ethnicity, or which contain ambiguous terminology, the terms advantaged and disadvantaged are used.

Due in part to the fact that whites tend to have stronger ethnocentric tendencies than people of color (Makarova & Herzog, 2014), much of the intergroup contact literature has focused on the benefits of intergroup contact for white individuals, with the potential for contact to reduce ethnocentrism, prejudice, and negative attitudes towards people of color. It is also

critical to note the sociopolitical power dynamics which favor white individuals, as they typically hold much of the power in society and are therefore in a position to either uphold practices and policies discriminating against people of color or take action in favor of a more equitable and inclusive society (MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Mallett et al., 2008).

However, the experiences and outcomes of intergroup contact can differ based on one's race or ethnicity. For example, research has found that positive intergroup contact has greater effects on decreasing prejudice for white populations as compared to people of color (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Moreover, people of color are generally more likely to experience negative intergroup contact (Enos, 2017). Research focusing on white individuals and other advantaged populations has often focused on the role of contact in reducing their prejudice and negative attitudes toward people of color or other disadvantaged groups, while research on people of color has often focused on experiences with discrimination (Makarova & Herzog, 2014; Ward & Leong, 2006). For both populations, there has been limited investigation of the role of intergroup contact in affecting actual behaviors (Dixon et al., 2012; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019). In general, intergroup contact scholarship has focused on prejudice and other attitudinal outcomes such as trust, and this is consistent with research in urban park contexts.

Attitudinal Outcomes of Intergroup Contact in Urban Parks

Intergroup contact in urban parks can be associated with both positive and negative outcomes, including those related to prejudice, trust, cultural awareness, and intergroup friendships (Neal et al., 2015; Peters & de Haan, 2011; Seeland et al., 2009). With regard to positive outcomes, intergroup contact in parks can increase intercultural awareness, reduce prejudice, and improve outgroup attitudes (Neal et al., 2015; Peters & de Haan, 2011; Seeland et al., 2009). For example, in their research in the Netherlands and England, respectively, Peters

and de Haan (2011) and Neal et al. (2015) suggested that just being together in shared spaces, even without interaction, can contribute to favorable attitudes toward the outgroup. Moreover, in a study in Switzerland, Seeland and colleagues (2009) emphasized the role of parks for developing friendships with people from outgroups. In neighborhood contexts, positive intergroup contact has even been shown to influence outgroup trust (Hewstone et al., 2006; Schmid et al., 2014). However, with regard to negative outcomes, other research suggests that intergroup contact in parks is often fleeting and therefore can reinforce pre-existing stereotypes or little effect on outgroup attitudes (Amin, 2002; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Valentine, 2008). In the worst cases, negative contact can lead to direct discrimination or violence (Harris et al., 2019; Mowatt, 2018b; Pettigrew & Hewstone, 2017; Pinckney et al., 2018). Thus, the outcomes of contact in urban parks vary widely across prior studies, underscoring the need for a more comprehensive assessment of the effects of park-based intergroup contact.

Connections between Intergroup Contact, Critical Consciousness, and Civic Engagement in Urban Parks

Across many community contexts, including parks (e.g., Peters & de Haan, 2011; Neal et al., 2015), scholars studying intergroup contact have typically focused on attitudinal outcomes, such as prejudice or trust (MacInnis & Hodson, 2019). However, in recent years, there have been calls for research to move beyond the investigation of these attitudinal outcomes and onto behavioral outcomes such as those related to civic engagement (MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013). Researchers have argued for the need to integrate the theories of intergroup contact and collective action-based civic engagement, suggesting the potential for a greater practical value of intergroup contact through connection with behavioral outcomes which help to advance social justice (Blinded 4; Dixon et al., 2012; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Wright

& Lubensky, 2013). Arguably these more active outcomes are what are essential to promoting social change for more equitable and just societies (MacInnis & Hodson, 2019). As MacInnis and Hodson (2019) suggest with regard to advantaged populations, positive attitudes toward disadvantaged populations that fail to impact actual behavior, support for policy change, or collective action may perpetuate inequities through maintenance of the status quo. Thus, the practical relevancy of intergroup contact in urban parks lies in its potential for affecting behaviors, not just attitudes. With this in mind, there have been calls for increased research on the relationships between intergroup contact and support for social justice, particularly those policies and collective actions that support disadvantaged populations (Dixon et al., 2012; Jackman & Crane, 1986; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019).

Collective action "refers to action by disadvantaged group members (and/or advantaged group member allies) aimed at reducing injustice/inequality and changing the status quo" (MacInnis & Hodson, 2019, p. 14). This type of civic engagement is critical for social change and it is such action, ideally from both advantaged and disadvantaged groups, that questions, disrupts, and changes the status quo (Dixon et al., 2012). It is based on the idea that one acts on behalf of a larger disadvantaged group (often their own) in an attempt to improve the group's position and wellbeing (Dixon et al., 2012; van Zomeren et al., 2012). Collective action as a form of civic engagement can manifest through channels such as advocacy, activism, and formal political participation (e.g., voting, policy or legislative support, etc.). Many of these behaviors even occur in park settings, which are often sites of activism and protests for various social justice causes (Arora, 2015).

Both intergroup contact and collective action can impact life and wellbeing within communities and public spaces. In terms of intergroup contact, negative contact and associated

negative intergroup attitudes can result in incidents of discrimination, violence, and intergroup conflict, and these issues have occurred in parks both historically and contemporarily (Barlow et al., 2012; Harris et al., 2019; Laurence, 2019; Mowatt, 2018b; Pinckney et al., 2018). More frequent and positive contact has the potential to help alleviate some of these concerns at the interpersonal or intergroup level in parks and other community settings (Allport, 1954; Hodson & Hewstone, 2013; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). However, discrimination also exists within and is heavily embedded in social and political systems (Feagin, 2013; Heberle et al., 2020), and intergroup contact theory alone does not offer an avenue for addressing such concerns. Collective action on the other hand encompasses the actions individuals take in an attempt to improve a marginalized group's societal position and address the relative deprivation that group has faced (Dixon et al., 2012; van Zomeren et al., 2012). Collective action is an important means of engagement for working toward a more equitable society and addressing more systemic concerns (e.g., systemic racism). If we are to address both interpersonal and systemic discrimination, integration of the constructs of intergroup contact and collective action offers a fruitful area for both empirical investigation and evidence-based practice.

On one hand, intergroup contact in community spaces has the potential to influence one's attitudes toward social justice and, in turn, increase their willingness to engage in behaviors supporting social justice, and this relationship can be true for members of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Bowman, 2011; Cakal et al., 2011; Mckeown & Taylor, 2017; Reimer et al., 2017; Turoy-Smith et al., 2013). Such connections between attitudes and behaviors can be understood through a variety of frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, which suggests that attitudes, along with other factors like norms and perceived behavioral control, influence behavioral intentions, and in turn, behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Torres-Harding et al., 2012).

For advantaged groups, it is positive intergroup contact that typically leads to stronger social justice attitudes and behaviors, whereas for disadvantaged groups, both positive and negative contact may influence attitudes and behaviors, albeit through different processes associated with awareness of discrimination and group inequality. The variation in outcomes associated with intergroup contact may be a function of one's critical consciousness, defined as "an individual's awareness of oppressive systemic forces in society" (Heberle et al., 2020, p. 525). Oppressive systems like racism or classism give power to some, while marginalizing others, and reinforce these power inequalities over time (Shin et al., 2016). Intergroup contact can affect one's awareness or perceptions of discrimination and inequalities associated with such oppressive systems, and studies have suggested that critical consciousness mediates the relationship between intergroup contact and attitudes and behaviors related to advancing social justice through collective action (Becker et al., 2013; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Ruck et al., 2011).

For members of disadvantaged groups, negative contact may cause a heightened awareness of discrimination and inequality, leading to collective action in support of social justice to address these inequalities (Reimer et al., 2017). Positive intergroup contact in the absence of critical consciousness, however, may have a negative effect on attitudes and behaviors for social justice among disadvantaged groups like people of color (Dixon et al., 2007, 2012; Laurence, 2019; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Reimer et al., 2017). This negative effect can occur when positive intergroup contact leads to the development of shared identities across groups as well as decreases in perceptions of discrimination and group inequality (i.e., critical consciousness), leading to a false sense of equality (Dixon et al., 2007, 2010; Laurence, 2019; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Reimer et al., 2017). Conversely, positive contact which supports critical consciousness development can simultaneously lead to intergroup friendships and

encourage collective action (Becker et al., 2013; Di Bernardo et al., 2019). Although these relationships have been documented in a variety of community contexts, there remains a lack of research specifically investigating these processes relative to public spaces such as urban parks.

Although the experience and direct outcomes of intergroup contact may be different for white individuals and people of color, it is clear that critical consciousness is an important component of these processes, and as such, should be examined as a mediating factor in these relationships. As MacInnis and Hodson (2019) assert, it is important to identify pathways and conditions which support intergroup contact that promotes collective action among both advantaged and disadvantaged groups, as collective action for social justice relies on the participation of both of these groups. A more thorough examination of the role of critical consciousness may help us to better understand these processes.

At the community level, public spaces like parks have the potential to serve as locations of diversity and intergroup contact. Parks are often touted as democratic spaces accessible to all, but the broader systemic inequalities of society transcend these spaces and can impact intergroup contact and relations (Harris et al., 2019; Mowatt, 2018a; Mumm, 2008). Although a small body of research has examined attitudinal outcomes of park-based intergroup contact related to intergroup attitudes, prejudice, and trust (Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Mullenbach, 2020; Neal et al., 2015; Peters, 2010; Peters et al., 2010; Seeland et al., 2009; Stodolska et al., 2017), these outcomes have varied significantly across studies, suggesting the need for a more comprehensive assessment extending beyond a single park or city. Moreover, given the role of parks as spaces of civic engagement and collective action (Arora, 2015), as well as repeated calls for research to integrate theories of intergroup contact and collective action (Dixon et al., 2012; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Wright & Lubensky, 2013), it is important for research to more thoroughly

examine the outcomes of intergroup contact which extend beyond attitudes and encompass behaviors related to advancing social justice and social change. The current study sought to address these needs by investigating the potential outcomes of intergroup contact in urban parks related to prejudice, trust, critical consciousness, and social justice civic attitudes and behaviors.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the outcomes of intergroup contact in urban parks across the United States and to assess potential variation in these outcomes for members of different racial and ethnic groups. Building off extant literature and existing research gaps, this study specifically examined the relationships between intergroup contact in urban parks, interracial trust, prejudice, critical consciousness, social justice civic attitudes, and social justice civic behaviors.

This study assessed the following overarching research questions: What are the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of intergroup contact in urban parks? And, do these outcomes differ by racial and ethnic group? Based on the literature, I hypothesized several relationships between the study constructs. These are listed below and visually represented in Figure 2. Exploratory paths, for which no specific hypotheses are provided, are represented by dotted lines in Figure 2. Exploratory paths indicate relationships that are theoretically and conceptually plausible, but for which less literature exists to help support a defined hypothesis. The term "park intergroup contact" reflects a two-dimensional construct encompassing both quantity and quality of contact (to be discussed in the measures section), with directional hypotheses reflecting the influence of more frequent and positive contact.

H1: Park intergroup contact will have a direct, positive relationship with interracial trust.

H2: Park intergroup contact will have a direct, negative relationship with prejudice.

H3: Interracial trust will have a direct, negative relationship with prejudice.

H4: Park intergroup contact will have a direct, positive relationship with critical consciousness.

H5: Prejudice will have a direct, negative relationship with social justice civic attitudes.

H6: Critical consciousness will have a direct, positive relationship with social justice civic attitudes.

H7: Critical consciousness will have a direct, positive relationships with social justice civic behaviors.

H8: Social justice civic attitudes will have a direct, positive relationship with social justice civic behaviors.

Figure 2. Hypothesized and Exploratory Paths

Methods

Sample

Data for this cross-sectional quantitative study was collected via an online Qualtrics panel survey of urban park users across cities and urban regions of the United States. Data collection occurred from October 27th to December 7th, 2020. A panel sample of 1,200 respondents was obtained from Qualtrics and tailored to certain population parameters. Qualtrics uses several identity screening procedures to ensure respondents are who they say they are, has a double opt-

in design to ensure respondents want to participate, and provides fair compensation appropriate for survey length. Respondents are compensated for completing the survey, and thus respondents who fail to reach the end of the survey are not compensated and their data is not retained. Throughout the data collection process, individual responses are examined and screened out if they completed the survey too quickly, provided "straight line" responses to Likert scale style questions, or provided nonsense answers to open-ended questions. These procedures are designed to ensure high-quality responses in the sample. Qualtrics does not provide information on response rate.

The sample included adults 18 years or older residing in urbanized areas. Individuals who did not meet these parameters were immediately screened out of the survey. The definition of urbanized areas is derived from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) locale framework, which is based on the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) definition (Geverdt, 2017). The NCES framework classifies zipcodes into four categories: city, suburban, town, and rural. This classification is based on both population size and proximity to urban areas (Geverdt, 2017). Zipcodes classified as city and suburban are census defined urbanized areas, meaning they have 50,000 or more people within them (United States Census Bureau, 2010). Individuals residing in NCES classified city and suburban zipcodes were eligible for participation in this study. A census matching regional quota was employed to ensure representation of respondents from across the country.

Rather than focusing on a nationally representative sample by race and ethnicity, which would provide a majority of Non-Hispanic white respondents, it was important for this study to have a racially and ethnically diverse sample given varied experiences with intergroup contact across racial and ethnic groups. Qualtrics balanced the completed sample representation by four

racial and ethnic groups (Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic Black or African American, Non-Hispanic Asian, and Hispanic of any race) as well as by gender (male and female). These groups were selected based on Qualtrics' pool of survey takers and their recruitment abilities. Although these four groups are certainly not comprehensive or inclusive of all racial and ethnic groups, they represent the most populous in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2019). Qualtrics aimed to balance the sample based on these categories, but the survey was open to anyone, regardless of whether they identified their gender, race, or ethnicity with these classifications. This inclusive approach was taken given that gender, race, and ethnicity classifications can simplify the complexity of individual experiences and identities. Furthermore, questions for gender, race, and ethnicity had many more response options, these categories are just the ones that Qualtrics used for survey recruitment procedures. Because Qualtrics balanced the survey across these pre-defined groups, if a survey quota had already been met for a certain group, say females, females attempting to take the survey after the quota had been met would be screened out.

      The average age of respondents in the sample was higher than the average adult age in the United States, and this was true for respondents in all racial and ethnic groups. Therefore, data were weighted based on the population age breakdown (of adults age 18+) within each racial and ethnic group as measured by the most recent U.S. Census data (United States Census Bureau, 2019). This helped to ensure continued representation across diverse racial and ethnic groups, while helping to make the sample more nationally representation of adults in the United States. The weighting procedure gave more weight to younger respondents, who were underrepresented in the sample, and less weight to older respondents who were overrepresented.

Measures

Park Intergroup Contact

Park intergroup contact was measured as a two-dimensional second order construct including both contact quantity and contact quality. Items were developed based on earlier work from Mowen et al. (2018), Prestwich et al. (2008), and Mckeown and Taylor (2017) to focus on a park and recreation context. Contact quantity and quality were assessed with four items each, utilizing seven-point bi-polar scales. Items were designed to reflect an individual's experience with people who are of different racial or ethnic backgrounds from their own, and items were worded as such. For example, one item read: "At the parks in your community, how much do you interact with people of different races or ethnicities? (e.g., make eye contact, wave, talk, participate in program together, etc.)." Intergroup contact items reflected both co-presence and interaction forms of contact.

Prejudice

Prejudice was assessed with the six-item measure from Finchilescu (2010). This scale measures aversion to an outgroup and was chosen given its versatility with different outgroup populations and demonstrated reliability (Finchilescu, 2010). Each item began with the statement: "I feel the following emotions toward people of other races or ethnicities in general," followed by a 7-point scale with choices between a pair of bipolar adjectives such as warm-cold, negative-positive, and friendly-hostile.

Interracial Trust

A four-item measure adapted from the social capital benchmark survey was used to assess interracial trust (Kennedy School of Government: Harvard University, 2000). The following item was asked on a 5-point scale from "not at all" to "a lot": "How much do you trust

(one item for each of the following: white people, Black/African American people, Asian people, and Middle Eastern people)? Then, one's own self-reported race is excluded and a composite score is compiled to represent the "latent propensity to trust those of another race" (Rudolph & Popp, 2010, p. 79). In cases where individuals reported their race as something other than one of these categories, a composite score was created with all four items. Because the composition of this index varied by respondent, this index score was used as a measured variable in the structural model.

Critical Consciousness

This study used a measure of contemporary critical consciousness focused specifically on racism, which was developed by Shin and colleagues (2016). Six items measured on seven-point Likert scales from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree were included. For example, one item read: "All Whites receive unearned privileges in U.S. society." The following three statements were reverse coded: "Reverse racism against whites is just as harmful as traditional racism," "Overall, whites are the most successful racial group because they work the hardest," and "Asian Americans are proof that any minority can succeed in this country".

Social Justice Civic Attitudes

To assess social justice civic attitudes, I used a subset of 9 attitude items from the Social Justice Scale (Torres-Harding et al., 2012). Items were measured on seven-point Likert scales from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. For example, one item read: "It is important to allow others to have meaningful input into decisions affecting their lives." The scale has been demonstrated to be a valid and reliable measure of attitudes related to social justice (Fietzer & Ponterotto, 2015; Torres-Harding et al., 2012). Per Torres-Harding et al. (2012), the following four items were reverse coded: "It is not important to make sure that all individuals and groups

have a chance to speak and be heard, especially those from traditionally ignored or marginalized groups," "It is not important to talk to others about societal systems of power, privilege, and oppression," "It is not important to promote fair and equitable allocation of bargaining powers, obligations, and resources in our society," and "It is not important to act for social justice."

Social Justice Civic Behaviors

A number of items were developed for this study to represent civic engagement behaviors related to social justice. I consulted Torres-Harding and colleagues' (2012) Social Justice Scale, which has a subscale measuring behavioral intentions related to a series of social justice behaviors. However, the behavioral intentions used in this scale are very broad and may lend themselves to high levels of agreement due to social desirability and an abstract conceptualization of what one may do in the future. I felt it more appropriate in the current study to examine actual behaviors which were more specific/tangible for respondents. Therefore, I developed four items based on specific civic engagement behaviors identified in prior literature (e.g., Chou et al., 2020; Doolittle & Faul, 2013; Noland, 2020) as related to social justice including those related to volunteering, donating to organizations that promote social justice, signing petitions, and social media engagement. These items were asked on seven-point Likert scales from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree.

Analysis

Analysis was conducted in SPSS version 26 and R version 4.0.0 with the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) served as the primary analytic approaches. The overall study from which this data is drawn included 1,213 respondents, 974 of whom (80%) had previously visited a park in their community. Only those who had previously visited a park in their community were asked

questions about park-based intergroup contact. Moreover, only respondents who reported at least some experience with park based intergroup contact (per intergroup contact quantity items) were asked about intergroup contact quality. A total of 943 respondents were asked questions about both quantity and quality of intergroup contact and were therefore eligible for this analysis. Twelve responses had a small amount of missing data. Little's MCAR test suggested data were missing completely at random, and therefore I used listwise deletion to eliminate these responses. Thus, a total of 931 responses were retained for analysis.

Race and ethnicity were measured separately as is done in the U.S. Census. Ethnicity was measured as a two category variable with response options listed as "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin" and "Not Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin." Response options for race included American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Middle Eastern or North African, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, White, and Other. Respondents selecting other were provided with a text entry box and asked to specify how they identify their race. Among those who answered other (n=28, 3%), 25 provided details in the text entry box. Fourteen reported Hispanic or Latino as their race, two reported a race encompassed by a prior category (e.g., "Caucasian" instead of "white"), six reported a race not listed in any prior categories (e.g., "Puerto Rican"), and four reported a multiracial identity (e.g., mixed race). Of the 28 who entered their race as other, all but 1 reported their ethnicity as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (and the 1 who did not was reclassified as white based on their response "Caucasian").

I applied Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach of assessing a measurement model and then testing a hypothesized structural model. CFA was used to test the structure of the measurement model, which included 6 hypothesized first order latent variables and 1 hypothesized second order latent variable. If the initial model did not exhibit good fit, a revised

model was tested; revisions were informed by item factor loadings, modification indices, and reliability statistics (Kim, 2017). Several model fit statistics including the χ^2 statistic, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) were consulted and reported for both the CFA and the SEM. Model fit was established using the following cutoff points: >.90 for TLI and CFI (Hu & Bentler, 1999), <.10 for RMSEA (Kline, 2016), and <.09 for SRMR (Hu & Bentler, 1999). I used maximum likelihood estimation with Yuan-Bentler corrected χ^2 and several robust versions of alternative fit measures (Brosseau-Liard et al., 2012; Brosseau-Liard & Savalei, 2014; Yuan & Bentler, 2000). For CFI and TLI, a Satorra-Bentler scaling constant was applied to produce estimates robust to violations of normality (Brosseau-Liard & Savalei, 2014). For RMSEA, the Li-Bentler robust statistic was used (Brosseau-Liard & Savalei, 2014; Li & Bentler, 2006). Cronbach's alpha coefficients were generated for the final measurement model, and values greater than 0.65 were deemed acceptable (Cortina, 1993; Vaske, 2008).

Once an acceptable model for the overall sample was obtained, I conducted measurement invariance testing by racial and ethnic group. First, configural invariance (an unconstrained model) is examined to determine whether the hypothesized structure of the measure is applicable for each group. If model fit statistics indicate a good fitting multi-group configural model, the researcher may proceed to testing metric invariance (S. T. H. Lee, 2018). Metric invariance testing investigates the equivalence of item factor loadings on their hypothesized latent constructs across groups by constraining them to be equal. Minimal change in model fit statistics between the configural and metric models and overall strong fit statistics for the metric model indicate metric invariance (Chen, 2007; Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). For the purposes of conducting measurement invariance testing by race and ethnicity, a four-category combined race

and ethnicity variable was created. This variable was used for invariance testing and group comparisons and was created with the following four categories: Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin of any race (n=234), Non-Hispanic white (n=217), Non-Hispanic Black or African American (n=235), and Non-Hispanic Asian (n=245).

Finally, SEM was used to test the hypothesized relationships between the latent variables. Figure 2 shows the initial hypothesized structural model which includes both hypothesized and exploratory paths.

Results

Sample Characteristics

Table 1 provides demographic information for the sample. The proportion of the sample from each U.S. region closely matched the U.S. population. In terms of race, 38% of the sample was white, 31% Black or African American, and 27% Asian. Twenty five percent of respondents were of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. The sample was closely balanced between male and female respondents. Household income was well distributed across the sample and a majority of respondents had some form of higher education. The average age of respondents was 46 years old (after data weighting, described above).

Table 1. Sample Demographics

Demographics	n	%
Region		
Midwest	194	20.9
Northeast	182	19.6
South	370	39.7
West	184	19.8
Race		
American Indian or Alaskan Native	6	0.6
Asian	250	26.8
Black or African American	291	31.3
Middle Eastern or North African	0	0.0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.1
White	354	38.1
Other	28	3.0
Ethnicity		
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	234	25.1
Non-Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	697	74.9
Gender		
Female	444	47.7
Male	485	52.2
Non-binary	1	0.1
Age	Mean = 46.0 (SD = 17.3)	
18-24	126	13.6
35-44	359	38.6
45-64	289	31.1
65 and older	156	16.7
Household Income		
$20,000 or less	68	7.6
$20,001 to $40,000	130	14.4
$40,001 to $60,000	135	15
$60,001 to $80,000	165	18.4
$80,001 to $100,000	93	10.3
$100,001 to $120,000	75	8.3
$120,001 to $140,000	44	4.9
Over $140,000	139	15.4
Education		
Some high school	22	2.4
High school diploma or GED	109	11.8
Some college	177	19.2
Associate's or Bachelor's degree	359	38.9
Graduate or professional degree	257	27.8

*May not total 100% due to rounding. May not total N due to non-response (on income and education)

Measurement Model

Model fit statistics for the initial measurement model indicated poor fit: χ^2= 2206.536, df = 483, p<.001, CFI = .808, TLI = .791, RMSEA = .096, SRMR = .122. Modification indices suggested the reverse coded items on the critical consciousness and social justice civic attitude constructs were problematic and exhibited low factor loadings (<.05) onto their hypothesized latent constructs. Therefore, the reverse coded attitude items (4) and critical consciousness items (3) were removed (see measures section for a listing of these items). Additionally, modification indices suggested adding a residual covariance between two prejudice items (Positive-Negative and Friendly-Hostile); given the conceptual similarities in these items, this covariance was included. The revised measurement model demonstrated strong fit: χ^2= 654.131, df = 286, p<.001, CFI = .947, TLI = .940, RMSEA = .060, SRMR = .063. All items in the final measurement model had statistically significant factor loadings greater than 0.5 for their respective latent constructs (Zhang et al., 2018), and each latent construct demonstrated sufficient reliability with Cronbach's alpha scores greater than 0.65 (Cortina, 1993; Vaske, 2008). Moreover, correlations between the latent factors were all below the recommended threshold of 0.9, suggesting sufficient discriminant validity between factors (Kline, 2016). Table 2 provides results of the final measurement model with descriptive statistics for all items and latent constructs.

Table 2. Items in Final Measurement Model with Descriptive Statistics

Latent Construct/Indicator	Mean	SD	B[g]	SE	β
Park Intergroup Contact[a] (α = .922) At the parks in your community...	5.1	1.2	-	-	-
Contact Quantity[b] (α = .915)	4.8	1.4	1.00	0.00	0.65
how much contact have you had with people of different races or ethnicities?	4.7	1.7	1.00	0.00	0.82
how much do you see people of different races or ethnicities?	5.0	1.5	0.90	0.04	0.84
how much do you interact with people of different races or ethnicities? (e.g., make eye contact, wave, talk, participate in program together, etc.)	4.8	1.6	1.00	0.04	0.88
how much do you see people of different races or ethnicities interacting? (e.g., gathering together, doing activities together, talking, etc.)	4.8	1.5	0.95	0.04	0.88
Contact Quality[c] (α = .939)	5.3	1.3	1.33	0.14	0.98
when you have contact with people of different races or ethnicities, do you find it pleasant or unpleasant?	5.3	1.4	1.00	0.00	0.88
when you interact with people of different races or ethnicities, do you find the contact pleasant or unpleasant?	5.3	1.4	0.97	0.03	0.90
when you see people of different races or ethnicities, do you find it pleasant or unpleasant?	5.3	1.3	0.96	0.03	0.91
when you see people of different races or ethnicities interacting, do you find these interactions to be pleasant or unpleasant?	5.4	1.4	0.97	0.03	0.88
Prejudice[d] (α = .918) I feel the following emotions toward people of other races or ethnicities in general	2.6	1.3	-	-	-
Warm - Cold	2.6	1.7	1.00	0.00	0.67
Positive - Negative	2.6	1.6	1.12	0.11	0.79
Friendly - Hostile	2.4	1.5	1.05	0.10	0.81
Trusting - Suspicious	2.8	1.5	1.15	0.09	0.87
Respect - Contempt	2.5	1.4	1.12	0.09	0.87
Admiration - Disgust	2.6	1.4	1.04	0.09	0.81
Critical Consciousness[e] (α = .786)	4.1	1.5	-	-	-
All Whites receive unearned privileges in U.S. society	4.2	1.8	1.00	0.00	0.75
The overrepresentation of Blacks and Latinos in prison is directly related to racist disciplinary policies in public schools	4.3	1.8	1.02	0.09	0.77
All Whites contribute to racism in the United States whether they intend to or not	3.8	1.8	0.95	0.07	0.71

Table 2. Items in Final Measurement Model with Descriptive Statistics (Continued)

Latent Construct/Indicator	Mean	SD	B[f]	SE	β
Social Justice Civic Attitudes[e] (α = .908)	5.4	1.2	-	-	-
It is important to try to change larger social conditions that cause individual suffering and impede well-being	5.1	1.5	1.00	0.00	0.79
It is important to promote the physical and emotional well-being of individuals and groups	5.4	1.5	1.05	0.06	0.86
It is important to respect and appreciate people's diverse social identities	5.6	1.3	0.91	0.06	0.83
It is important to allow others to have meaningful input into decisions affecting their lives	5.5	1.4	0.93	0.05	0.78
It is important to support community organizations and institutions that help individuals and group achieve their aims	5.2	1.5	1.02	0.06	0.82
Social Justice Civic Behaviors[e] (α = .901)	4.1	1.6	-	-	-
I volunteer for organizations that promote social justice	4.1	1.9	1.00	0.00	0.86
I donate to organizations that promote social justice	4.1	1.8	1.01	0.04	0.88
I sign petitions promoting social justice	4.4	1.8	0.93	0.05	0.82
I raise awareness about social injustices through posting on social media	4.0	1.9	0.93	0.04	0.78
Interracial Trust (Not in Measurement Model)[f]	3.3	0.9	-	-	-

[a]Park intergroup contact quantity and quality had a significant correlation of 0.59, p<.001
[b]Scale from 1=None at All to 7=A Great Deal
[c]Scale from 1=Very Unpleasant to 7=Very Pleasant
[d]Seven point bi-polar scales
[e]Scale from 1=Strongly Disagree to 7=Strongly Agree
[f]Scale from 1=Not at All to 5=A Great Deal
[g]For model identification purposes, one item on each latent factor is fixed to a loading of 1.00, factor loadings for all items were significant at p<.001

Measurement Invariance

Next, measurement invariance testing was conducted for each of the measures in the overall model to examine the equivalence of the hypothesized factor structure across four racial and ethnic groups: Non-Hispanic Asian, Non-Hispanic Black or African American, Non-Hispanic white, and Hispanic or Latino of any race. Model fit statistics were used to assess configural invariance, then, if confirmed, metric and scalar invariance were tested. Although the change in χ^2 between nested models was often significant, this finding is to be expected with large sample sizes (Putnick & Bornstein, 2016), and therefore other fit indices were consulted.

As recommended by Cheung and Rensvold (2002), a change in CFI smaller than 0.1 between nested models (e.g., from the Configural to Metric model) is indicative of invariance. Additionally, Chen (2007) suggested that changes between models in RMSEA and SRMR of less than 0.015 and 0.030, respectively indicate invariance.

Measures of park intergroup contact (quantity and quality), social justice civic attitudes, and social justice civic behaviors were invariant at the configural, metric, and scalar levels across race and ethnicity (Table 3). For these measures, all criteria were met for comparisons between configural and metric models, followed by comparisons between metric and scalar models. With regard to prejudice, model fit statistics for the configural model suggested mixed fit of the model to the data. CFI and SRMR suggested acceptable fit, but TLI and RMSEA suggested marginal fit. Given that comparative fit indices are not meant to serve as analogous to hypotheses tests, but rather indicate level of fit or misfit to the data, a marginally fitting model could still have practical value, but must be interpreted with caution and the consequences of accepting a model with marginal fit should be considered (Barrett, 2007). Given this suggestion and because of the central nature of prejudice in Allport's intergroup contact theory, I proceeded to test for metric and scalar invariance. Changes in model fit statistics between these nested models generally provided evidence of measurement invariance, although the change in SRMR from the configural to metric model exceeded the 0.030 threshold suggested by Chen (2007). As a result of these findings, I investigated whether the measure may be partially invariant across groups at the metric level (i.e., factor loadings), and found that 1) the factor loading for the Warm–Cold item was notably lower for white respondents and 2) the factor loading for the Admiration–Disgust item was quite low for Asian respondents. As Shi et al. (2019) identified, there are several possible explanations for partial invariance including that the item may indeed measure

the same construct across groups, but have a stronger weight in certain groups over others, or that the item may be interpreted differently by members of different groups. It is difficult to know which explanation is most appropriate. Given that very similar versions of this measure have been used in prior studies with racially and ethnically diverse samples (including Asian, Black, and white respondents; Cao & Lin, 2017; Paleari et al., 2019; Toit & Quayle, 2011), I opted to proceed with using the partially invariant measure of prejudice.

Furthermore, I was unable to test for measurement invariance on the revised critical consciousness measure, as it contained only 3 items, meaning the model could not be identified. As such, I concluded that comparisons by race and ethnicity would be appropriate for park intergroup contact, social justice civic attitudes, and social justice civic behaviors; and comparisons ought to be examined/interpreted with caution for both critical consciousness and prejudice. Metric invariance across groups typically indicates the appropriateness of group comparisons based on factor variances and covariances, whereas scalar invariance indicates appropriateness of mean comparisons (S. T. H. Lee, 2018). Only covariance-based analyses (i.e., SEM) were conducted across groups, but given only partial evidence of metric invariance for prejudice and an inability to test measurement invariance for critical consciousness, subsequent analyses must be interpreted with caution.

Table 3. Measurement Invariance Testing

Measure	χ^2	p	df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Park Intergroup Contact							
Configural	224.369	<.001	76	0.931	0.953	0.092	0.034
Metric	254.533	<.001	94	0.942	0.951	0.086	0.052
Scalar	259.974	<.001	109	0.949	0.951	0.077	0.055
Social Justice Civic Attitudes							
Configural	56.361	<.001	20	0.905	0.953	0.088	0.037
Metric	78.942	<.001	32	0.933	0.946	0.079	0.072
Scalar	105.253	<.001	44	0.939	0.932	0.077	0.081
Social Justice Civic Behaviors							
Configural	33.412	<.001	8	0.904	0.968	0.117	0.027
Metric	50.248	<.001	17	0.954	0.967	0.092	0.046
Scalar	57.142	<.001	26	0.971	0.969	0.072	0.051
Prejudice							
Configural	152.629	<.001	36	0.829	0.897	0.118	0.053
Metric	195.726	<.001	51	0.859	0.880	0.111	0.099
Scalar	225.064	<.001	66	0.885	0.874	0.102	0.106

Full Structural Model

Next, I tested the hypothesized structural model (Figure 2) which demonstrated strong model fit: χ^2=687.562, p<.001, df = 308, TLI = .940, CFI = .947, RMSEA = .036, SRMR = .060. This model produced a total of 9 direct, significant paths and accounted for 46% of the variance in social justice civic behaviors (the most distal outcome). Figure 3 shows only the significant paths, but statistics for all hypothesized and exploratory paths are shown in Table 4. More frequent and positive intergroup contact in parks was positively related to critical consciousness, interracial trust, social justice civic attitudes, and social justice civic behaviors. Park intergroup contact was negatively related to prejudice such that those who reported more frequent and positive intergroup contact reported lower levels of prejudice. Critical consciousness was positively related to social justice civic attitudes and behaviors. Prejudice and interracial trust were negatively associated with attitudes such that higher levels of prejudice and interracial trust

were associated with less strong social justice civic attitudes. Finally, in addition to being

predicted by park based intergroup contact, interracial trust was a significant, positive predictor

of critical consciousness. Overall, several of the study hypotheses were supported.

Table 4. Paths in Structural Model

Dependent Variable	R^2	Independent Variables	B	SE	β	p	Hypothesis[1]
Trust	.220	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.369**	**0.047**	**0.469**	**0.000**	**H1: Yes**
Prejudice	.368	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**-0.618**	**0.092**	**-0.603**	**0.000**	**H2: Yes**
		Trust	-0.009	0.082	-0.007	0.915	H3: No
Critical Consciousness	.102	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.253**	**0.112**	**0.208**	**0.023**	**H4: Yes**
		Trust	**0.320**	**0.118**	**0.207**	**0.007**	**Exp: Yes**
		Prejudice	0.105	0.100	0.089	0.295	Exp: No
Social Justice Civic Attitudes	.565	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.643**	**0.073**	**0.584**	**0.000**	**Exp: Yes**
		Trust	**-0.123**	**0.054**	**-0.088**	**0.023**	**Exp: Yes**
		Prejudice	**-0.173**	**0.067**	**-0.161**	**0.010**	**H5: Yes**
		Critical Consciousness	**0.228**	**0.048**	**0.252**	**0.000**	**H6: Yes**
Social Justice Civic Behaviors	.457	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.405**	**0.123**	**0.275**	**0.001**	**Exp: Yes**
		Trust	0.112	0.080	0.060	0.162	Exp: No
		Prejudice	0.001	0.076	0.001	0.989	Exp: No
		Critical Consciousness	**0.725**	**0.077**	**0.597**	**0.000**	**H7: Yes**
		Social Justice Civic Attitudes	-0.168	0.095	-0.126	0.077	H8: No

Significant paths are bolded.
[1]Exp. signifies an exploratory path.

Figure 3. Final Structural Model (Significant Paths)

Comparisons by Race and Ethnicity[1]

Next the structural model was examined for each of the four racial and ethnic groups. The model had a strong fit for both Hispanic or Latino and Black or African American respondents. Model fit was poor for Asian and white respondents (Table 5). Across groups, more frequent and positive park intergroup contact was associated with higher levels of interracial trust and stronger social justice civic attitudes. For all but Asian respondents, more frequent and positive intergroup contact was associated with lower levels of prejudice; there was no significant relationship between contact and prejudice for Asian respondents. For white respondents, park intergroup contact had a direct, positive relationship with social justice civic behaviors, such that more frequent and positive contact was associated with greater engagement in civic behaviors, but for the other groups, this relationship was not significant. Critical consciousness had a significant, positive relationship with social justice civic behaviors across all racial and ethnic groups, and for Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino respondents, it was positively associated with social justice civic attitudes as well. Figure 4 provides a visual representation of significant paths (and whether they are positive or negative relationships) for each group. Full details of group analyses can be found in Table 6.

Table 5. SEM Model Fit across Groups

Model	N	$\chi2$	p	df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Overall Sample	931	687.562	<.001	308	0.940	0.947	0.036	0.060
Hispanic or Latino or Any Race	234	531.433	<.001	308	0.927	0.936	0.056	0.067
Black or African American	235	517.002	<.001	308	0.918	0.928	0.054	0.070
Asian	245	1045.878	<.001	308	0.726	0.759	0.099	0.109
White	217	901.798	<.001	308	0.809	0.832	0.094	0.096

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[1] Due to prejudice only having partial measurement invariance, an additional, more conservative model was conducted without prejudice. The relationships between other constructs were consistent across the models, but for interested readers, results of this additional analysis can be found in the Appendix.

Figure 4. Final Structural Model by Racial or Ethnic Group (Significant Paths)

Table 6. Paths in Modified Structural Model by Race and Ethnicity

Dependent Variable	R^2	Independent Variables	B	SE	β	p
Hispanic or Latino of Any Race						
Trust	.298	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.422**	**0.072**	**0.546**	**<.001**
Prejudice	.340	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**-0.733**	**0.186**	**-0.562**	**<.001**
		Trust	**-0.066**	**0.191**	**-0.037**	**0.730**
Critical Consciousness	.136	Park Intergroup Contact	0.125	0.146	0.096	0.392
		Trust	**0.397**	**0.171**	**0.235**	**0.020**
		Prejudice	-0.114	0.086	-0.120	0.185
Social Justice Civic Attitudes	.698	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.692**	**0.158**	**0.550**	**<.001**
		Trust	-0.082	0.118	-0.050	0.490
		Prejudice	**-0.229**	**0.088**	**-0.250**	**0.009**
		Critical Consciousness	**0.282**	**0.074**	**0.293**	**<.001**
Social Justice Civic Behaviors	.293	Park Intergroup Contact	0.189	0.232	0.144	0.417
		Trust	0.195	0.160	0.115	0.222
		Prejudice	0.122	0.090	0.128	0.175
		Critical Consciousness	**0.447**	**0.116**	**0.446**	**<.001**
		Social Justice Civic Attitudes	0.025	0.182	0.024	0.890
Black or African American						
Trust	.255	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.463**	**0.078**	**0.505**	**<.001**
Prejudice	.400	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**-0.875**	**0.186**	**-0.701**	**<.001**
		Trust	0.238	0.123	0.175	0.053
Critical Consciousness	.070	Park Intergroup Contact	0.113	0.176	0.111	0.521
		Trust	0.234	0.144	0.212	0.105
		Prejudice	0.094	0.153	0.116	0.537
Social Justice Civic Attitudes	.564	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.676**	**0.179**	**0.521**	**<.001**
		Trust	-0.141	0.111	-0.100	0.203
		Prejudice	-0.210	0.126	-0.201	0.096
		Critical Consciousness	**0.474**	**0.160**	**0.370**	**0.003**
Social Justice Civic Behaviors	.438	Park Intergroup Contact	0.389	0.251	0.279	0.113
		Trust	0.199	0.142	0.128	0.162
		Prejudice	0.022	0.130	0.019	0.866
		Critical Consciousness	**0.737**	**0.272**	**0.524**	**0.007**
		Social Justice Civic Attitudes	-0.047	0.176	-0.043	0.787

Dependent Variable	R^2	Independent Variables	B	SE	β	p
**Table 6. Paths in Modified Structural Model by Race and Ethnicity (Continued)**							

Dependent Variable	R^2	Independent Variables	B	SE	β	p
Asian						
Trust	.138	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.312**	**0.091**	**0.372**	**<.001**
Prejudice	.253	Park Intergroup Contact	-0.307	0.190	-0.375	0.105
		Trust	-0.219	0.138	-0.224	0.113
Critical Consciousness	.171	Park Intergroup Contact	0.018	0.149	0.021	0.905
		Trust	**0.437**	**0.157**	**0.436**	**0.005**
		Prejudice	0.215	0.237	0.210	0.365
Social Justice Civic Attitudes	.434	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.426**	**0.078**	**0.584**	**<.001**
		Trust	0.017	0.079	0.019	0.832
		Prejudice	-0.060	0.076	-0.067	0.430
		Critical Consciousness	0.138	0.076	0.159	0.070
Social Justice Civic Behaviors	.423	Park Intergroup Contact	0.100	0.180	0.065	0.579
		Trust	-0.075	0.195	-0.041	0.699
		Prejudice	-0.213	0.140	-0.113	0.128
		Critical Consciousness	**1.241**	**0.414**	**0.672**	**0.003**
		Social Justice Civic Attitudes	-0.186	0.248	-0.088	0.454
White						
Trust	.248	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.327**	**0.097**	**0.498**	**<.001**
Prejudice	.524	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**-0.522**	**0.189**	**-0.786**	**0.006**
		Trust	0.149	0.107	0.147	0.166
Critical Consciousness	.200	Park Intergroup Contact	0.608	0.421	0.399	0.149
		Trust	0.362	0.495	0.156	0.465
		Prejudice	0.184	0.425	0.080	0.666
Social Justice Civic Attitudes	.599	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.809**	**0.208**	**0.788**	**<.001**
		Trust	**-0.386**	**0.169**	**-0.247**	**0.023**
		Prejudice	0.056	0.285	0.036	0.844
		Critical Consciousness	0.143	0.097	0.212	0.140
Social Justice Civic Behaviors	.667	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.887**	**0.381**	**0.572**	**0.020**
		Trust	-0.017	0.258	-0.007	0.946
		Prejudice	0.344	0.335	0.147	0.303
		Critical Consciousness	**0.644**	**0.097**	**0.632**	**<.001**
		Social Justice Civic Attitudes	-0.308	0.292	-0.204	0.290

Significant paths are bolded.

Discussion

Although research suggests urban parks provide opportunities for intergroup contact

(e.g., Hillier et al., 2016; Blinded 1), the potential outcomes of contact in parks are less well

understood. Prior research suggested that intergroup contact in parks can increase intercultural awareness, reduce prejudice, and improve outgroup attitudes (Neal et al., 2015; Peters & de Haan, 2011; Seeland et al., 2009), but it can also reinforce pre-existing stereotypes, fail to influence intergroup attitudes, or lead to direct discrimination or violence toward people of color (Amin, 2002; Harris et al., 2019; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Mowatt, 2018b; Pinckney et al., 2018; Valentine, 2008). The documented outcomes of contact in urban parks have varied widely in prior studies, although variance in outcomes may be, in part, attributable to different cultural and historical contexts, small samples or case studies at individual parks, and varied consideration of the dimensions of contact- both quantity and quality. The present study sought to provide a more comprehensive assessment of the outcomes of intergroup contact in urban parks, specifically within the United States. Findings suggest that intergroup contact in parks is associated with both attitudinal and behavioral factors. Specifically, more frequent and positive intergroup contact in parks was associated with lower levels of prejudice, higher levels of interracial trust, higher levels of critical consciousness, stronger social justice civic attitudes, and greater engagement in social justice civic behaviors, and many of these relationships were robust across racial and ethnic groups. While these factors are treated as outcomes in this study based on prior literature and the directionality of the analysis, it is also important to keep in mind that many of these relationships could be more complex, and some of these "outcomes" could be predictors of intergroup contact as well. For instance, some research has identified a bi-directional relationship between prejudice and intergroup contact, and although the influence of contact on prejudice far outweighs the influence of prejudice on contact, the relationship can go both ways (Hewstone et al., 2006; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Thus, although the term outcome is used here, it is possible these relationships are more complex. The following sections provide a

discussion of the relationships identified in this study and their implications relative to the social justice contributions of urban parks.

Prejudice

Allport's (1954) initial intergroup contact theory suggested that more frequent and positive intergroup contact (occurring as a result of various favorable conditions, see Chapter 3) would lead to reductions in intergroup prejudice. Findings of this study provide direct support for intergroup contact theory in the context of U.S. urban parks, extending findings from studies in Europe which have suggested connections between park based intergroup contact and intergroup attitudes (Neal et al., 2015; Peters & de Haan, 2011; Seeland et al., 2009). The relationship between contact and prejudice was strong among Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, and white respondents. This relationship between more frequent, positive contact and prejudice is encouraging and demonstrates the potential for parks to contribute to prejudice reduction.

However, the measure of prejudice used in this study was only partially invariant across the four racial and ethnic groups, and thus future research is needed to better understand differences across racial and ethnic groups. It is possible that the very general wording applied in this study for the prejudice measure ("I feel the following emotions toward people of other races or ethnicities in general...") contributed to the varied interpretation of some items, as the attitudinal object this wording evoked could have varied greatly across study participants. The partial invariance of the prejudice measure is a finding in and of itself, and, to my knowledge, invariance testing had not previously been conducted on this measure; partial invariance indicates that new measures of prejudice may need to be developed to allow for robust comparisons across racial and ethnic groups. However, it is also important to remember that the

classification by race and ethnicity in this study likely simplified the real-life complexity of these

characteristics, and the groups used for comparisons were limited based on the recruitment

capacity of Qualtrics.

Furthermore, although the joint consideration of race and ethnicity as a single variable is

widely accepted and frequently used, it is not without critique. For instance, the use of a category

which encompasses all Hispanic or Latino respondents, regardless of their reported race, may be

very heterogeneous. Alternatively, even though race and ethnicity were asked in the survey as

separate questions, there was a substantial portion of respondents who reported both their

ethnicity and their race as Hispanic or Latino, indicating notable overlap in how these

demographic attributes are understood by survey takers. Furthermore, some researchers have

critiqued the use of race and ethnicity as comparison variables more broadly, suggesting they are

often incorrectly used to uncover "preferences" rather than to understand the influence of

systemic factors, which would be a more appropriate use (Arai & Kivel, 2009; Floyd, 2007;

Mowatt, 2018a). Findings of the current study provide some initial evidence supporting the

connection between more frequent and positive intergroup contact in parks and lower prejudice,

but more research and ideally new measures are needed to better understand this relationship.

Interracial Trust

Results indicate that more frequent and positive contact in urban parks is associated with

higher levels of interracial trust, and this relationship was robust across racial and ethnic groups.

This finding is particularly interesting in the context of urban park discourse. As discussed by

Mullenbach et al. (2021), much of the discourse surrounding urban parks and public spaces has

focused on the role of parks in bridging social divides, with many organizations and initiatives in

these fields suggesting that social interactions across people from different racial and ethnic

groups in public spaces would result in higher levels of community trust. Mullenbach et al. (2021) specifically tested this component of urban park discourse, examining the extent to which intergroup contact in parks and public spaces was associated with trust in community members and institutions (e.g., neighbors, local government, police). That study found a significant relationship between positive intergroup contact in parks and trust for Black or African American park users, but no significant relationships were found for negative intergroup contact among Blacks or African American park users or either form of contact among white users. The authors suggested that intergroup contact in parks may not be enough to influence broader levels of community trust and that contact may be limited due to residential segregation.

In the current study, I focused specifically on interracial trust, arguably a more proximal variable to intergroup contact that is more closely aligned with intergroup contact theory than general community trust; the varied proximity of these types of trust may be one explanation for the difference in findings. Furthermore, perhaps there are other, stronger factors which influence community trust or serve as mediators between park contact and community trust. Findings of the current study indicate promising relationships for the role of frequent and positive contact in increasing interracial trust. However, agencies employing intentional efforts focused on increasing interracial trust through contact in parks must be especially mindful to create park conditions which promote positive contact, as negative contact occurring in the absence of these conditions is likely to undermine interracial trust and other desired outcomes like prejudice reduction. For instance, prior research has indicated that negative contact occurring in unfavorable conditions can result in increased prejudice and stereotypes (Amin, 2002; Harris et al., 2019; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Valentine, 2008). Conditions which support more frequent and positive intergroup contact in parks include the provision of welcoming and safe

environments for all, as supported by equitable and inclusive engagement and representation

(e.g., inclusive and relevant programs and events, input in decision making, and representation of

racial and ethnic diversity among staff, leadership, media and promotional materials, etc. See

Chapter 3). Thus, in line with a suggestion from Mullenbach et al. (2021) regarding community

trust, if park agencies wish to provide park environments which support interracial trust and

prejudice reduction, they should first focus on broader aspects of equitable and inclusive park

management.

Intergroup Contact, Critical Consciousness, and Civic Engagement

Findings of this study also demonstrate a connection between park-based intergroup

contact and civic engagement, partially mediated by critical consciousness. Overall, more

frequent and positive intergroup contact in parks was associated with higher critical

consciousness, stronger social justice civic attitudes, and greater engagement in social justice

civic behaviors. These findings provide support for the role of intergroup contact in influencing

not just intergroup attitudes, but broader attitudes toward social justice and actual behaviors in

support of social justice. This is especially important given that the practical relevance of

intergroup contact for more socially just societies arguably lies in the potential for contact to

influence not just intergroup attitudes, but behaviors in support of intergroup equality and social

justice (Dixon et al., 2012; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Wright & Lubensky, 2013). At the group

level, intergroup contact in parks had a direct effect on behaviors only for white respondents,

indicating differences in these relationships across racial and ethnic groups. There are a variety

of potential explanations for these differences. First, prior research has suggested critical

consciousness as an especially important mediator between contact and civic behaviors for

people of color, as more frequent and positive contact occurring in the absence of critical

consciousness can have a sedative effect on civic behaviors (Dixon et al., 2007, 2010; Laurence, 2019; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Riemer et al., 2017). However, for people of color in this sample, there were no direct relationships between contact and either critical consciousness or civic behaviors. It is possible that people of color, especially as compared to whites, may have more factors influencing their critical consciousness and social justice behaviors, so the remaining variance to be influenced by intergroup contact in parks may be small. Furthermore, given lasting impacts of residential segregation, it is possible that white individuals may be less likely to experience intergroup contact in their everyday lives than people of color (see Chapter 4), and perhaps contact in parks is therefore more novel and impactful for them. Residential segregation coupled with known inequities in park distribution and quality across urban areas may be factors limiting intergroup contact in parks (Mullenbach, 2020).

Despite the presence of this relationship among only one group, it is an important and meaningful finding. The connection between intergroup contact in parks and both attitudes and behaviors indicates a potential collective action pathway in the form of allyship, and as suggested by MacInnis and Hodson (2019), it is important to identify pathways between contact and collective action among both advantaged and disadvantaged groups because social change relies on the participation of both. Whites are currently the societal majority group in the United States and this position affords white individuals both power and influence that can support positive social change. For Hispanic or Latino and Asian respondents, park intergroup contact had an indirect relationship with behaviors as mediated through trust and critical consciousness, providing empirical evidence to support the role of critical consciousness in linking intergroup contact in parks with social justice civic behaviors.

Although contact was positively associated with social justice civic attitudes among all groups, attitudes did not have a significant relationship with behaviors. This finding stands in contrast to prior studies on intergroup contact in other contexts that have found positive associations between contact, attitudes, and behaviors (Bowman, 2011; Cakal et al., 2011; Mckeown & Taylor, 2017; Reimer et al., 2017; Turoy-Smith et al., 2013). A lack of connection between attitudes and behaviors in this study is likely due to the fact that the attitude measure used in this study was very general, whereas the behavior measure I developed was very specific. In other words, I did not assess individuals' attitudes toward the specific behaviors I examined. Had the attitude and behavior measures been more aligned, it is possible this relationship would have been significant, and additional mediating paths would have been present in the model.

Limitations and Future Research

Data were collected through a Qualtrics panel, which importantly allowed for a racially and ethnically diverse sample and a virtual investigation of the research topic during a time when in-person data collection was severely restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Qualtrics panel data have several limitations which must be acknowledged. Qualtrics only keeps data for respondents who complete the survey. Thus, people who experience survey fatigue, are too busy to finish, or get distracted and fail to complete it are excluded from the sample. In a sense, listwise deletion is completed before data is received by the research team, and therefore missing data is typically very limited with Qualtrics panel studies. Moreover, Qualtrics does not provide information on response rate and they provide only limited details on where respondents are recruited from. Qualtrics could only target/promote the survey to four racial and ethnic groups, and despite the fact that the survey was open to anyone, all respondents identified themselves as belonging to one of these groups. It took a lot longer to get a substantial number of

respondents who were Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino than it did to obtain similar numbers of respondents who were white or Asian, which could perhaps indicate 1) the size of the respondent pools that Qualtrics has for each of these groups or 2) that the topic of the survey was more interesting/appealing to certain individuals over others. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the timing of this study. Data collection began right before the 2020 U.S. election and in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, more specifically the late fall spike in cases. Both of these contextual factors could have impacted perceptions of certain study variables.

Moreover, some of the measures intended for use in this study exhibited poor reliability and negatively impacted the fit of the measurement model. In particular, reverse coded items on the critical consciousness and social justice civic attitude scales did not load well onto their respective factors; there could be several explanations for this finding. First, items on both the critical consciousness and social justice civic attitude scales could have been perceived as controversial or contentious issues, particularly during our nation's heightened political polarization at the time of the 2020 general election. Second, it is possible that items with reverse wording were confusing for respondents or that they failed to read them closely enough to discern their directionality. Irrespective of the cause, the removal of these items from the measurement model and subsequent structural model reduced the scope of the concepts reflected in the latent constructs for both critical consciousness and social justice civic attitudes. Although the resulting latent constructs were still valuable and meaningful, future studies should consider alternative approaches to the measurement of these concepts. The three-item measure of critical consciousness was not suitable for measurement invariance testing, underscoring the need to interpret model comparisons across groups with caution and improve measurement of this

construct in future research. Finally, given the types of questions and relatively sensitive topics examined in this study, there could have been an element of social desirability where respondents may have indicated more favorable interracial or social justice attitudes than perhaps they actually have. However, regarding prejudice, for example, there is evidence to suggest high correlations between explicit and implicit-association measures, particularly when respondents are encouraged to be honest (Phillips & Olson, 2014). As Phillips and Olson (2014) suggested regarding social desirability, the motivation to appear unprejudiced when taking a survey is likely "not as strong or as easily evoked as the motive to appear non-prejudiced in, for example, an interracial interaction" (p. 131). Future studies could incorporate implicit association-based measures in addition to self-report measures to help limit the risk of social desirability impacting responses and provide evidence of correlations between measures.

Civic behaviors in this study included those related to signing petitions, engaging on social media, donating, and volunteering. However, the scope of civic behaviors for social justice encompasses additional actions such as participating in protests, voting, and contacting elected officials (Blinded 5). Future research should continue to examine the relationship between intergroup contact in parks and various behaviors in support of social justice, ideally with a more comprehensive measure of behaviors. This study focused on adults, but research on intergroup contact among youth in park and recreation settings offers a fruitful area for future investigation, particularly given evidence to suggest more frequent and positive intergroup contact at parks among youth compared to adults (See Chapter 4). Given that youth are generally more receptive to people who are different from them (e.g., diverse children naturally playing together on a playground; Chapter 4), multigenerational contexts may offer unique opportunities for

encouraging more frequent and positive intergroup contact among adults; future studies should explore intergroup contact in multigenerational recreation spaces.

Future studies should continue to investigate intergroup contact in public parks and various attitudinal and behaviors factors. Focusing on locations of contact at specific areas or amenities within parks (e.g., playgrounds, fitness stations, and basketball courts) may help to provide additional evidence on the conditions which support contact, and in turn, various outcomes. GIS or participatory mapping approaches paired with survey or interview data may be effective tools for such investigations. Finally, future research should expand investigations of recreation-based intergroup contact to include other public community facilities including recreation centers, fitness centers, and swimming pools.

Conclusion

This study provides evidence of the outcomes of intergroup contact in urban parks among racially and ethnically diverse residents of U.S. urban areas. Findings suggest that park-based intergroup contact is associated with both attitudinal and behavioral factors. Across diverse racial and ethnic groups, more frequent and positive intergroup contact in parks was associated with lower levels of prejudice, higher levels of interracial trust, and stronger social justice civic attitudes. Among white respondents, intergroup contact in parks had a direct, positive association with civic behaviors in support of social justice, suggesting an important allyship pathway that should be investigated further. Overall, findings underscore the importance of both quantity and quality of contact, and park agencies seeking to stimulate intergroup contact with these goals in mind should focus on creating environments conducive to frequent and positive contact. Providing welcoming and safe environments for all, as supported by equitable and inclusive engagement and representation can stimulate more frequent and positive contact, which in turn,

may help to reduce prejudice, increase interracial trust, strengthen social justice civic attitudes, and in some cases, increase engagement in social justice civic behaviors.

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Blinded 1.

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Chapter 3 Assessing the Conditions Supporting Frequent and Positive Intergroup Contact in Urban Parks: The Role of Engagement and Representation and Sense of Welcome and Belonging

Abstract

Urban parks have been touted as spaces of diversity and democracy that have the potential to foster intergroup contact among racially and ethnically diverse visitors. However, the extent to which urban parks facilitate intergroup contact and the factors related to contact are less understood. Using a quantitative panel study of racially and ethnically diverse U.S. urban residents (n=931), this study investigated the influence of community diversity, motivations to visit parks, perceived engagement and representation, safety, and sense of welcome and belonging upon intergroup contact in urban parks. Results demonstrated more frequent and positive intergroup contact when individuals perceived a greater sense of welcome and belonging and when they perceived more engagement and representation. These results suggest that urban park agencies seeking to increase sense of welcome and belonging or frequency of positive intergroup contact should focus on engagement and representation (as reflected through inclusive programs and events, input in decision making, and representation of racial and ethnic diversity) and safety.

Introduction

As urban areas become increasingly diverse, intergroup contact between individuals from different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups may become more commonplace. Spaces in the public realm, such as parks, plazas, and community centers have been touted as spaces of diversity and democracy, and these public recreation spaces have the potential to foster intergroup contact among racially and ethnically diverse visitors (Low et al., 2009; Valentine, 2008; Wessel, 2009). Intergroup contact occurring in public spaces can have both positive and negative consequences at individual, community, and societal levels, and such consequences depend largely on conditions and quality of contact (Allport, 1954; Hodson & Hewstone, 2013; Wessel, 2009). Intergroup contact theory, originally put forth by Allport in 1954, suggested four conditions that can support more frequent and positive contact, and in turn, reductions in outgroup prejudice. These conditions included support from institutions, shared goals and cooperation, equal status of individuals, and development of intergroup relationships (Allport, 1954); however, all of these conditions need not occur simultaneously for the elicitation of positive outcomes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Importantly, more frequent and positive intergroup contact occurring under favorable conditions can reduce prejudice, increase awareness of discrimination and group inequalities, and encourage civic engagement attitudes and behaviors related to advancing social justice (Allport, 1954; Di Bernardo et al., 2019; MacInnis & Hodson, 2019; Mckeown & Taylor, 2017; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Ruck et al., 2011; Turoy-Smith et al., 2013). Conversely, in the absence of favorable conditions, contact can be negative and result in intergroup conflict, discrimination, or violence, which unfortunately remain common in the United States (Barlow et al., 2012; Harris et al., 2019; Laurence, 2019).

Urban parks are especially relevant to the topic of intergroup contact, given their histories as contested spaces and sites of both intergroup conflict and intergroup cooperation (Harris et al., 2019; Hillier et al., 2016; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Mowatt, 2018b; Peters et al., 2010; Priest et al., 2014; Stodolska et al., 2011). Systemic inequalities transcend park spaces, and parks can mirror broader societal aspects of power and control (Mowatt, 2018b, 2018a). Parks are spaces where intergroup relations manifest both in the form of interpersonal interactions and systemic inequalities; as such, parks have been documented as sites of both negative and positive contact (Harris et al., 2019; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Neal et al., 2015; Peters, 2010; Peters & de Haan, 2011; Seeland et al., 2009). Negative contact can include things such as dirty looks, rude gestures and comments, racist or discriminatory language, and violence, while positive contact can manifest through friendly gestures, conversations, and interactions. Parks have the potential for frequent and repeated visitation and are spaces where people pursue shared interests; therefore, they provide several pre-conditions to facilitating shared identities and relationships across users, which can stimulate positive intergroup contact (Freeman, 2012; Shinew et al., 2004; Wessel, 2009). Given these factors, urban parks represent a relevant context for the study of intergroup contact in community spaces, but to date, relatively little research attention has been given to this topic.

Aligning with and extending Allport's (1954) initial theory, forthcoming research indicates that more frequent and positive intergroup contact in urban parks is associated with a variety of positive outcomes including higher interracial trust, lower prejudice, stronger civic attitudes toward social justice, and more frequent civic engagement behaviors in support of social justice (See Chapter 2). Therefore, understanding the conditions which support more frequent and positive contact, particularly those which can be influenced by park managers and

stewards, could aid in the development of practical strategies to increase the quantity and quality of intergroup contact in urban parks, and in turn, stimulate a variety of positive outcomes (Blinded 1; Hillier et al., 2016) . Furthermore, given historical and contemporary factors impacting park experiences, it is important to understand the conditions related to intergroup contact among diverse park users, particularly because experiences with intergroup contact are known to vary between whites and people of color.

Knowledge of the conditions in urban parks that relate to both the quantity and quality of intergroup contact remains limited, yet has been identified as an important area for future scholarship (Blinded 1). Moreover, there are currently initiatives such as Reimagining the Civic Commons which seek to stimulate intergroup contact in the form of "socioeconomic mixing" in urban parks (Reimagining the Civic Commons, 2020), but evidence supporting and informing such initiatives remains limited. Without a thorough understanding of the conditions supporting frequent and positive contact, initiatives to influence intergroup contact may be well-intentioned, but could inadvertently stimulate negative contact and therefore have negative consequences for park users. However, practices based on empirical evidence could help support efforts to both reduce negative contact and foster positive contact. Given the importance of considering contact quality (i.e., positive vs. negative contact) and contact quantity, the position of parks as manifesting intergroup relations, and the role of parks as settings of hobbies and shared interests, urban parks represent an important and promising context to examine intergroup contact. This study investigated intergroup contact in urban parks with a focus on assessing what conditions relate to quantity and quality of intergroup contact among racially and ethnically diverse park users.

Literature Review

Intergroup Contact in Parks

Intergroup contact theory, discussed here relative to contact between people of different races and ethnicities, specifically posits that frequent, positive contact between different groups occurring under favorable conditions can lead to reductions in prejudice toward members of another group (Allport, 1954; Hodson & Hewstone, 2013). Contact is generally considered as a two-dimensional construct, reflecting both quantity (or frequency) of contact, and quality, the extent to which it is perceived as negative or positive (Mckeown & Taylor, 2017; Turoy-Smith et al., 2013). Research has repeatedly emphasized the importance of both quantity and quality of intergroup contact, suggesting that favorable outcomes arise from more frequent and positive contact (Allport, 1954; Hodson & Hewstone, 2013; Mckeown & Taylor, 2017; Priest et al., 2014). Intergroup contact has been demonstrated to be a viable strategy to reduce prejudice, increase awareness of discrimination and inequalities, and influence civic engagement attitudes and behaviors related to advancing social justice (Allport, 1954; Mckeown & Taylor, 2017; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Turoy-Smith et al., 2013). As such, there is practical value to understanding the conditions which can facilitate frequent, positive intergroup contact.

In diverse communities, intergroup contact can occur in a variety of public spaces, including parks. Within park settings, studies have documented the occurrence of intergroup contact and suggested significant variations in the quality of contact (Harris et al., 2019; Hillier et al., 2016; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Neal et al., 2015; Peters et al., 2010; Peters & de Haan, 2011). For example, negative contact may take the form of overt or covert discrimination, conflict, or violence, and people of color are more likely to experience these forms of negative contact (Camarillo et al., 2019; Enos, 2017; Harris et al., 2019; Mowatt, 2018b; Pinckney et al.,

2018; Stodolska et al., 2011). Positive contact may take the form of peaceful co-presence, interaction, cooperation, or friendship formation (Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Neal et al., 2015; Peters & de Haan, 2011; Priest et al., 2014; Seeland et al., 2009). Despite the variations between positive and negative contact, there has been limited investigation of the conditions which relate to intergroup contact quality.

Although not specific to parks, researchers have emphasized the importance of identifying conditions and factors which support positive intergroup contact, particularly those which extend beyond Allport's (1954) four initial conditions (K. J. Lee & Scott, 2013; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). More frequent and positive intergroup contact in parks may rely on a variety of psychosocial factors (many related to diversity, equity, and inclusion) which could be intentionally influenced by park managers and stewards (Blinded 1; Hillier et al., 2016; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011). In park settings, various psychosocial factors related to intergroup contact (e.g., perceived safety, sense of welcome and belonging) can also vary by race and ethnicity; for example, prior research indicates concerns about safety from racism and discrimination and lower sense of welcome and belonging among people of color compared to white park users (Blinded 3; Camarillo et al., 2019; Rushing et al., 2019). Given these differences, the factors which relate to intergroup contact in parks may be different based on one's race or ethnicity; for instance, some prior research suggests that conditions supporting more frequent and positive contact can vary between advantaged and disadvantaged populations (Freeman, 2012). The following sections outline factors that have either been identified to be related to intergroup contact in parks or hypothesized to be related based on research from similar contexts.

Community Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Intergroup Contact

Diversity is a precondition to intergroup contact, such that the potential for contact between people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds is predicated on having racially and ethnically diverse individuals within a space (Neal et al., 2015; Schmid et al., 2014). For example, parks located in more diverse neighborhoods typically have higher levels of intergroup contact (Hillier et al., 2016), just as individuals living in more diverse areas have more opportunities for contact (Schmid et al., 2014). Diversity at the neighborhood level is particularly relevant, as this micro-level diversity is more reflective of an individual's proximate environment than is a measure of city or metro area diversity, which can obscure neighborhood segregation and differences across various neighborhoods (Holloway et al., 2012). Although higher levels of community racial and ethnic diversity do not imply that people will actually have contact with one another, it does create a higher potential for contact, and thus is an important precondition to the quantity of park-based intergroup contact (Holland et al., 2007; Wessel, 2009). Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that greater diversity (particularly in the form of well-balanced representation of people from different racial and ethnic groups) within a space is an important condition facilitating more positive contact experiences for people of color (Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013). Thus, diversity may be connected to both quantity and quality of intergroup contact and its relationship with contact may vary by race and ethnicity.

Park Use Motivations

The extent to which individuals experience intergroup contact in parks may be a function of their motivations for using park spaces. A substantial body of research has examined the motivations and recreation experience preferences of urban park visitors (e.g., Home et al., 2012; Peters et al., 2010b; Vierikko et al., 2020). Individuals visit urban parks for different reasons, and

although some may be motivated by social experiences, others visit parks to experience solitude and quiet, and in turn may be less motivated to be in spaces shared with other visitors or to interact with other visitors (Home et al., 2012; Peters et al., 2010). As Peters et al. (2010) identified, the desire for solitude may limit one's frequency of intergroup contact. Similarly, those who visit parks with existing social groups may be less likely to interact with strangers in favor of spending time with their friends or family (Peters et al., 2010) Reasons for using parks are known to vary across different racial and ethnic groups (Jason Byrne & Wolch, 2009; Gobster, 2002; Harris et al., 2019; Payne et al., 2002; Vaughan et al., 2018), and thus their relationship with contact may also vary. Although certain park use motivations may serve as barriers to intergroup contact for some visitors, other visitors may be motivated by the desire to see and interact with new people (Vierikko et al., 2020; Whiting et al., 2017), and thus may be more likely to experience intergroup contact.

Sense of Welcome and Belonging

Intergroup contact may also depend on the extent to which individuals feel welcome and that they belong within a given park setting. Sense of welcome and belonging may be especially important for racial and ethnic groups who were historically excluded from certain park spaces due to segregationist policies (See Chapter 4). Prior research indicates that when park visitors feel a greater sense of welcome and belonging, they are more likely to engage in intergroup contact, indicating a positive relationship between sense of welcome and belonging and contact *quantity* (Blinded 1). Similar findings have been documented in neighborhood-area contexts with regard to contact *quality* such that individuals who feel a greater sense of neighborhood belonging have reported higher quality intergroup contact within their neighborhoods (Liu et al.,

2018). Thus, it is possible that park visitors who feel a greater sense of welcome and belonging may experience more frequent and positive intergroup contact.

Research has identified a variety of strategies related to equity and inclusion that park managers and stewards can use to foster a more welcoming environment, and such strategies may encourage more frequent and positive intergroup contact through their mediated relationships with sense of welcome and belonging (Blinded 1). Inclusive programs and events which represent diverse community cultures, opportunities for input in decision making, representation of racial and ethnic diversity among park staff and within media communications, a park environment that is perceived as safe, and efforts to stimulate visitors' emotional connections to the space (i.e., place identity) may help diverse park users, especially people of color, to feel welcome within urban parks, and in turn, could support more frequent and positive intergroup contact (Blinded 1; J. Byrne, 2012; Camarillo et al., 2019; Peters et al., 2010; Selim, 2015; Stodolska et al., 2019).

Engagement and Representation

In urban park contexts, engagement and representation typically reflect actions taken by park and recreation organizations to involve various community stakeholders in programming, planning, management, or decision making (J. Byrne, 2012; Gómez et al., 2015). Engagement and representation are inherently intertwined; community engagement efforts often encompass actions to represent community diversity and culture in programming as well as community voices in decision making and positions of leadership. Engagement in decision making has been identified as an important avenue for park and recreation agencies to build a sense of psychological ownership and empowerment, especially among communities of color whose voices have been historically underrepresented (Mullenbach et al., 2019). Among racially and

ethnically diverse park visitors, engagement in decision making can increase sense of welcome and belonging (Blinded 1). Recent research has begun to explore the connection between engagement and representation and intergroup contact, but is limited by investigation of only one form- input and voice in park planning and management (Blinded 1). Although having a voice in decision making is important, there are also other ways organizations can equitably and inclusively engage and represent communities. For instance, providing programs and events which are culturally relevant and inclusive to diverse community members may help stimulate a sense of welcome and belonging in parks (J. Byrne, 2012; Camarillo et al., 2019; Plane & Klodawsky, 2013; Stodolska et al., 2019) and can foster a diverse environment that creates the potential for intergroup contact (Neal et al., 2015).

Furthermore, research has suggested that people of color may feel a greater sense of welcome and belonging when racial and ethnic diversity is visible among park visitors, staff, and volunteers, and when this diversity reflects the diversity of the community (J. Byrne, 2012). Finally, representation of racial and ethnic diversity in park-related media including social media posts and promotional materials may also influence individuals' perceptions of parks as places where they belong, and this may be especially important for people of color (Blinded 6). Thus, efforts to equitably and inclusively engage and represent racially and ethnically diverse community members may positively impact park users' sense of welcome and belonging, help to increase the presence of diverse users, and stimulate intergroup contact; that is, the relationship between engagement and representation and intergroup contact may be partially mediated through sense of welcome and belonging. Moreover, given current and historical factors, the influence of engagement and representation upon sense of welcome and belonging, intergroup

contact, and other outcomes like safety may vary across people from different races and ethnicities.

Safety

Perceptions of safety, particularly as it relates to other park users, could also influence intergroup contact. Fear of prejudice, discrimination, conflict, or crime, especially as it relates to intergroup interactions, could influence visitors' spatial use patterns and their interest or willingness to engage in intergroup contact (Hewstone et al., 2006; Selim, 2015). These factors also reflect broader reasons why individuals may choose not to visit certain parks or facilities; for example, experiences with overt discrimination from other park users and fear of prejudice from staff or other visitors have been identified as constraints to park visitation among people of color (Camarillo et al., 2019; Rushing et al., 2019). Moreover, issues of territoriality associated with gang violence and crime can also affect perceptions of park safety (Stodolska et al., 2011). Additionally, park safety may be influenced by the physical conditions of a park, reflecting aspects of park quality and maintenance. Park use patterns among people of color relative to such factors can and should be understood through a lens of systemic racism, rather than one of personal or cultural preferences (Arai & Kivel, 2009; Floyd, 2007; R. G. Lee, 1972; Mowatt, 2018a). Safety concerns may reflect a park which is not welcoming to people of color and concerns of prejudice, discrimination, racism, harassment, and so forth may signal an unsafe environment (Camarillo et al., 2019; Stodolska et al., 2011). Furthermore, safety concerns may result in intimate segregation, or self-segregation of different racial and ethnic groups (Harris et al., 2019). Intimate segregation affects the spatial distribution of park users and may mean that individuals of diverse groups are not in close enough proximity to have contact with each other (Harris et al., 2019; Mumm, 2008). Therefore, various aspects of safety related to racism,

discrimination, and conflict could impact the potential for engagement in intergroup contact as well as the quality of contact, and the impact of safety on intergroup contact may be especially relevant for people of color.

Safety may also have important relationships with other variables that can influence intergroup contact. For instance, prior research suggests that when individuals perceive safer park conditions, they feel a greater sense of welcome and belonging, and in turn, report more frequent intergroup contact (Blinded 1). Safer park environments can be supported by aspects of engagement and representation such as programming (Bryne, 2012; Groshong et al., 2020). Moreover, particularly for people of color, individuals may feel safer, more welcome, and experience more positive intergroup contact when there are others in the park with similar ethno-racial characteristics to themselves; that is, they are not the only person of color in the park (Byrne, 2012; Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013). Given these connections, perceptions of safety may partially mediate the relationship between engagement and representation and sense of welcome and belonging; furthermore, safety may both indirectly and directly relate to intergroup contact as mediated through sense of welcome and belonging.

Place Identity

Finally, research has suggested that attachment to parks is often associated with frequency and duration of use, which in turn can promote familiarity with other people commonly in the space (Blokland, 2003; Dines & Cattell, 2006; Paulos & Goodman, 2004; Peters et al., 2010). The connection between familiarity and place suggests that over time, people become more dependent on places and also begin to develop emotional bonds with them. Of particular interest to the current study is place identity, which refers to the emotional connections that individuals have to recreation spaces including parks (Kyle et al., 2005; Plunkett et al., 2019;

Williams & Vaske, 2003). Place identity can increase sense of belonging in communities and has been suggested to be positively related to intergroup contact, but this relationship has not been investigated further (Peters et al., 2010). This construct can closely resemble the extent to which one feels a sense of personal psychological ownership over a space, and research indicates that engagement in decision making can support psychological ownership, and in turn, both sense of welcome and belonging as well as intergroup contact quantity (Blinded 1). It is quite plausible that place identity could be supported by engagement and representation, relate to one's sense of welcome and belonging in a park context, and be positively related to quantity of intergroup contact.

Study Purpose

As demonstrated above, a variety of factors including community racial and ethnic diversity, park use motivations, sense of welcome and belonging, engagement and representation, safety, and place identity have been found to be or hypothesized to be related to intergroup contact in urban parks. Some of these relationships have been tested relative to intergroup contact quantity (Blinded 1), but these factors in combination have not yet been examined with regard to both dimensions of intergroup contact- quantity *and* quality. A better understanding of the factors which collectively influence intergroup contact quantity and quality for people of different races and ethnicities could help inform more comprehensive management practices to stimulate more frequent and positive contact, and in turn, positive outcomes like prejudice reduction, increased interracial trust, and stronger civic engagement attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the interrelationships between these factors and intergroup contact experienced by diverse urban park users, and examine if these relationships vary across users from different racial and ethnic groups, as intergroup contact

experiences can vary based on one's race or ethnicity (Enos, 2017; Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005).

This study will assess the following overarching research questions: What factors relate to intergroup contact in urban parks? And, do these factors vary by race and ethnicity? Based on the literature, I have hypothesized several relationships between the study constructs for the overall sample. These are listed below and visually represented in Figure 5. No specific hypotheses were generated regarding differences by race and ethnicity, as this was a primarily exploratory research question. The term "park intergroup contact" encompasses both quantity and quality of contact, with directional hypotheses reflecting the influence of more frequent and positive contact.

H1: Community racial diversity will have a direct positive relationship with park intergroup contact.

H2: Community ethnic diversity will have a direct positive relationship with park intergroup contact.

H3: Motivations to use parks to spend time with one's friends or family (hereafter called "social group motivations") will have a direct, negative relationship with park intergroup contact.

H4: Motivations to visit parks to meet and interact with new people (hereafter called "new people motivations") will have a direct, positive relationship with park intergroup contact.

H5: Solitude motivations have a direct, negative relationship with park intergroup contact.

H6: Engagement and representation will have a direct, positive relationship with park intergroup contact.

H7: The effect of engagement and representation on park intergroup contact will be partially mediated through positive relationships with safety, place identity, and sense of welcome and belonging.

H8: Safety will have a direct, positive relationship with park intergroup contact.

H9: The effect of safety on park intergroup contact will be partially mediated through a positive relationship with sense of welcome and belonging.

H10: Park-based place identity (hereafter called "place identity") will have a direct, positive relationship with park intergroup contact.

H11: The effect of place identity on park intergroup contact will be partially mediated through a positive relationship with sense of welcome and belonging.

H12: Sense of welcome and belonging have a direct positive relationship with park intergroup contact.

Figure 5. Hypothesized Paths

Methods

Sample

Data for this cross-sectional quantitative study were collected via an online Qualtrics panel survey of park users across cities and urban regions of the United States. Data collection occurred from October 27th to December 7th, 2020. A panel sample of 1,200 respondents was obtained from Qualtrics and tailored to certain population parameters. Qualtrics uses several identity screening procedures to ensure respondents are who they say they are, has a double opt-in design to ensure respondents want to participate, and provides fair compensation appropriate for survey length. Respondents are compensated for completing the survey, and thus respondents who fail to reach the end of the survey are not compensated and their data is not retained. Throughout the data collection process, individual responses are examined and screened out if they completed the survey too quickly, provided "straight line" responses to Likert scale style questions, or provided nonsense answers to open-ended questions. These procedures are designed to ensure high-quality responses in the sample. Qualtrics does not provide information on response rate.

The sample included adults 18 years or older residing in urbanized areas. Individuals who did not meet these parameters were immediately screened out of the survey. The definition of urbanized areas is derived from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) locale framework, which is based on the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) definition (Geverdt, 2017). The NCES framework classifies zipcodes into four categories: city, suburban, town, and rural. This classification is based on both population size and proximity to urban areas (Geverdt, 2017). Zipcodes classified as city and suburban are census defined urbanized areas, meaning they have 50,000 or more people within them (United States Census Bureau, 2010). Individuals residing in

NCES classified city and suburban zipcodes were eligible for participation in this study. A census matching regional quota was employed to ensure representation of respondents from across the country.

Rather than focusing on a nationally representative sample by race and ethnicity, which would provide a majority of Non-Hispanic white respondents, it was important for this study to have a racially and ethnically diverse sample given varied experiences with intergroup contact across racial and ethnic groups. Qualtrics balanced the completed sample representation by four racial and ethnic groups (Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic Black or African American, Non-Hispanic Asian, and Hispanic of any race) as well as by gender (male and female). These groups were selected based on Qualtrics' pool of survey takers and their recruitment abilities. Although these four groups are certainly not comprehensive or inclusive of all racial and ethnic groups, they represent the most populous in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2019). Qualtrics aimed to balance the sample based on these categories, but the survey was open to anyone, regardless of whether they identified their gender, race, or ethnicity with these classifications. This inclusive approach was taken given that gender, race, and ethnicity classifications can simplify the complexity of individual experiences and identities. Furthermore, questions for gender, race, and ethnicity had many more response options, these categories are just the ones that Qualtrics used for survey recruitment procedures. Because Qualtrics balanced the survey across these pre-defined groups, if a survey quota had already been met for a certain group, say females, females attempting to take the survey after the quota had been met would be screened out.

The average age of respondents in the sample was higher than the average adult age in the United States- this was true for respondents in all racial and ethnic groups. Therefore, data

were weighted based on the population age breakdown (of adults age 18+) within each racial and ethnic group as measured by the most recent U.S. Census data (United States Census Bureau, 2019). This helped to ensure continued representation across diverse racial and ethnic groups, while helping to make the sample more nationally representation of adults in the United States. The weighting procedure gave more weight to younger respondents, who were underrepresented in the sample, and less weight to older respondents who were overrepresented.

Measures

Park Intergroup Contact

Park intergroup contact was measured as a two-dimensional second order construct including both contact quantity and contact quality. Items were developed based on the work of Mowen et al. (2018), Prestwich et al. (2008), and Mckeown and Taylor (2017) to focus on a park and recreation context. Contact quantity and quality were assessed with four items each, utilizing 7-point bi-polar scales. Items were designed to reflect an individual's experience with people who are of different races and ethnicities, and items were worded as such. For example, one item read: "in the parks in your community, how much do you see people of different races or ethnicities?" Intergroup contact items reflected both co-presence and interaction forms of contact.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Community racial and ethnic diversity were measured through a diversity calculation derived from U.S. Census data for an individual's zipcode. These variables were used as control variables, as intergroup contact is known to be more common in areas that are more diverse (Schmid et al., 2014). A Simpson Index based calculation, or interaction index, was used to estimate both racial and ethnic diversity (Simpson, 1949). The index is derived from the

following equation, and ultimately "represents the probability that two members of the population chosen at random will be of different [demographic] groups" (Ohmer et al., 2018, p. 396): $A=N (N - 1)/ \Sigma_i n_i(n_i - 1)$, where N is the number of groups, n_i is the number of people within a given group, and Σ represents the sum. An index with a score of 1 suggests a homogenous population, and as the value gets higher, it shows a higher probability that two people randomly selected would be from different demographic groups. The index has a maximum score equivalent to the number of categories for each variable. Based on Census definitions, seven categories were used for race: White alone, Black or African American alone, American Indian or Native American alone, Asian alone, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander alone, other alone, and two or more races alone. Two categories were used for ethnic diversity: Hispanic or Latino and non-Hispanic or Latino. These categories were based on the U.S. Census Bureau classifications, and data to calculate the diversity indices was obtained from the most recent American Community Survey data from 2019.

Park Use Motivations

Park use motivations related to solitude, spending time with existing social groups like friends and family (social group motivations), and the desire to meet and interact with new people (new people motivations) were included as control variables and measures were derived from recreation experience preference scales (Driver, 1983). A total of nine items measured on 5-point Likert scales comprise these individual motivations such as "I visit parks in my community to meet new people."

Sense of Welcome and Belonging

A four-item measure was developed by Mowen et al. (2018) and applied in several recent studies (e.g., Blinded 1; Blinded 3) to capture an individual's feeling of welcome and belonging

in a park context. The measure was initially created based on youth development literature (e.g., Gambone & Arbreton, 1997) and the items were asked on a 5-point Likert scale from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree and included statements such as: "I feel like I belong at the parks in my community." In the present study, this measure was expanded to include two additional items about comfort level to reflect a more comprehensive assessment of sense of welcome and belonging in a park setting. For instance, one item read: "I feel comfortable when I visit the parks in my community."

Engagement and Representation

Engagement and representation was considered a second order construct composed of three underlying latent constructs: input in decision making, inclusivity and relevance of programs and events, and representation of racial and ethnic diversity. The second order construct reflects these three integrated aspects of equity and inclusion in park and recreation management. This measurement structure was initially validated with pilot data from a prior study (Blinded 3); both the first and second order models demonstrated strong model fit and all latent constructs demonstrated strong reliability. Items for these three underlying constructs of engagement and representation were developed and refined in Blinded 3 and the current study in order to create an accessible way for park and recreation agencies, researchers, and supporting foundations/funders to assess engagement and representation from a quantitative perspective.

Engagement and representation items were adapted from or developed based on prior work in Philadelphia, existing literature, and conversations with park and recreation professionals, and many items reflect intentional actions taken by park and recreation agencies. Input in decision-making reflected the extent to which individuals feel their voices and those of their community are represented in their local parks, and items were adapted from prior park

studies in Philadelphia (e.g., Blinded 6; Mowen et al., 2018, Mullenbach et al., 2019). Inclusivity and relevance of programs and events reflected an individual's perception that their local park and recreation department sponsors various types of programs and events including those which bring together people from different cultures and backgrounds as well as those which represent the diversity of their community; program and event items were initially developed based on prior literature (e.g., J. Byrne, 2012; Camarillo et al., 2019; Neal et al., 2015; Plane & Klodawsky, 2013; Stodolska et al., 2019) and were refined based on results from a recent state study in Pennsylvania (Blinded 3). Finally, representation of racial and ethnic diversity reflected the extent to which individuals feel that racial and ethnic diversity is reflected in the staff, leadership, and promotional materials of their local park and recreation agency, and these items were developed based on prior research (Blinded 6; J. Byrne, 2012) and initially tested in Blinded 3. All items were assessed on a scale from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. Although a detailed reporting of the development, testing, and validation of the engagement and representation measure is not the focus of the current chapter, a forthcoming manuscript (Blinded 9) provides detailed development and testing information, including evidence of validity and reliability, as well as a critical discussion of the potential utility of the measure for capturing and monitoring public perceptions of equitable engagement and representation in park and recreation contexts.

Safety

In a recent study (Blinded 1), a preliminary park safety conditions measure was tested and its relationship with intergroup contact was examined. Although the measure performed well, it was not a comprehensive representation of safety in a park context- it focused solely on maintenance, cleanliness, and safety from criminal activity. In the current study, I developed an

expanded safety measure which includes items that represent other domains of safety in parks as identified in the literature (McCormack et al., 2010; McCormick & Holland, 2015; Stodolska et al., 2011). These included, but were not limited to, safety from harassment, discrimination, and user conflict. Safety perceptions were measured on a scale from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

Place Identity

Place identity items were adapted from Kyle, Graefe, and Manning (2005) and Plunkett, Fulthorp, and Paris (2019). Four items were asked on 5-point Likert scales from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree and included statements such as "I identify strongly with the parks in my community"

Analysis

Analysis was conducted in SPSS version 26 and R version 4.0.0 with the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) served as the primary analytic approaches. The overall study from which these data are drawn included 1,213 respondents, 974 of whom (80%) had previously visited a park in their community. Only those who had previously visited a park in their community were asked questions about park-based intergroup contact. Moreover, only respondents who reported at least some experience with park based intergroup contact (per intergroup contact quantity items) were asked about intergroup contact quality. A total of 943 respondents were asked questions about both quantity and quality of intergroup contact and were therefore eligible for this analysis. Twelve responses had a small amount of missing data. Little's MCAR test suggested data were missing completely at random, and therefore I used listwise deletion to eliminate these responses. Thus, a total of 931 responses were retained for analysis.

Race and ethnicity were measured separately as is done in the U.S. Census. Ethnicity was measured as a two category variable with response options listed as "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin" and "Not Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin." Response options for race included American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Middle Eastern or North African, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, White, and Other. Respondents selecting other were provided with a text entry box and asked to specify how they identify their race. Among those who answered other (n=28, 3%), 25 provided details in the text entry box. Fourteen reported Hispanic or Latino as their race, two reported a race encompassed by a prior category (e.g., "Caucasian" instead of "white"), six reported a race not listed in any prior categories (e.g., "Puerto Rican"), and four reported a multiracial identity (e.g., mixed race). Of the 28 who entered their race as other, all but one reported their ethnicity as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (and the one who did not was reclassified as white based on their response "Caucasian").

I applied Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach of assessing a measurement model and then testing a hypothesized structural model. CFA was used to test the structure of the measurement model, which included 11 hypothesized first order latent variables and two hypothesized second order latent variables. If the initial model did not exhibit good fit, a revised model was tested; revisions were informed by item factor loadings, modification indices, and reliability statistics (Kim, 2017). Several model fit statistics including the χ^2 statistic, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) were consulted and reported for both the CFA and the SEM. Model fit was established using the following cutoff points: >.90 for TLI and CFI (Hu & Bentler, 1999), <.10 for RMSEA (Kline, 2016), and <.09 for SRMR (Hu & Bentler, 1999). I used maximum likelihood estimation with Yuan-Bentler corrected χ^2 and

several robust versions of alternative fit measures (Brosseau-Liard et al., 2012; Brosseau-Liard & Savalei, 2014; Yuan & Bentler, 2000). For CFI and TLI, a Satorra-Bentler scaling constant was applied to produce estimates robust to violations of normality (Brosseau-Liard & Savalei, 2014). For RMSEA, the Li-Bentler robust statistic was used (Brosseau-Liard & Savalei, 2014; Li & Bentler, 2006). Cronbach's alpha coefficients were generated for the final measurement model, and values greater than 0.65 were deemed acceptable (Cortina, 1993; Vaske, 2008).

Once an acceptable model for the overall sample was obtained, I conducted measurement invariance testing by racial and ethnic group. First, configural invariance (an unconstrained model) is examined to determine whether the hypothesized structure of the measure is applicable for each group. If model fit statistics indicate a good fitting multi-group configural model, the researcher may proceed to testing metric invariance (S. T. H. Lee, 2018). Metric invariance testing investigates the equivalence of item factor loadings on their hypothesized latent constructs across groups by constraining them to be equal. Minimal change in model fit statistics between the configural and metric models, and overall strong fit statistics for the metric model indicate metric invariance (Chen, 2007; Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). For the purposes of conducting measurement invariance testing by race and ethnicity, a four-category combined race and ethnicity variable was created. This variable was used for invariance testing and group comparisons and was created with the following four categories: Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin of any race (n=234), Non-Hispanic white (n=217), Non-Hispanic Black or African American (n=235), and Non-Hispanic Asian (n=245).

Lastly, SEM was used to test the hypothesized relationships (and non-hypothesized relationships) between the latent variables. In addition to an overall model, models were

examined by the four-category race and ethnicity classification to explore potential differences in the significance, strength, or direction of relationships.

Results

Sample Characteristics

Table 7 provides demographic information for the sample. The proportion of the sample from each U.S. region closely matched the U.S. population. In terms of race, 38% of the sample was white, 31% Black or African American, and 27% Asian. Twenty five percent of respondents were of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. The sample was closely balanced between male and female respondents. Household income was well distributed across the sample and a majority of respondents had some form of higher education. The average age of respondents was 46 years old (after data weighting, described above).

Table 7. Sample Demographics

Demographics	n	%
Region		
Midwest	194	20.9
Northeast	182	19.6
South	370	39.7
West	184	19.8
Race		
American Indian or Alaskan Native	6	0.6
Asian	250	26.8
Black or African American	291	31.3
Middle Eastern or North African	0	0.0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.1
White	354	38.1
Other	28	3.0
Ethnicity		
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	234	25.1
Non-Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	697	74.9
Gender		
Female	444	47.7
Male	485	52.2
Non-binary	1	0.1
Age	Mean = 46.0 (SD = 17.3)	
18-24	126	13.6
35-44	359	38.6
45-64	289	31.1
65 and older	156	16.7
Household Income		
$20,000 or less	68	7.6
$20,001 to $40,000	130	14.4
$40,001 to $60,000	135	15
$60,001 to $80,000	165	18.4
$80,001 to $100,000	93	10.3
$100,001 to $120,000	75	8.3
$120,001 to $140,000	44	4.9
Over $140,000	139	15.4
Education		
Some high school	22	2.4
High school diploma or GED	109	11.8
Some college	177	19.2
Associate's or Bachelor's degree	359	38.9
Graduate or professional degree	257	27.8
Zipcode Racial Diversity	Mean = 2.03 (SD = .68)	
Zipcode Ethnic Diversity	Mean = 1.37 (SD = .30)	

*May not total 100% due to rounding. May not total N due to non-response (on income and education)

Measurement Model

Model fit statistics for the initial measurement model indicated acceptable fit: χ^2= 2197.597, df = 1047, p<.001, CFI = .925, TLI = .919, RMSEA = .052, SRMR = .056. I proceeded to examine item factor loadings and reliability statistics for each hypothesized latent construct. The first item on the social group motivations construct ("To be with my family") had a factor loading of 0.5 and the construct as a whole demonstrated poor reliability; upon removing this item, reliability increased to an acceptable level. The solitude construct also exhibited poor reliability and was therefore removed from the model. This revised model demonstrated strong fit: χ^2= 2073.667, df = 963, p<.001, CFI = .925, TLI = .919, RMSEA = .055, SRMR = .056. All items in the final measurement model had statistically significant factor loadings greater than 0.5 for their respective latent constructs (Zhang et al., 2018), and each latent construct demonstrated sufficient reliability with Cronbach's alpha scores greater than 0.65 (Cortina, 1993; Vaske, 2008). Moreover, correlations between the latent factors were all below the recommended threshold of 0.9, suggesting sufficient discriminant validity between factors (Kline, 2016).

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the measurement model are presented in Table 8. Regarding park intergroup contact, respondents reported moderate contact quantity (mean of 4.8/7), and generally positive contact quality (mean of 5.3/7). Respondents felt relatively safe at their community parks (mean of 3.9/5) and felt a relatively strong sense of welcome and belonging in these spaces (mean of 3.9/5). Neither new people motivations nor social group motivations to visit parks were particularly strong, although people were more likely to feel motivated by spending time with their social groups (mean of 3.3/5) over meeting/encountering new people (mean of 3.0/5). Perceptions of engagement and representation were moderate (3.5/5).

Table 8. Items in Final Measurement Model with Descriptive Statistics

Latent Construct/Indicator	Mean	*SD*	*B*[e]	*SE*	*β*
New People Motivations[a] (α = .932)	3.0	1.2	-	-	-
I visit parks in my community to…					
meet new people	2.9	1.3	1.00	0.00	0.87
talk to new people	3.0	1.3	1.07	0.03	0.92
see new people	3.0	1.3	0.96	0.04	0.87
build friendships with new people	2.9	1.3	0.93	0.05	0.86
Social Group Motivations[a] (α = .776)	3.3	1.1	-	-	-
I visit parks in my community to…					
be with members of my group	3.3	1.2	1.00	0.00	0.77
be with friends	3.4	1.2	1.05	0.06	0.82
Place Identity[a] (α = .898)	3.6	0.9	-	-	-
The parks in my community mean a lot to me	3.7	1.0	1.00	0.00	0.78
The parks in my community are very special to me	3.6	1.0	1.10	0.07	0.85
I identify strongly with the parks in my community	3.6	1.1	1.15	0.09	0.85
I am very attached to the parks in my community	3.5	1.1	1.12	0.09	0.84
Welcome & Belonging[a] (α = .904)	3.9	0.8	-	-	-
I feel welcome at the parks in my community	3.9	1.0	1.00	0.00	0.75
I feel like I belong at the parks in my community	3.9	1.0	1.05	0.07	0.81
The parks in my community are a comfortable place to hang out	3.9	0.9	0.91	0.08	0.79
The parks in my community are for people like me	3.9	0.9	1.01	0.09	0.83
I feel comfortable when I visit the parks in my community	4.0	0.9	0.94	0.08	0.78
I feel comfortable expressing myself at the parks in my community	3.7	1.0	0.97	0.08	0.75
Engagement & Representation (α = .955)	3.5	0.8	-	-	-
Programs & Events[a] (α = .914)					
My local park and recreation department sponsors programs and events...	3.6	0.8	1.00	0.00	0.95
relevant to my culture	3.5	1.0	1.00	0.00	0.74
that encourage interaction among attendees	3.6	0.9	1.05	0.06	0.83
that bring together people from different cultures and backgrounds	3.7	1.0	1.07	0.08	0.81
that bring together people from different cultures and backgrounds to discuss issues in the community	3.4	1.0	1.11	0.08	0.80
that celebrate the diversity of our community	3.6	1.0	1.09	0.07	0.82
that celebrate the culture and background of people like me	3.5	1.0	1.13	0.09	0.81
Input in Decision Making[a] (α = .915)	3.4	0.8	0.94	0.07	0.92
My local park and recreation department would be open to my input	3.5	1.0	1.00	0.00	0.72
I know how to provide feedback and input to my local park and recreation department	3.4	1.0	1.11	0.08	0.79
My input is valued by my local park and recreation department	3.4	1.0	1.19	0.08	0.86
My local park and recreation department actively seeks input from my community	3.5	1.0	1.11	0.08	0.82
My voice is represented in what happens at local parks generally (programs, events, maintenance, etc.)	3.4	1.0	1.16	0.06	0.83
My community is represented in what happens at local parks generally (programs, events, maintenance, etc.)	3.5	0.9	1.03	0.08	0.80

Latent Construct/Indicator	Mean	SD	B[d]	SE	β
Table 8. Items in Final Measurement Model with Descriptive Statistics (Continued)					
Representation of Racial and Ethnic Diversity[a] (α = .861)	3.6	0.8	0.94	0.11	0.90
My local park and recreation department employs people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds	3.6	1.0	1.00	0.00	0.70
People from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds hold leadership positions at my local park and recreation department	3.5	1.0	1.08	0.06	0.79
Marketing materials and promotions for my local park and recreation department feature people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds	3.6	0.9	0.99	0.10	0.79
My local park and recreation department's social media features people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds	3.6	1.0	1.09	0.10	0.84
Safety[a] (α = .910) At the parks in my community, I generally feel...	3.9	0.8	-	-	-
Safe	3.9	0.9	1.00	0.00	0.70
Safe from criminal activity	3.8	0.9	1.10	0.06	0.81
Safe from harassment	3.8	0.9	1.14	0.09	0.81
Safe from discrimination	3.9	0.9	1.08	0.08	0.80
Safe from user conflict	3.8	0.9	1.18	0.08	0.84
Safe from interracial conflict	3.9	0.9	1.16	0.09	0.81
Park Intergroup Contact[b] (α = .922) At the parks in your community...	5.1	1.2	-	-	-
Quantity[c] (α = .915)	4.8	1.4	1.00	0.0	0.86
how much contact have you had with people of different races or ethnicities?	4.7	1.7	1.00	0.00	0.82
how much do you see people of different races or ethnicities?	5.0	1.5	0.90	0.05	0.84
how much do you interact with people of different races or ethnicities? (e.g., make eye contact, wave, talk, participate in program together, etc.)	4.8	1.6	1.00	0.04	0.88
how much do you see people of different races or ethnicities interacting? (e.g., gathering together, doing activities together, talking, etc.)	4.8	1.5	0.95	0.04	0.88
Quality[d] (α = .939)	5.3	1.3	0.75	0.31	0.74
when you have contact with people of different races or ethnicities, do you find it pleasant or unpleasant?	5.3	1.4	1.00	0.00	0.87
when you interact with people of different races or ethnicities, do you find the contact pleasant or unpleasant?	5.3	1.4	0.98	0.03	0.90
when you see people of different races or ethnicities, do you find it pleasant or unpleasant?	5.3	1.3	0.96	0.03	0.91
when you see people of different races or ethnicities interacting, do you find these interactions to be pleasant or unpleasant?	5.4	1.4	0.98	0.03	0.89

[a]Scale from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree
[b]Park intergroup contact quantity and quality had a significant correlation of 0.59, p<.001
[c]Scale from 1=None at All to 7=A Great Deal
[d]Scale from 1=Very Unpleasant to 7=Very Pleasant
[e]Factor loadings for all items were significant at p<.001. For model identification purposes, one item on each latent factor is fixed to a loading of 1.00.

Measurement Invariance

Next, measurement invariance testing was conducted for each of the measures in the overall model to examine the equivalence of the hypothesized factor structure across four racial and ethnic groups: Non-Hispanic Asian, Non-Hispanic Black or African American, Non-Hispanic white, and Hispanic or Latino of any race. Model fit statistics were used to assess configural invariance, then, if confirmed, metric and scalar invariance were tested. Although the change in χ^2 between nested models was generally significant, this finding is to be expected given such a large sample size (Putnick & Bornstein, 2016), and therefore other fit indices were consulted. As recommended by Cheung and Rensvold (2002), a change in CFI smaller than 0.1 between nested models (e.g., from the Configural to Metric model) is indicative of invariance. Additionally, Chen (2007) suggested that changes between models in RMSEA and SRMR of less than 0.015 and 0.030, respectively indicate invariance.

Measures of park intergroup contact (quantity and quality), engagement and representation (inclusivity of programs and events, input in decision making, representation of racial and ethnic diversity), sense of welcome and belonging, safety, and motivations (both social group motivations and new people motivations) were invariant at the configural, metric, and scalar levels across race and ethnicity (see Table 9). For these measures, all criteria were met for comparisons between configural and metric models, followed by comparisons between metric and scalar models. However, with regard to place identity, model fit statistics and changes between models suggested measurement non-invariance, indicating that comparisons by race and ethnicity would not be appropriate for this measure (Putnick & Bornstein, 2016). As such, I concluded that comparisons by race and ethnicity would be appropriate for all measures except place identity. Therefore, given the intent of exploring potential differences by race and

ethnicity, I revised my structural model to no longer include place identity. Figure 6 displays the

new structural model, revised according to CFA and measurement invariance testing to eliminate

solitude motivations and place identity.

Table 9. Measurement Invariance Testing

Measure	χ^2	p	df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Park Intergroup Contact							
Configural	224.369	<.001	76	0.931	0.953	0.092	0.034
Metric	254.533	<.001	94	0.942	0.951	0.086	0.052
Scalar	259.974	<.001	109	0.949	0.951	0.077	0.055
Engagement & Representation							
Configural	884.868	<.001	405	0.900	0.914	0.071	0.051
Metric	914.563	<.001	450	0.900	0.907	0.067	0.070
Scalar	980.919	<.001	486	0.910	0.909	0.066	0.074
Welcome & Belonging							
Configural	91.072	<.001	36	0.923	0.954	0.081	0.039
Metric	107.389	<.001	51	0.933	0.953	0.069	0.069
Scalar	122.719	<.001	66	0.957	0.953	0.061	0.075
Safety							
Configural	82.316	<.001	36	0.926	0.956	0.074	0.037
Metric	98.453	<.001	51	0.951	0.959	0.063	0.056
Scalar	116.931	<.001	66	0.962	0.958	0.058	0.061
Motivations							
Configural	78.363	<.001	32	0.949	0.973	0.079	0.027
Metric	91.941	<.001	44	0.961	0.971	0.068	0.052
Scalar	107.260	<.001	56	0.967	0.970	0.063	0.055
Place Identity							
Configural	27.450	<.001	8	0.904	0.968	0.102	0.030
Metric	59.698	<.001	17	0.930	0.951	0.104	0.078
Scalar	68.394	<.001	26	0.953	0.949	0.084	0.083

Figure 6. Revised Structural Model

Structural Model

Next, I tested the revised structural model (Figure 6) including non-hypothesized paths, which demonstrated strong model fit: χ^2=1747.990, p<.001, df=870 TLI=.929, CFI=.935, RMSEA=.033, SRMR=.060 (Table 10). Figure 7 shows the final structural model. Engagement and representation and sense of welcome and belonging had significant, positive relationships with park intergroup contact such that when individuals felt greater engagement and representation (as represented by the latent variables of programs and events, input in decision making, and representation of racial and ethnic diversity) and a stronger sense of welcome and belonging, they reported greater park intergroup contact (more frequent, higher quality). These factors accounted for 38% of the variance in intergroup contact at urban parks. The effect of engagement and representation on park intergroup contact was partially mediated through safety and sense of welcome and belonging, and the effect of safety was fully mediated through sense of welcome and belonging. That is, sense of welcome and belonging was higher when individuals felt safer in parks and perceived greater engagement and representation. Importantly, the model accounted for 77% of the variance in sense of welcome and belonging. Finally, people felt safer in parks when they perceived more engagement and representation and felt less safe

when they visited parks to meet and interact with new people. Overall, several of the initial study

hypotheses were supported, several were not supported, and several were not tested due to

measurement concerns.

Table 10. Paths in Structural Equation Model

Dependent Variable	R^2	Independent Variables	B	SE	β	p	Hypothesis[1]
Park Intergroup Contact	.378	Community Racial Diversity	-0.050	0.083	-0.033	0.542	H1: No
		Community Ethnic Diversity	0.166	0.185	0.047	0.370	H2: No
		Social Group Motivations	0.080	0.118	0.072	0.498	H3: No
		New People Motivations	-0.121	0.085	-0.134	0.155	H4: No
		Engagement & Representation	**0.497**	**0.150**	**0.337**	**<.001**	**H6: Yes**
		Safety	0.028	0.151	0.018	0.852	H8: No
		Sense of Welcome & Belonging	**0.461**	**0.187**	**0.326**	**0.014**	**H12: Yes**
Sense of Welcome & Belonging	.774	Community Racial Diversity	0.025	0.044	0.023	0.566	-
		Community Ethnic Diversity	-0.011	0.076	-0.005	0.881	-
		Social Group Motivations	0.077	0.064	0.099	0.226	-
		New People Motivations	-0.086	0.047	-0.135	0.066	-
		Engagement & Representation	**0.597**	**0.071**	**0.526**	**<.001**	**H7: Yes**
		Safety	**0.479**	**0.084**	**0.460**	**<.001**	**H9: Yes**
Safety	.439	Community Racial Diversity	-0.068	0.034	-0.070	0.046	-
		Community Ethnic Diversity	-0.084	0.083	-0.038	.309	-
		Social Group Motivations	0.112	0.079	0.162	0.158	-
		New People Motivations	**-0.226**	**0.051**	**-0.401**	**<.001**	**Non-Hypoth.**
		Engagement & Representation	**0.700**	**0.090**	**0.762**	**<.001**	**H7: Yes**

Significant paths are bolded.
[1]H5, H10, H11 unable to be tested due to measurement concerns with solitude motivations and place identity. Non-hypothesized paths are marked with "-" unless they were statistically significant.

Figure 7. Final Structural Model (Significant Paths)

Comparisons of Model by Race and Ethnicity

Next, the structural model was examined separately for each of the four racial and ethnic groups. Model fit was strong for Hispanic or Latino respondents, acceptable for Black or African American respondents, and poor for Asian and white respondents (Table 11). Some common patterns emerged across the groups, particularly with regard to factors associated with sense of welcome and belonging. Generally, safety and engagement and representation were positively related to welcome and belonging, either through direct or mediated relationships, or some combination of the two. That is, the more that people felt safe in parks and engaged by the park organization, the more they felt welcome and that they belonged in parks. Furthermore, for Black or African American respondents, sense of welcome and belonging had a direct, positive relationship with park intergroup contact, such that a greater sense of welcome and belonging was associated with more frequent and positive contact, but this was the only group for which this relationship was statistically significant. For Asian and white respondents, there were no statistically significant predictors of park intergroup contact. Figure 8 provides a visual representation of significant paths (and whether they are positive or negative relationships) for each group. Full details of group analyses can be found in Table 12.

Table 11. SEM Model Fit across Groups

Model	N	χ^2	p	df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Overall Sample	931	1747.990	<.001	870	0.929	0.935	0.033	0.060
Hispanic or Latino or Any Race	234	1289.742	<.001	870	0.910	0.917	0.045	0.060
Black or African American	235	1409.211	<.001	870	0.880	0.890	0.051	0.058
Asian	245	2480.894	<.001	870	0.729	0.751	0.087	0.104
White	217	2778.821	<.001	870	0.706	0.729	0.122	0.117

Figure 8. Final Structural Model by Racial or Ethnic Group (Significant Paths)

Table 12. Paths in Structural Model by Race and Ethnicity

Dependent Variable	R^2	Independent Variables	B	SE	β	p
Hispanic or Latino of Any Race						
Park Intergroup Contact	.426	**Community Racial Diversity**	**0.278**	**0.130**	**0.165**	**0.033**
		Community Ethnic Diversity	-0.421	0.269	-0.127	0.117
		Social Group Motivations	0.419	0.422	0.366	0.321
		New People Motivations	-0.308	0.282	-0.314	0.275
		Engagement & Representation	0.463	0.266	0.310	0.081
		Safety	0.189	0.314	0.121	0.547
		Sense of Welcome & Belonging	0.239	0.284	0.169	0.402
Sense of Welcome & Belonging	.740	Community Racial Diversity	-0.024	0.066	-0.020	0.721
		Community Ethnic Diversity	0.129	0.129	0.055	0.317
		Social Group Motivations	0.278	0.198	0.343	0.160
		New People Motivations	-0.167	0.126	-0.241	0.184
		Engagement & Representation	0.288	0.156	0.272	0.065
		Safety	**0.654**	**0.126**	**0.593**	**<.001**
Safety	.516	Community Racial Diversity	-0.119	0.064	-0.110	0.063
		Community Ethnic Diversity	-0.145	0.135	-0.068	0.282
		Social Group Motivations	-0.308	0.233	-0.419	0.186
		New People Motivations	0.075	0.166	0.119	0.650
		Engagement & Representation	**0.828**	**0.132**	**0.864**	**<.001**
Black or African American						
Park Intergroup Contact	.504	Community Racial Diversity	0.056	0.138	0.035	0.687
		Community Ethnic Diversity	0.135	0.269	0.042	0.615
		Social Group Motivations	0.197	0.136	0.210	0.147
		New People Motivations	-0.155	0.100	-0.189	0.121
		Engagement & Representation	0.152	0.208	0.117	0.464
		Safety	-0.174	0.287	-0.111	0.543
		Sense of Welcome & Belonging	**0.771**	**0.269**	**0.656**	**0.004**
Sense of Welcome & Belonging	.841	Community Racial Diversity	-0.010	0.075	-0.007	0.893
		Community Ethnic Diversity	-0.053	0.148	-0.019	0.722
		Social Group Motivations	0.002	0.092	0.003	0.979
		New People Motivations	0.026	0.061	0.037	0.675
		Engagement & Representation	**0.388**	**0.161**	**0.352**	**0.016**
		Safety	**0.786**	**0.177**	**0.590**	**<.001**
Safety	.661	Community Racial Diversity	-0.002	0.072	-0.002	0.974
		Community Ethnic Diversity	0.042	0.151	0.020	0.780
		Social Group Motivations	0.068	0.096	0.113	0.480
		New People Motivations	-0.097	0.062	-0.186	0.120
		Engagement & Representation	**0.691**	**0.113**	**0.836**	**<.001**

Dependent Variable	R^2	Independent Variables	B	SE	β	p
Table 12. Paths in Structural Model by Race and Ethnicity (Continued)

Dependent Variable	R^2	Independent Variables	B	SE	β	p
Asian						
Park Intergroup Contact	.143	Community Racial Diversity	-0.195	0.118	-0.150	0.099
		Community Ethnic Diversity	0.604	0.303	0.167	0.047
		Social Group Motivations	-0.053	0.244	-0.044	0.828
		New People Motivations	-0.041	0.185	-0.044	0.825
		Engagement & Representation	0.335	0.535	0.208	0.531
		Safety	0.038	0.227	0.027	0.866
		Sense of Welcome & Belonging	0.335	0.460	0.194	0.466
Sense of Welcome & Belonging	.783	Community Racial Diversity	0.045	0.054	0.060	0.400
		Community Ethnic Diversity	0.031	0.109	0.015	0.780
		Social Group Motivations	-0.064	0.112	-0.092	0.571
		New People Motivations	0.042	0.082	0.079	0.608
		Engagement & Representation	**0.396**	**0.134**	**0.427**	**.003**
		Safety	**0.491**	**0.135**	**0.589**	**<.001**
Safety	.322	Community Racial Diversity	0.064	0.076	0.071	0.403
		Community Ethnic Diversity	-0.213	0.210	-0.085	0.310
		Social Group Motivations	0.268	0.149	0.322	0.073
		New People Motivations	**-0.316**	**0.104**	**-0.493**	**0.002**
		Engagement & Representation	**0.685**	**0.249**	**0.615**	**0.006**
White						
Park Intergroup Contact	.542	Community Racial Diversity	-0.554	0.353	-0.290	0.117
		Community Ethnic Diversity	1.025	0.682	0.238	0.133
		Social Group Motivations	-0.282	0.466	-0.235	0.546
		New People Motivations	0.231	0.362	0.256	0.523
		Engagement & Representation	0.238	0.453	0.155	0.600
		Safety	0.257	0.387	0.138	0.507
		Sense of Welcome & Belonging	0.700	0.418	0.470	0.094
Sense of Welcome & Belonging	.845	**Community Racial Diversity**	**0.217**	**0.097**	**0.169**	**0.025**
		Community Ethnic Diversity	-0.426	0.214	-0.147	0.047
		Social Group Motivations	0.273	0.156	0.340	0.081
		New People Motivations	**-0.433**	**0.153**	**-0.714**	**0.005**
		Engagement & Representation	**0.855**	**0.223**	**0.830**	**<.001**
		Safety	**0.485**	**0.149**	**0.389**	**<.001**
Safety	.387	Community Racial Diversity	-0.157	0.103	-0.153	0.126
		Community Ethnic Diversity	0.011	0.224	0.005	0.962
		Social Group Motivations	0.129	0.221	0.200	0.559
		New People Motivations	**-0.313**	**0.145**	**-0.644**	**0.031**
		Engagement & Representation	**0.671**	**0.194**	**0.812**	**<.001**

Discussion

Urban parks are often touted as shared community spaces of diversity and inclusion among people from different racial and/or ethnic backgrounds (Amin, 2002; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Valentine, 2008). However, the extent that these spaces facilitate intergroup contact between racially and ethnically diverse users has received relatively little empirical attention (Hillier et al., 2016). Some evidence suggests parks provide the opportunity for intergroup contact, but this contact can vary in quality (Harris et al., 2019; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Neal et al., 2015; Peters, 2010; Peters & de Haan, 2011; Seeland et al., 2009). Importantly, less is known about the factors or conditions which relate to intergroup contact. Understanding these conditions, particularly those which can be influenced by park managers and stewards, could aid in the development of practical strategies to increase the frequency of positive intergroup contact in urban parks (Blinded 1; Hillier et al., 2016). This rationale is particularly relevant given that more frequent and positive intergroup contact in parks is associated with a variety of positive outcomes including higher interracial trust, lower prejudice, stronger civic attitudes toward social justice, and more frequent civic engagement behaviors in support of social justice (See Chapter 2). Several conditions associated with or predictive of intergroup contact have been identified/hypothesized in previous research, but their collective influence on contact had yet to be examined, making it more difficult to understand which factors to intentionally focus on to promote more frequent and positive intergroup contact. The current study sought to address these gaps through examining the relationships between community diversity, park use motivations, engagement and representation, safety, sense of welcome and belonging, and park intergroup contact.

Results indicated that park intergroup contact is well represented as a two-dimensional construct comprising both quantity and quality, and descriptive findings across urban park visitors in the U.S. indicated moderate contact quantity and generally positive contact quality. The structural model indicates sense of welcome and belonging as having a direct, positive relationship with more frequent and positive intergroup contact. Moreover, engagement and representation has both direct and mediated relationships with contact, and safety has a mediated relationship with contact. Collectively, sense of welcome and belonging, engagement and representation, and safety are associated with more frequent and positive intergroup contact. These three factors were especially relevant among Black or African American respondents. Across respondents of different races and ethnicities, engagement and representation and safety almost always had positive and strong relationships with sense of welcome and belonging. These results suggest that efforts to increase safety and engagement and representation could serve to support a more welcoming environment for racially and ethnically diverse visitors, and in turn, support more frequent and positive intergroup contact. The following sections provide a discussion of these relationships and their implications for the management of urban parks.

Safety and Sense of Welcome and Belonging

Prior research in Philadelphia urban parks found that a higher sense of welcome and belonging was associated with more frequent intergroup contact (Blinded 1). The current study corroborates this finding, demonstrating the association between sense of welcome and belonging and more frequent and positive contact. Findings also align with neighborhood research suggesting that a greater sense of community belonging is associated with higher quality intergroup contact for some racial and ethnic groups (Liu et al., 2018) - in the current study, this held true in an urban park context, particularly for Black or African American

respondents, for whom sense of welcome and belonging was a relatively strong and direct contributor to more frequent and positive contact.

Although examining the model by race and ethnicity provides some interesting insights, findings should be interpreted in the broader societal context- leisure does not occur in a vacuum, but rather is a manifestation of broader socio-political contexts (Mowatt, 2018a; Rose et al., 2018). Some research has critiqued the use of race, ethnicity, or some combination of the two as comparison variables in recreation and leisure research, particularly when race is used as a variable to explain inequities rather than to examine the influence of systemic factors which relate to these inequities (Floyd & Stodolska, 2019). Comparisons across racial and ethnic groups were conducted due to anticipated different experiences with intergroup contact based on one's race or ethnicity relative to current and historical systemic factors which may influence safety, sense of welcome and belonging, and engagement and representation. In the current study, the measure of safety I developed was intentionally focused on safety from, for example, racism, discrimination, and interracial conflict, as these have both historically and contemporarily occurred in park and recreation spaces (Harris et al., 2019; Mowatt, 2018b; Pinckney et al., 2018). Individuals who reported more engagement and representation typically felt safer in their community's parks. This finding aligns with prior research suggesting that park programming can increase use and perceptions of safety (e.g., Groshong et al., 2020), and provides evidence of the important roles of representation and input in decision making. Moreover, legacies of exclusionary practices such as park segregation and inequitable resource allocation remain (e.g., Rigolon & Németh, 2018), and both firsthand experiences or shared experiences with these factors may impact the extent to which individuals feel safe, welcome, or that they belong in park spaces (Chapter 4). As urban park agencies work to address inequities

and increase the extent to which parks are welcoming for people of color, knowledge of the factors which impact a sense of welcome and belonging could be very valuable and help to advance norms, policy, and practice. The fact that engagement and representation was positively associated with both safety and sense of welcome and belonging across racial and ethnic groups underscores the need for park agencies to focus on these modifiable factors.

Engagement and Representation

Engagement and representation, as reflected by inclusive programs and events, input in decision making, and representation of racial and ethnic diversity can support a greater sense of welcome and belonging as well as more frequent and positive intergroup contact. These findings align with prior urban park research suggesting that input in decision making can support sense of welcome and belonging and in turn, intergroup contact quantity (Blinded 1). Previous research has also suggested that representation of diversity among park staff and more inclusive and programs and events representing community diversity and culture could support a sense of belonging in parks (J. Byrne, 2012; Camarillo et al., 2019; Plane & Klodawsky, 2013; Stodolska et al., 2019) and the current study extends these findings to include intergroup contact. Thus, efforts to increase inclusive and culturally relevant programming, input in decision making, and representation of racial and ethnic diversity may have a dual benefit of increasing sense of welcome and belonging and increasing the frequency of positive intergroup contact in parks.

Inclusivity of programs and events was represented in this study by programs which are relevant to individuals' cultures and backgrounds, celebrate community diversity, and bring people from different cultures and backgrounds together. Many urban park agencies are providing innovative programs and events that meet these objectives. For example, in Nashville, Tennessee, the *Celebrate Nashville Cultural Festival* is an event which celebrates the diverse

cultures of the community and brings together individuals from many different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds (Celebrate Nashville Cultural Festival, 2021). In addition to increasing inclusive and culturally relevant programming, urban park agencies should direct resources toward ensuring equitable and inclusive community input in programming, management, and planning for parks. Providing equitable opportunities for input involves intentional outreach and going beyond traditional community meetings and forums. Agencies should use a diverse array of tools to gain community input and work to ensure that the voices of all are represented in decision making, not just the most influential or vocal stakeholders. Urban park agencies can more equitably obtain input through partnerships with community non-profits and local businesses, strategic scheduling of meetings at convenient locations and times of day to account for non-traditional work schedules, marketing opportunities in multiple languages and through various culturally relevant media outlets, obtaining feedback of park visitors through surveys or interviews, and providing both online and in-person opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous input (National Recreation and Park Association, 2018; See Chapter 4). One comprehensive example of such engagement can be seen in Atlanta's park master planning process, *Activate ATL: Recreation and Parks for All*. Input was obtained through surveys, meetings, focus groups, a mobile app, and opportunities were widely advertised in multiple languages, through mailings, media promotion, and in-park signage (Activate ATL, 2021).

Representation of racial and ethnic diversity was reflected in this study through items pertaining to racial and ethnic diversity among park and recreation employees and leaders and in marketing materials, promotions, and social media. Findings corroborate prior research indicating that representation of racially and ethnically diverse staff can support a sense of welcome and belonging for people of color in parks (J. Byrne, 2012). Although not directly

measured in this study, it is important for park and recreation agencies seeking to increase

diverse representation to do so genuinely, and not from a standpoint of tokenism. For example,

prior research has identified that tokenistic representation in media and promotions can

undermine diversity and inclusion efforts, and can reduce sense of welcome and belonging

(Blinded 6). Agencies seeking to increase representation of racial and ethnic diversity among

staff and leaders should consider workforce development programs and intentional recruiting of

people of color. One such example can be seen in Portland, Oregon Parks and Recreation's

Workforce Diversity and Competency Initiative of their *Five-Year Racial Equity Action Plan*.

This initiative is focused on ensuring the workforce is representative of the city and includes

specific strategies for racial equity in recruitment and hiring. For instance, the plan outlines how

hiring managers will be trained to "counter implicit bias during the hiring process," and the

department will use "disaggregated data by race to track and monitor the hiring process,

including recruitment, interview procedures, and hiring outcomes" (Portland Parks & Recreation,

2017, p. 21).

    In addition to the identified relationships between engagement and representation and

other study variables, the measure of engagement and representation developed and employed in

this study has additional practical value. To date, there have been a lack of accessible tools for

park agencies, other managing organizations or stewards, and researchers to quantitatively

measure aspects of equitable engagement and representation. Given inequities in engagement

and representation demonstrated in prior qualitative research (e.g., Allison & Hibbler, 2004; J.

Byrne, 2012), the development of this measure presents an opportunity to quantify perceptions of

engagement and representation and obtain more generalizable data. It also offers the potential for

less resource intensive (i.e., less staff time, less need for expertise in qualitative research) data

collection techniques at park and recreation agencies, who often conduct survey efforts anyway. This measure is relatively short, and the items/constructs are easily analyzable and comparable across groups. Demonstrated measurement invariance indicates that the measure could be used to compare perceptions by race/ethnicity, which could be useful for agencies seeking to better understand broader public perceptions which extend beyond the often overrepresented voices of white residents. Having quantitative data on engagement and representation could help agencies to more effectively allocate funds toward more equitable engagement and representation, especially if they can document existing needs or inequities. Quantitative data can help to convey needs to stakeholders, and such information could be useful in advocating for funding from local officials or communicating with the public. Furthermore, documenting success or progress associated with agency efforts could help convey their contributions to equity to local officials and other decision makers, and evidence of such contributions may help with sustaining or increasing levels of funding (Blinded 8).

Limitations and Future Research

Data were collected through a Qualtrics panel, which importantly allowed for a racially and ethnically diverse sample and a virtual investigation of the research topic during a time when in-person data collection was severely restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Qualtrics panel data have several limitations which must be acknowledged. Qualtrics only keeps data for respondents who complete the survey. Thus, people who experience survey fatigue, are too busy to finish, or get distracted and fail to complete it are excluded from the sample. In a sense, listwise deletion is completed before data is received by the research team, and therefore missing data is typically very limited with Qualtrics panel studies. Moreover, Qualtrics does not

provide information on response rate and they provide only limited details on where respondents are recruited from.

The classification by race and ethnicity in this study simplified the complexity of these constructs, and the groups used for comparisons were limited based on the recruitment capacity of Qualtrics. Qualtrics could only target/promote the survey to four racial and ethnic groups, and despite the fact that the survey was open to anyone, all respondents identified themselves as belonging to one of these groups. A joint variable for race and ethnicity was used to conduct group comparisons based largely on group size and statistical feasibility, and although this approach is widely accepted, it is not without critique. For instance, the use of a category which encompasses all Hispanic or Latino respondents, regardless of their reported race, may be very heterogeneous. Alternatively, even though race and ethnicity were asked in the survey as separate questions, there was a substantial portion of respondents who reported both their ethnicity and their race and Hispanic or Latino, indicating notable overlap in how these demographic attributes are understood by survey takers. Some researchers have critiqued the use of race and ethnicity as comparison variables more broadly, suggesting they are often used incorrectly used to uncover "preferences" rather than to understand the influence of systemic factors, which would be a more appropriate use (Arai & Kivel, 2009; Floyd, 2007; Mowatt, 2018a).

Furthermore, it took a lot longer to get a substantial number of respondents who were Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino than it did to obtain similar numbers of respondents who were white or Asian, which could perhaps indicate 1) the size of the respondent pools that Qualtrics has for each of these groups or 2) that the topic of the survey was more interesting/appealing to certain individuals over others. It is also important to acknowledge the

timing of this study. Data collection began right before the 2020 U.S. election and was in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, more specifically the late fall spike in cases. Both of these contextual factors could have impacted perceptions of certain study variables. For instance, park use motivations, particularly those related to other people may have been different due to the pandemic.

Regarding study findings, the structural model was a poor fit for white and Asian respondents, suggesting there may be other variables the model did not capture that are more important for these groups. Future research should continue to investigate the factors that relate to intergroup contact in parks for both of these groups, particularly given that the benefits of frequent, positive contact in parks (e.g., higher interracial trust, lower prejudice, stronger civic attitudes toward social justice, and more frequent civic engagement behaviors in support of social justice; See Chapter 2) can be beneficial for both these groups and for broader societal civic engagement for social justice. Future research should also consider testing and expanding some of the measures used in this study. For instance, regarding representation of racial and ethnic diversity, additional items reflecting representation of diverse languages and history of various racial and ethnic groups in parks (e.g., through art, names, statues) may provide additional practical insights for increasing equitable engagement and representation, and in turn, safety, sense of welcome and belonging, and intergroup contact.

Furthermore, park quality, park design, and certain park amenities may also play a role attracting and creating a welcoming environment for racially and ethnically diverse users, and thus additional variables representing these factors may be fruitful for future research (See Chapter 4). It is important for park agencies, community organizations, and supporting foundations to monitor the effectiveness of intentional efforts to stimulate more frequent and

positive intergroup contact in parks, tracking changes in outcomes such as prejudice, intergroup attitudes, and acts of racism and discrimination in parks. It would also be valuable for future studies to test the structural relationships identified in this study in different contexts and populations; other in-person recreation settings such as community centers, swimming pools, and fitness centers may be fruitful contexts for future investigation. Virtual recreation spaces pioneered during the COVID-19 pandemic may also be a relevant context for stimulating frequent and positive intergroup contact, and they could be used as a platform to promote prejudice reduction, improved intergroup attitudes, awareness of systemic inequalities, and civic engagement. Future studies should explore how park and recreation agencies can use virtual spaces to encourage positive intergroup contact and promote dialogue and understanding across people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Conclusion

As the United States becomes more racially and ethnically diverse, the occurrence of intergroup contact in public spaces such as parks is likely to increase. As park and recreation professionals, researchers, and stewards, we have a responsibility to promote positive intergroup contact and to ensure diverse, equitable, and inclusive services. With this vision in mind, the current study investigated a variety of contextual and psychosocial factors hypothesized to be related to intergroup contact in urban parks. Findings supported intergroup contact as a two-dimensional construct encompassing both quantity and quality, and results suggested contact occurs in moderate quantities and is generally quite positive for urban park visitors in the United States. More frequent, positive contact occurred when individuals perceived a greater sense of welcome and belonging and more engagement and representation. Safety as well as engagement and representation were important predictors of sense of welcome and belonging across diverse

racial and ethnic groups. Results indicate that urban park agencies seeking to increase sense of welcome and belonging or frequency of positive intergroup contact should focus on engagement and representation (as reflected through inclusive programs and events, input in decision making, and representation of racial and ethnic diversity) and safety.

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Chapter 4 Urban Park Leaders' Perceptions of Park-Based Intergroup Contact

Abstract

Urban parks have often been discussed as multicultural spaces with the potential for intergroup contact between racially and ethnically diverse visitors. Prior research suggests that various park agency practices supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in urban parks may help foster contact, but studies have yet to examine the perspectives and actions of park leaders, who are responsible for DEI initiatives and who may shape policies to promote intergroup contact. This qualitative study explored the perceptions of leaders at urban public park agencies across the United States relative to DEI, with a specific focus on intergroup contact between racially and ethnically diverse park users. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 leaders at large urban parks agencies across the country. Leaders believed that stimulating a welcoming park atmosphere supports more diverse usership of parks (i.e., intergroup co-presence). Furthermore, certain park features, programs, and events were perceived to support the transition from co-presence to interaction. Leaders indicated that contact is generally positive, but also recognized instances of negative contact with harmful consequences for people of color. Overall, findings underscore the need for park agencies to attend to intergroup contact, as it can both support and undermine efforts to make parks more welcoming and safe.

Introduction

Urban parks are often discussed as diverse spaces where individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds come together (Low et al., 2009; Seeland et al., 2009; Wessel, 2009). While parks have the potential to foster diverse visitation (Low et al., 2009; Valentine, 2008; Wessel, 2009), this may not happen without intentional actions from park managers, advocates, stewards, and local policy-makers, particularly given existing barriers and disparities in park access and use based on race and ethnicity (Blinded 7; Camarillo et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2019). When parks are visited by diverse users, intergroup contact, or contact between individuals of different races or ethnicities, can occur. Attention to park-based intergroup contact is critical, as contact can be both positive and negative and can have varied consequences within and beyond the park setting (Harris et al., 2019; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Neal et al., 2015; Peters, 2010; Peters & de Haan, 2011; Seeland et al., 2009). On the positive side, intergroup contact in parks could include friendly gestures, conversations, or interactions, but on the negative side, contact could include dirty looks, rude gestures, racist comments, or physical violence. Intergroup contact theory, developed by Allport in 1954, suggests that positive intergroup contact occurring under favorable conditions can reduce prejudice toward members of other groups. The initial theory posited that support from institutions, shared goals and cooperation, equal status of individuals, and development of intergroup relationships can all support positive intergroup contact, and in turn, reductions in outgroup prejudice (Allport, 1954). Subsequent research has identified that these conditions do not all need to occur simultaneously for positive outcomes to arise (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), and that positive outcomes often occur from repeated, positive contact over time (Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Neal et al., 2015; Pettigrew, 1998).

Within park settings, intergroup contact can take multiple forms ranging from intergroup co-presence to intergroup interaction. Positive intergroup contact in the form of peaceful co-presence or interaction has the potential to reduce prejudice, increase intergroup trust, increase awareness of systemic inequalities, and influence aspects of civic engagement (Neal et al., 2015; Peters & de Haan, 2011; Seeland et al., 2009; Chapter 2). On the other hand, negative contact in the form of covert or overt discrimination, conflict, or violence has the potential to result in physical harm, increase prejudice, reinforce existing stereotypes, and undermine intergroup trust (Amin, 2002; Camarillo et al., 2019; Enos, 2017; Harris et al., 2019; Mowatt, 2018; Pinckney et al., 2018; Stodolska et al., 2011; Valentine, 2008). The divergent potential consequences underscore the need to more comprehensively understand how park agencies and their leaders perceive and address intergroup contact within urban parks. Given favorable outcomes of frequent, positive intergroup contact in urban parks (see Chapter 2), there are practical benefits to minimizing negative contact and increasing positive contact, and doing so could both enhance park experiences and improve intergroup attitudes. Despite evidence to suggest the importance of intentional management efforts surrounding intergroup contact in parks (Blinded 1; Hillier et al., 2016; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Peters et al., 2010), very little is known about the perceptions or actions that managers of urban parks are taking regarding park-based intergroup contact. Since these stakeholders have the potential to influence various factors (e.g., programs, policies, investments) related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) that could affect intergroup contact in parks, their perspectives warrant attention.

Literature Review

Public park agencies have leadership, managerial, and stewardship roles with the potential to influence intergroup contact in urban parks. While studies have not directly

examined the role of park agencies in influencing intergroup contact, studies have investigated some of the actions public park agencies are taking more broadly with regard to DEI, which may indirectly relate to intergroup contact. In the following literature review, I discuss barriers to racial and ethnic diversity in parks, DEI roles and actions of public park agencies, and finally, the role of park managers and stewards relative to park based intergroup contact.

Barriers to Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Parks

Prior to discussing the actions taken by park managers and stewards to advance DEI in urban parks, it is important to acknowledge some of the disparities and barriers that can prohibit parks from having diverse visitation, which is a precondition to intergroup contact (Neal et al., 2015; Schmid et al., 2014). A lack of diversity in the neighborhoods surrounding a park, often a function of neighborhood segregation, can limit the diversity of its visitors (Hillier et al., 2016). Moreover, people of color often face specific barriers to park visitation related to broader systemic inequalities. Safety concerns, fears of conflict and discrimination, a lack of inclusion in decision making, a lack of desired or culturally relevant activities or programs, and a non-welcoming atmosphere can all negatively impact park use (J. Byrne, 2012; Camarillo et al., 2019; Lee & Scott, 2016; Stodolska et al., 2011, 2019). Research suggests that people of color may feel unwelcome in parks when there is a lack of representation of racial and ethnic diversity among park staff and leadership, information and communications from the park agency or organization lack representation of racially and ethnically diverse users, and their communities have not been given meaningful opportunities for input and participation in decision making (Blinded 1; Blinded 6; J. Byrne, 2012; See Chapter 3). Despite these aforementioned barriers, park agencies have implemented a variety of strategies and initiatives to address these factors, increase the diversity of visitors, and support more equitable and inclusive parks.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Public parks and recreation are primarily tax-funded services that have a mission to serve all (Crompton & West, 2008; Lee et al., 2019). As such, DEI are important guiding principles for the management of park and recreation services. As defined in this dissertation, racial and ethnic diversity refers to a mixture of individuals from different racial and ethnic groups. The term diversity is not used as a synonym for people of color (Cortright, 2018). In a park setting, a park with diverse usership (as defined in this dissertation) would have visitors from multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds using the space. Equity, on the other hand, refers to the promotion of justice and fairness in the processes and distribution of resources (Blinded 2; City of Portland Office of Equity and Human Rights, n.d.; Extension Foundation, 2021). In a park context, equity is often operationalized through the distribution of capital and programmatic resources (Nisbet & Schaller, 2019; Rigolon, 2019). Finally, inclusion reflects an environment where all individuals are valued and engaged, and a variety of individuals have power and a voice in decision making (Extension Foundation, 2021; FerdMan et al., 2010; S. J. Kim, 2020). Together, diversity, equity, and inclusion are said to create the conditions under which individuals can feel a sense of belonging (Burnette, 2019). Given that research has demonstrated a connection between sense of welcome and belonging and intergroup contact Blinded 1; Chapter 3) and that park users' perceptions of certain DEI focused topics (e.g., engagement, representation, safety) can promote frequent and positive contact (See Chapter 3), actions of park agencies that support DEI may also support positive intergroup contact.

Studies have demonstrated a variety of DEI approaches among urban park agencies which may help encourage diverse visitation through creating more inclusive environments and more equitably distributing resources. Broadly speaking, these include actions related to

providing culturally relevant programs and events, increasing accessibility through eliminating or reducing program costs, hiring racially and ethnically diverse employees, increasing relevancy of and representation of racial and ethnic diversity in marketing and communications, and allocating resources based on equity frameworks (J. Byrne, 2012; Camarillo et al., 2019; Córdova, 2020; Lee et al., 2019). It is possible that these strategies could create some of the conditions which support positive intergroup contact in parks, but research has yet to investigate these connections from the park agency perspective.

Actions Related to Intergroup Contact

The actions of park agencies could influence both the frequency and quality of intergroup contact occurring at urban parks. Prior research has suggested that high-quality intergroup contact requires significant effort from park and recreation management (Matejskova & Leitner, 2011). Co-presence of racially and ethnically diverse groups is more likely to occur under supervision, suggesting the importance of Allport's (1954) condition of the support from institutions to encourage intergroup contact (Hiller et al., 2016; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011). Moreover, external stimuli such as programs, events, and park features can also encourage contact (Neal et al., 2015; Peters et al., 2010). Park agencies may be taking actions specifically related to minimizing negative intergroup contact and/or increasing positive intergroup contact, but to date, there remains a lack of research on this topic. Studies on intergroup contact in parks have examined perceptions of park visitors, but there is a lack of knowledge on the perceptions and actions taken from park agencies. A more comprehensive assessment of the perceptions and actions taken by these stakeholders could help advance understanding of the conditions and outcomes of park-based intergroup contact and inform effective management practices.

Study Purpose

The goal of this study was to understand the perceptions and actions taken by urban park agencies relative to intergroup contact between people of different races and ethnicities in parks. Dissemination of effective strategies for minimizing negative intergroup contact and stimulating positive intergroup contact in urban parks may help to support DEI efforts of park agencies across the country. This study assessed the following research questions relative to intergroup contact (both co-presence and interaction) between racially and ethnically diverse park users:

RQ1: What factors do urban park agency leaders believe influence intergroup contact in their parks?

RQ2: What management actions do urban park agencies take regarding intergroup contact their parks?

RQ3: How do urban park agency leaders perceive/characterize intergroup contact in their parks?

RQ4: What outcomes, if any, do urban park agency leaders perceive relative to intergroup contact in their parks?

Methods

This exploratory qualitative study employed a cross-sectional design with purposive sampling of leaders at public park and recreation agencies in urban areas of the United States (Babbie, 2013; Bernard, 2011; Creswell, 2014). Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately one hour. Non-probability sampling allowed for purposive selection of representative individuals relevant to the research topic (Babbie, 2013).

Eligible park agencies were determined based on a list of the 52 largest U.S. cities ranked by median racial and ethnic diversity at the neighborhood level (Cortright, 2018). Given research

on area diversity and park intergroup contact, recruiting agencies from cities with relatively high levels of neighborhood diversity was deemed advantageous, as leaders in these cities may be more expert informants on the study topics. Based on the list of eligible park agencies, email contact information for the executive director (or similarly named highest ranking position) was obtained. Study participants were recruited via email in two batches- first those whose cities were ranked in the top half of the list were recruited, and then one week later, I proceeded to recruiting those in the second half of the list. This two-stage recruitment process allowed me to 1) prioritize cities with higher neighborhood level diversity, 2) gauge rate of response/willingness to participate and 3) slightly stagger the scheduling of interviews, allowing for greater flexibility in the times I had available to meet with participants. In two instances, the director was not available for an interview, but they directed me to another high-ranking leader within their organization (e.g., deputy director).

Stratified purposive sampling, also known as quota sampling, was used to gain perspectives from diverse urban park agency leaders (Miles & Hubermn, 1984). This sampling technique, while not a probability sample, allowed the data to reflect important parameters of the population, including ensuring representation across leaders with different demographic characteristics (Bernard, 2011). I applied purposive sampling for maximum variation with regard to race and ethnicity, gender, and region of the country. The sample stratification plan can be found in Table 13. This sample size estimate and stratification was used only as a guide and did not impact initial participant recruitment. Follow-up emails to leaders who did not respond to my initial study invitations were sent out purposively based on this stratification. Recruitment of new participants concluded when data saturation had been reached and the point of saturation was assessed by continuously comparing data (Bernard, 2011; Creswell, 2014).

Table 13. Sample Stratification Guide

Group	Number of Interviews
Gender	
Male	5+
Female	5+
Race or Ethnicity	
White	5+
People of Color[1]	5+
Region of U.S.	
Northeast	3+
Midwest	3+
South	3+
West	3+

[1]Could include any leaders identifying as non-white

Semi-structured interviews of approximately one hour were held and recorded via Zoom with all who agreed to participate (n=16); verbal consent was obtained prior to beginning each interview. An interview guide was used to ensure that all topic areas were covered in each interview (Bernard, 2011). This technique was selected due to its functionality and efficiency as opportunities for follow up were expected to be limited. The interview guide was developed based on the main research questions of the study and was partially informed through the results of Chapter 3 of this dissertation, which revealed important relationships between engagement and representation, sense of welcome and belonging, and intergroup contact. Although a draft interview guide was developed prior to the data analysis for Chapter 3, findings from Chapter 3 informed one main modification to the interview guide- a question was added to specifically ask leaders about factors they perceived help make parks more welcoming for people of color. Results from Chapter 3 also confirmed the importance of having questions about engagement and representation. The questions were purposively ordered in the interview guide, but the order they were asked in the interview often varied based on topics which emerged organically. Probing techniques were used to encourage participants to expand and provide additional details.

Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded[2] and transcribed verbatim as they occurred using Otter.ai automated transcription software. Transcripts were reviewed and edited by two trained undergraduate research assistants. I conducted thematic analysis to identify and analyze themes in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2014). Thematic analysis has been identified as a valid approach for applied research and one that is especially valuable for presenting results to non-academic stakeholders- a key audience to which I intend to share the study findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2014; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Data were analyzed using MAXQDA qualitative analysis software. A mixture of in vivo coding and descriptive coding was used so as to most accurately represent the words of participants and demonstrate trustworthiness of the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Saldaña, 2015). Codes were compiled to create a codebook. The constant comparison method was applied to continually reevaluate and update the codebook throughout the analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Research assistants who reviewed and edited transcriptions were asked to generate a list of topics that they felt were represented in the data, and we came together to discuss our impressions and terminology used. Furthermore, an outside researcher with expertise in DEI was asked to code a subset of the data (i.e., one transcript), and after doing so, we came together to discuss impressions and codes used. A few minor adjustments were made to the codebook based on these discussions.

Once the codebook and coding of transcripts was finalized, codes were reduced into categories and themes. Data were analyzed and presented in the context of each research question. In order to advance the rigor of this study, I used member checking to help to establish

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[2] One interviewee requested not to be recorded, and therefore there is no recording or transcription for this person. Notes taken during the interview are the data source for this interviewee.

the internal validity of the findings and demonstrate their trustworthiness (Connelly, 2016; Rose & Johnson, 2020). In particular, I adopted a synthesized and systematic member checking approach (Birt et al., 2016). Once preliminary analysis had been completed, I shared a visual representation of the four main topics resulting from the analysis, and within each topic, I shared the themes and subthemes I had identified (see Appendix D for an example). For each of the four topics, I selected one quote from each participant and noted the theme and subtheme in which I had categorized it. I asked participants to review my classification of their responses and either 1) confirm that the classification made sense and represented their words well or 2) suggest where they think it would be more appropriately classified. I also invited them to add any additional comments or thoughts that they did not mention in their interview or edit anything they had said. I conducted member checks via email and participants were asked to return the document within seven days. Approximately half of the interviewees returned their documents. Participants who responded to the member check almost universally confirmed the classification of their responses (an alternate classification was suggested for one response, which was implemented), and occasionally added additional information supplementing their initial response. When additional context was added, I incorporated this into the presentation of their quotes. Full study results will be shared with participants upon conclusion of the dissertation process. To triangulate the data, I also examined publicly accessible materials from the agencies and organizations of my interviewees, particularly with regard to any programs or initiatives discussed in the interviews. While not directly presented or cited here (to help maintain participant confidentiality), these sources provided additional context supporting participants' examples.

Results

Sample Characteristics

On account of the relatively small population from which this sample is derived (16 interviews out of 52 possible agency directors) coupled with the intersectionality of demographic characteristics like gender, race, or ethnicity, I have chosen not to present a table of individual participant characteristics in order to protect the confidentiality of participants. For instance, a relatively small portion of directors across the 52 cities are women of color, and presenting gender, race, and ethnicity information for each interviewee may easily identify someone's participation in the study. Therefore, I have opted to show participant characteristics in aggregate to show the diversity of the sample without compromising confidentiality (Table 14).While this table does not show the intersections of these characteristics, among subgroups of both males and females and across different regions of the country, I interviewed directors who were Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and white.

Table 14. Interviewee Characteristics

	n (%[1])
Gender	
Male	7 (44)
Female	9 (56)
Race or Ethnicity[2]	
White	8 (50)
Black	5 (31)
Hispanic or Latino	4 (25)
Multiple Ethnicities	1 (6)
Region	
Northeast	1 (6)
Midwest	2 (13)
Mid-Atlantic	3 (19)
Southeast	5 (31)
Southwest	2 (13)
West	3 (19)
Median Neighborhood Racial and Ethnic Diversity	
Highest (top third)	7 (44)
Mid-range (middle third)	6 (38)
Lowest (lowest third)	3 (19)

[1]Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding
[2]Participants could indicate multiple categories and therefore percentages exceed 100

Results are presented in four main sections which closely correspond to my research questions. In each section, I discuss the identified themes and subthemes and share example quotes which illustrate these themes. A number was assigned to each interviewee, and the interviewee number is presented with each example quote, primarily to show the prevalence of themes and subthemes across interviewees. Each section also has a table that displays the themes, subthemes, and components of the subthemes.

Factors Influencing Co-Presence of Racially and Ethnically Diverse Park Users (RQ1, RQ2)

Consistent with the idea of racially and ethnically diverse visitation as a necessary condition for intergroup co-presence and any subsequent intergroup interaction, I asked interviewees about the factors and management actions related to the racial and ethnic diversity

of their park visitors. I identified two themes: *structural community factors* and *management factors/actions*. Components of the latter theme were perceived to influence the extent parks are welcoming to and used by racially and ethnically diverse individuals. A breakdown of the themes, subthemes, and components of the subthemes for this section can be found in Table 15. For topics leaders described as supporting racial and ethnic diversity in parks, a "(+)" is used; conversely for topics described as a barrier to racial and ethnic diversity in parks, a "(-)" is used. Topics with mixed perceptions are indicated with "(+/-)."

Table 15. Factors Influencing Co-Presence of Racially and Ethnically Diverse Park Users

Themes, **Subthemes**, & Components

Structural Community Factors

Residential patterns/segregation

- Limited neighborhood diversity/residential segregation (-)
- People staying in their own neighborhoods (-)
- Uniqueness of parks and recreation as spaces of intergroup contact (+)

Type of park

- Regional/destination/signature parks (+)
- Neighborhood parks (-)

Park Access

- Transportation barriers (-)
- Poor walkability to parks (e.g., distance, safety) (-)

Management Factors/Actions

General welcoming atmosphere

Park condition

- Overall quality and facility condition (+)
- Maintenance and cleanliness (+)
- Perceived equity of park quality across city (+)
- Park renovations (+/-)

Safety

- Lighting (+)
- Supervision (+)
- Crime and gang presence (-)

Park features & amenities

- Appealing to diverse user groups (+)
- Conducive to a variety of activities and park uses (+)

Programs & events

- Cultural festivals (+)
- Broad-based appeal programming (+)
- Free or low cost (+)
- Community partnerships (+)

Outreach & engagement

- Knowledge/information about parks and offerings (+)
- Marketing in culturally relevant media (+)
- Multi-lingual communications and signage (+)
- Equitable input in decision making (+)

Representation of racial & ethnic diversity

- People at the park (+)
- Staff and leadership (+)
- History and art (+)

History of institutional racism

- History of racism, segregation, and facilities being unwelcoming to people of color (-)
- Public acknowledgement by park agency and work to address institutional racism (+)

Structural Community Factors

Interviewees across all regions of the country generally indicated that park use across their systems reflected the diversity of their city as a whole, but that at the park level, diversity of users by race and ethnicity was dependent on a number of community factors which included residential patterns/segregation, type of park, and park access.

Residential patterns/segregation.

Diversity of park users, particularly for neighborhood parks, was frequently perceived to depend on neighborhood diversity or lack thereof. For instance, one leader indicated how park use tends to mirror residential patterns in her city:

"The users in our parks reflect the diversity of the city as a whole, and they mirror the housing patterns and living patterns in the city. And so those areas of the city that are more demographically diverse are those parks where that participation tends to be more diverse as well" (8)

Residential segregation associated with redlining was commonly cited by both white and non-white interviewees as a structural barrier to racially and ethnically diverse visitation (as well as historical park investment) at individual parks:

"It's all about location...we have a significant history of redlining that created a racial divide about where people live, and parks are a part of that because they're a part of the system of where people live. So, the parks that are in the neighborhoods that were designated on the redlining maps for minorities, also did not get investments, did not have the amenities that the other parks [have]" (16)

Often coinciding with patterns of residential segregation, leaders noted that people frequently stayed within their neighborhoods in environments they were familiar with. For example, one interviewee described:

> "I don't think the parks themselves have any kind of structural barriers or programmatic barriers or anything like that. I think it's a function of the community and people feeling comfortable leaving their racial and ethnic bubble and going into other racial ethnic bubbles. And so, it's a reflection of the culture more than it's a reflection of our parks."
>
> (13)

Conversely, several leaders of varied racial and ethnic characteristics noted how parks and recreation are unique spaces that bring people together in the face of persistent segregation in other aspects of daily life in their cities. For instance, one person explained:

> "When I think of our neighborhoods and cities across this country, they still have very segregated patterns. Our religious institutions, for example, are still amazingly segregated, barber shops and salons, and so on. And that's changing, but it's still primarily true, and schools, as much as I think efforts have been made to provide good access and schools that are you know demographically diverse, it follows the pattern of the neighborhoods in many instances and so people in their daily lives don't naturally mix a lot. But parks and recreation are the one place where that does happen, and that's a real opportunity to bring people together" (8)

Type of park.

Many leaders across the U.S. described differences in the extent to which visitors are racially and ethnically diverse across the types of parks in their portfolios. They discussed how

regional parks, large destination parks, and more famous or signature parks typically attracted

racially and ethnically diverse visitors, whereas visitors to neighborhood parks were typically

less diverse (echoing aspects of residential segregation, as noted above). For instance, one person

noted: "If you go to some of our major sort of community parks that attract a lot of visitors you'll

see a lot more diversity at those locations" (13). Others described similar patterns, also noting

how the location of these types of parks relative to downtown areas or highways was associated

with more diverse visitation:

> "There are many that are what we call kind of regional [community centers], regional
>
> parks that you will find people from all over the city go to. Those are closer maybe to our
>
> downtown area and those might tend to be the more racially diverse" (14)

Park access.

Next, leaders discussed park access as a contributor to racially and ethnically diverse

visitation. In particular, physical access, transportation barriers, and walkability were perceived

to influence the extent of diverse visitation, regardless of interviewee's region of the country. For

example, one interviewee described challenges with park access in his city:

> "Our climate is usually very hot and humid and muggy. And so, people like their cars and
>
> they like their AC. So, if you rely on public transportation, then that makes it more
>
> challenging to get into a park versus, 'oh I live across the street or three blocks from it, let
>
> me just walk to it'" (4)

Relative to issues of transportation, several leaders in Western cities noted current efforts to

increase park access. For instance, one person described:

"We have one Metro transportation organization but we also have small transportation providers and so we do both regional and local coordination...almost all our facilities have bus shelters. And we, specifically in the planning process, really work with our transportation agencies to make sure that our parks are destinations as part of the routes" (10)

In one instance, a leader in a Southern city described both an institutional barrier and a physical barrier which limited park access particularly for people of color. In discussing these barriers, she also described how historical segregation policies have had a lasting impact on the extent to which people of color feel welcome at the park (a topic interwoven throughout multiple study themes and described by multiple study participants):

"I think some of it [diversity of visitors] has to do with history. So, for example the [local park's] swimming pool... because of its placement which is on the West side and the history of our city which had a barrier or had a divide based upon a 1928 plan and redlining, it moved people who were minority or people of color to the East side. That was the first barrier and then there became a physical barrier in that our city is divided by [a highway]. And so now there's a physical barrier that makes it a little more difficult to get there and also transportation...Some of it's about the history and not feeling welcome or having the segregation policies. There were segregationist policies and so there are certain individuals who just don't feel welcome and haven't been able to feel welcome. And then also now there's a physical barrier and there's also transportation issues from one side of town to the other." (9)

Management Factors/Actions

Leaders identified a variety of management factors and actions related to the extent that parks were welcoming to and visited by racially and ethnically diverse users. The management factors/actions theme included subthemes of general welcoming atmosphere, park condition, safety, park features and amenities, programs and events, outreach and engagement, representation of racial and ethnic diversity, and history of institutional racism.

General welcoming atmosphere.

The extent to which parks were welcoming to all was identified as an important factor associated with the diversity of park users. The subsequent subthemes discussed under the management factors/actions theme were all perceived in some capacity to influence the extent to which parks are welcoming to people of color, and these interconnected subthemes are highlighted where applicable. However, most leaders, both whites and people of color, also spoke more broadly about the importance of having a welcoming atmosphere at their parks. For example, one person noted:

> "It starts with us, you know, making sure that we're providing and welcoming everybody regardless of your zip code, regardless of your diversity, your ethnicity. I mean, it doesn't matter to us and I think, because that's so strong, I mean generally you get a mix of people comingling together that may not have comingled together" (11)

Park condition.

Many interviewees discussed how the condition of a park relative to quality, maintenance, and recent renovations could impact the diversity of users. Leaders across all regions and of various races and ethnicities emphasized how, regardless of the area of their city

or the population of interest, the parks needed to be clean and well maintained, or people will not use them. They also discussed issues of equity in park quality. For instance, one leader described:

> "They [parks] need to be well maintained. They need to have the same quality as you would find a park in a higher income area of the city...but if you don't have support for the infrastructure, and it doesn't feel welcoming, or it feels like they're getting less, then there's a negative vibe to that park" (11)

Another leader emphasized how some parks are more diverse than others, and discussed the connections between park condition, use, and diversity:

> "I think some [of our parks] are more diverse than others. All of them don't have a similar amount of resources that are allocated towards them, so they're in varying states of repair or disrepair...Park condition can/does often directly correlate to park use, which also, I think, potentially impacts diversity. Equitable resources (all parks in same state of repair or disrepair) might provide more consistency in measuring park goers, use, diversity, etc. Parks that have deferred maintenance, less investment, fewer amenities – impact the experience that a resident might have, and thus, serve to limit engagement. Parks that have more amenities and more investment would naturally draw more interest, thus likely leading to an increase in diversity in those parks/spaces (transportation, access and other barriers, notwithstanding)" (15)

These examples illustrate how quality facilities are key to attracting users from all demographics. As the first comment conveys, if it feels like one community is getting less, the park can have a "negative vibe" and can be a visual manifestation of inequities. Perceived inequities in resource

allocation may also contribute to tensions between racially and ethnically diverse users within parks, as discussed in a subsequent section on intergroup threat and suspicion.

Leaders also discussed the impact of park investments on diversity of users. On one hand, several leaders described how recently renovated or developed parks tended to attract diverse users. For instance, one person described a multi-million-dollar playground investment in their community: "We have a signature playground. The playground is huge. It's a million-dollar playground. It attracts people from all over the city." Conversely, however, some leaders discussed the challenging connections between park investments and gentrification. For example, one leader from a Midwestern city described a park whose attributes intersect with other study themes related to park access and type. While she noted that the park attracted diverse users, she also described how African American residents near the park have feared the renovation would contribute to them being pushed out of their community.

> "We have a park that is on a busy thoroughfare, it's probably on the border of two or three or four different neighborhoods that are all very different. And it saw a multi-million-dollar renovation in the last few years. And with some controversy too, where African American neighbors thought they were being pushed out. You know, a lot of white middle class families embraced the park because it suddenly had these really terrific amenities even though it was also in walking distance for them. But what we found, or at least anecdotally what I've observed is, at any given day, the usership is incredibly diverse and reflective of all those different neighborhoods and the kids don't care." (5)

Later in our conversation, she noted how the connection between parks and gentrification is a significant challenge:

"There's definitely this notion and I don't know that it's wrong, there's this notion that we come in and fix up these places when the neighborhood is changing or on the brink of changing. And that's really tough. You know, there's a chicken and an egg thing there for sure. And there is a real fear that parks can be the catalyst for gentrification. I mean we've had neighborhood leaders in another area where we've done a giant visionary masterplan that has so much life and we're doing so much in this park and but it's a neighborhood that has a real history of being shut out of local spaces and they're scared to death that these improvements can shut them out. There are other things going on in the neighborhood too, other investments from other entities that have nothing to do with us. But boy, it looks like we're piling on, like 'oh the white people are coming, it's time to fix up the park'. That's not it. I mean I care about doing it for the people that live there for decades or longer. But man, it's tough" (5)

This example illustrates how park renovations may increase diversity of park users, but this diversity (and large park investments themselves) can be connected to gentrification and potential displacement in surrounding neighborhoods. Recognition of these impacts, both positive and negative, was apparent among several white and non-white leaders.

Safety.

Next, interviewees discussed how perceptions of safety contribute to the diversity of users. Leaders across the country noted concerns about unsupervised parks, safety getting to the parks, lighting, and crime. Regarding supervision and safety within parks, one person described:

"I think it's difficult to diversify neighborhood-based parks [because of the] perception of safety... whether it be traffic, concerns about their children being able to walk safely to

the park, concerns about what might be going on in the park if the parks not supervised"

(16)

Others echoed the importance of safety. For instance, one leader discussed the importance of lighting and having eyes on the park:

> "Things that are appealing within the park that make people want to go to it. So, if there's more people in the park, if it's well lit, if people perceive it to be safe, the bad people don't want to go there, they'll gravitate to where it is less safe, less lighted, less eyes on the park" (1)

Leaders also discussed how crime can be a deterrent to park use. For example, one person described perceptions of crime and gang activity, while also noting how individuals may not be comfortable going to neighborhoods dominated by a racial or ethnic group other than their own:

> "When it comes to perhaps crime, you know in areas that might have gang activity, certain people from certain neighborhoods would not go to that area, because they're not known or because they're concerned that it's gang activity. There are some neighborhoods in [city], again, the city is segregated and so there are portions of the city that one might say, that is the white part of town and that is the Black part of town or something like that. So, someone may not feel comfortable going there for whatever reason, or feel unsafe" (14)

These examples illustrate the multi-faceted nature of safety. People can derive perceptions of safety from the complex intersections of park physical features (e.g., lighting), park users (e.g., gang presence), and the surrounding community (e.g., racial and ethnic composition), all of which may influence the diversity of park users.

Park features and amenities.

Many leaders across different regions and demographic characteristics discussed the role of park features and amenities in attracting diverse park users. Leaders noted the importance of having park features and amenities which appeal to diverse user groups, are conducive to a variety of activities and uses, and are suitable for culturally relevant activities. A few leaders of color described pools and fitness stations as amenities with a broad-based appeal that attract racially and ethnically diverse users. For instance, one person discussed how a recently installed fitness stations in one of her city's larger regional parks has attracted diverse users:

> "I think one of the things that really has broken down a lot of the barriers of bringing people together...We've made some concerted efforts on outdoor fitness. So, we installed an outdoor fitness court in one of our larger regional parks that has a reputation for being a homogeneous affluent population and a white population. So, we put a fitness court there and immediately it drew tremendous amount of diversity from around the city" (16)

Several leaders emphasized the importance of having amenities and features that are conducive to a variety of activities and park uses. Mentions of park design, features, and amenities often intersected with other subthemes related to park type (e.g., signature parks) and access. For instance, one person described his city's signature park which has features that support many different uses.

> "Our signature park [infill park] in the city... is in the middle of our city. It has a large lake and walking trails and shelters and volleyball courts, a huge playground, a skate park, and a big mountain to climb and fly kites. That park is extremely diverse. It attracts people from all over the city to use it on a daily basis. And so, when I go to that park, I

see races, ethnicities throughout, I see ages throughout, some people with kids, people

without kids, workout groups, singles, couples, very high, high, high diversity... My

number one thing I believe is successful in terms of inclusion, diversity: as usage goes up

in a park, you tend to get more diversity and usage goes up in a park usually with a good

mix of recreational elements. And not just 1 or 2 recreational things to do, but 5, 6, 7, 8

things to do. Then you get more people coming, more people mixing, more people

staying, seeing people that they normally wouldn't see and interacting with other people

in different cultures... I mean, if you're a dog owner and the park doesn't love dogs, you're

not going to go. And if you're a cricket player and there's no cricket field, you're not

going to go play cricket there, as an example...So I really think it is about design, and

people are more apt to use a park if it has amenities they want" (12)

The example above portrays how the convergence of these different factors (like park

features/amenities, park type, and park location) is associated with the racial and ethnic diversity

of park users.

Programs and events.

Cultural festivals as well as programs and events with broad appeal, especially those

which were free or low cost, were perceived to support more diverse park use by nearly all

leaders. For instance, one leader described an event in her city, held at one of the city's signature

parks, which celebrated the diverse cultures of city residents:

"I mean it [signature park] is pretty diverse anyway, but then in the fall we have a festival

there at the park [about celebrating our city] and it is really a showcase of art and music

and dance and food for all of the different ethnicities and cultures that call the city home"
(3)

Others noted how large programs and events draw people from across the city: "By and large the city has very interwoven diversity, so whenever we do something, like major events for a park, they really do draw everybody to that, by and large" (2) Another described a variety of their city's cultural programs, emphasizing the role of these programs in exposing people to different cultures:

"When you start to have programmed events specific to cultures, specific to things that you would not normally see, like Fourth of July and fireworks, but a Cherry Blossom Festival focusing on Asian culture is very different and can expose people to those cultures. We have parks partnered with our cultural affairs department to offer different types of music programming in the parks. So, music from different cultures and different countries live on stage and free to the public" (12)

Several leaders also discussed the role of community partnerships in drawing racially and ethnically diverse participants to various events. For instance, one interviewee noted:

"I know in a couple of our parks that are more diverse in terms of participation, it's because there are community-based activities and organizations, neighborhood organizations that hold the neighborhood picnic and everybody's invited and welcome. And, so I think what that means for us is that partnerships with local community organizations are really, really important to providing some of that shared experience and more diverse opportunities for people to interact. So, you'll see that much more in neighborhoods where the neighborhood-based organizations are really reaching out. And

they use our facilities and they reach out and we partner with them for activities and events that activate the parks and then bring people together." (8)

Overall, a wide variety of programs and events were perceived to attract racially and ethnically diverse attendees to the parks, and this topic was prominent across all demographic subgroups of the interviewees.

Outreach and engagement.

Regarding outreach and engagement, leaders across the U.S. discussed the importance of informing people about the opportunities available to them, marketing through culturally relevant channels and in multiple languages, and providing equitable and inclusive opportunities for input in park and recreation decision making. A lack of information about parks among people of color was perceived as a barrier to diverse park visitation by both white and non-white leaders, and one leader shared an example of an outreach strategy to share information:

"We put together a series of videos and talks from people of color in our agency and in the community who were avid outdoors people to share their experiences and why they spent time outdoors and then we were able to share with them all of these amazing facilities and walking trails in our own communities, much nearer and more accessible to the African American community that people didn't even know existed. And so, it's not only geographic access, but also knowledge and awareness" (8)

Relative to outreach, leaders also emphasized the need to use diverse media sources and multiple languages. For example, one interviewee described her efforts:

"I've actually made a big emphasis to really connect with the Spanish media or Telemundo, as well as the [city newspaper] which is predominantly an African American

Black newspaper here in [city]. So, we really have to branch out in regards to [outreach] and not solely depend on marketing in the website and in social media because if we're doing that, I mean, if COVID has taught us anything with the education system is, you know, the significant digital divide" (10)

Another leader discussed how her agency's equity assessment informed changes to communication when they found language to be a barrier to access:

"We were able to make very specific changes in language access by increasing the number of languages that our materials are produced in. We were able to improve our signage by including signage that was in multiple languages where appropriate. We were able to determine in the community what types of media resources different groups different ethnic groups may use to get their information and we could partner with them or utilize that particular medium by which to get information out" (9)

Finally, having ongoing input from the community to understand their wants and needs was seen as an important strategy to encourage more diverse park visitation. For instance, one person described the importance of communication with his community to understand both facility and programmatic needs:

"Understanding the needs of the community is critical to them wanting to visit or participate. Everyone has outcomes that they want to achieve. And if we're able to have communication with our community, understand the wants and needs of our community, whether it's the physical facilities or the programmatic, we need to be able to have an ongoing conversation with them, a relationship building conversation with them. We need to try to meet the wants and needs so that they can achieve their outcomes that

they're wanting to achieve. And then, that makes the relationship, the visit to the park, the

visit to the program, better for them regardless of what demographic they are from" (1)

These examples illustrate leaders' perspectives on effective outreach and engagement and

highlight how diverse park usership relies on diverse community members knowing about the

parks and the opportunities within them.

> **Representation of racial and ethnic diversity.**

Many leaders, both whites and people of color, discussed how representation of racial

and ethnic diversity within parks and the organizations that manage them is important to

ensuring people feel comfortable and welcome in park spaces, and in turn, contributes to the

diversity of users. Representation was perceived to be important across park users of different

races and ethnicities: "Representation [among staff] is important and it's important that people

see themselves in this organization, because these parks are theirs. And we want to make sure

that people feel welcome and at home in the parks and facilities" (3). Furthermore, multiple

interviewees emphasized that no matter one's race or ethnicity, people generally do not want to

be the only person of their racial or ethnic group in a park, suggesting diverse usership may help

people to feel more welcome in parks. For instance, one person stated:

> "They [park users] will be more comfortable there if they see people like them also using
>
> the space. Nobody wants to be the lead person, I mean nobody wants to. I mean, you and
>
> I are Caucasian. Do we want to go to a park where there's no Caucasians in the park or
>
> would we feel more comfortable going to a park where there's 20/30% Caucasians and
>
> 20/30% African Americans and Hispanic and Asians and it's this melting pot of different

people using it? I would venture a guess that most of us, no matter what background we are, would not want to be the lone person of your ethnic group in a park" (12)

A few leaders also discussed the importance of the representation of history and culture within parks. For example, one leader noted interpretive efforts highlighting the history of their parks:

"In celebrating Black History Month, we just did this interpretive piece of elevating all of our parks that bear the names of African American heroes or sheroes...We're also working in other areas where some of the history of some of our cultural spaces has been erased... so we are in the process of reinterpreting much of our histories of our parks... that's really important. It's claiming space and telling a really comprehensive narrative of the land. For us, indigenous people were part of creating the culture and history here as well" (10)

Another interviewee described the African American history in his community, and how celebrating this history brought diverse community members together:

"We really do live in a community that has a strong African American History, compared to some others. And so, we celebrate that on a regular basis. We have a lot of strong African American icons in the community, and I think that also helps. We recently dedicated a street named after one of those icons. And that was a huge thing that brought the community together, but it was also diverse. So, I think there's so much stuff that we do, because we're a diverse community, that everything, you know, needs to have that sort of lens" (2)

Overall, representation in the park itself, among staff and leadership, and through interpretation were all perceived to be important factors contributing to the diversity of park users.

History of institutional racism.

Many leaders described the legacy of and continued impact of systemic racism in their communities, and some recognized the role of parks and recreation. For example, one person noted: "There's a lot of institutional racism and parks and recreation is not immune. We are part of institutions and part of practices that have historically done things that none of us should be proud of" (2). Several leaders discussed how the history of systemic racism continues to impact the extent parks are welcoming to and use by people of color. In a particularly powerful example, one interviewee talked about her city's history, and the importance of acknowledging that history as an agency:

> "I mean, I can say all day and I always do say that everybody is welcome in every area of the parks, but you know, you can say that someone is welcome, but if you don't feel welcome, that's something completely different. I'll go back to the history of this park system...Our park system here in [city] has a complicated history. In the past it was a segregated system. And then of course, [being] in the south, it was primarily divided between white and Black. So, there were parks that were for Black people and some for white people. And I am a native [of this city], and that history is a painful history, and people remember it. There are lots of people in our city who remember it...of course we're not segregated now, but there is still some residue. And so, we have been working toward helping folks feel welcome, having dialogue... We, one of our friends' groups actually, sponsored a dialogue, an evening, a couple of years ago to talk about the segregation of the park system and because we have lots of new folks that live in [city] who don't know the history at all. But for those who do know it is very painful and it's uncomfortable for some others, so they just don't talk about it... this evening dialog [was

hosted] down at what is now the park art center, which had been an outdoor pool at the

park, but, rather than integrate the pools back in the 60s, the parks director and the city

cemented over them, rather than integrate the pools. And so that was an appropriate

location to talk about that history. There was a panel, and I was on the panel as the

director but then there were also folks who had lived, who still live here in [city], who

had been children or teenagers at that time and they lived through that experience, so they

could talk about that. We also had a [city] historian on the panel to talk about that. I think

it was very cathartic because I feel it's hard to move forward if we don't acknowledge

what has happened in the past and why we need to change some of our thinking, or why

some people feel certain ways. We need to just address it...until you have those honest

conversations, it's going to be very difficult to progress" (3).

This example not only illustrates the history of systemic racism in the city, but also the historical

contributions of the park and recreation department. As suggested by this leader, and others

interviewed, publicly acknowledging this history is an important step to advancing racial equity

and making parks more welcoming for people of color. Importantly, there were both white and

non-white interviewees who acknowledged aspects of systemic racism and the need to address

them, although discussion of systemic racism was more prominent among leaders in the

Southern parts of the country.

Factors Influencing Interaction between Co-Present Groups (RQ1, RQ2)

Beyond asking about co-presence of racially and ethnically diverse users, I also asked

leaders about factors they perceived to be related to intergroup interactions and intentional

actions of their agency (if any) to influence intergroup interactions- results are presented below

in the context of these two themes. A breakdown of the themes, subthemes, and components of

the subthemes for this section can be found in Table 16. For factors leaders described as

supporting intergroup interactions, a "(+)" is used; conversely for factors described as limiting

intergroup interactions, a "(-)" is used. Factors with mixed perceptions are indicated with "(+/-)."

Table 16. Factors Influencing Interaction between Co-Present Groups

Themes, **Subthemes**, & Components
Factors Supporting Interaction of Co-Present Groups
Programs & events
• Culture, music, and art events (+)
• Older adult programming (+)
• Sports (+)
• Volunteering (+)
Park features & amenities
• Playgrounds (+)
• Basketball courts (+)
Changes over time (+)
Staying in existing social groups (-)
Intentional Management Actions to Encourage Interaction of Co-Present Groups
Youth programs
• Music programs (+)
• Sports (+)
Conversation or dialogue programs
• Current (+)
• Future (+)
Unintentional or intentionally not doing
• Programs and events (+)
• Community engagement (+)
• Outside scope of mission (-)
• Do not make sense based on city composition (-)

Factors Supporting Interaction of Co-Present Groups

Interviewees described a variety of factors and contexts supporting intergroup interaction

of co-present groups including certain types of programs and events as well as specific park

features and amenities. Moreover, many discussed how intergroup interaction was more common

among youth and a few participants noted intergroup interactions have increased over time and

among younger generations. Finally, park users' desire to stay with and interact within their

existing social groups (e.g., friends, families) was perceived as a factor limiting intergroup interaction.

Programs & events.

Leaders in various regions and of various races and ethnicities most commonly indicated that intergroup interaction occurred at programs and events focused on culture, music, or art. For instance, one interviewee described the types of positive interactions he has observed in these contexts:

> "When you go to those events, you see a very diverse crowd, and that's what's great. And you see people getting up in front of the stage, learning to dance to music and learning a cultural dance that they never would have done outside this event. So, it's all good and the question becomes how do we do more of it and get twice as many people there next year. You want more interactions and more positive experiences in the parks...it's really, really good and rewarding to see that happen. And at these events, you see parents, and people just sometimes they just come and put out a blanket, and lay on the blanket, listen to music, but it's kind of like a playground but the kids are running around and they start playing with the other kids from another family sitting there with their blanket, but that's pretty cool" (12)

Others echoed these sentiments, describing how recurring programs and events can support people getting to know each other through their shared experiences:

> "I know in a couple of our parks that are more diverse in terms of participation, it's because there are community-based activities and organizations. So, one of our parks, has a jazz series, and it brings people from all walks together and, eventually people are in

the park, they're listening to music, they're sitting next to somebody they don't know. And over the years people become gotten to know other people because of that shared experience" (8)

Several leaders described how sports provided opportunities for intergroup experiences and interactions. For example, one person noted:

"They [racially and ethnically diverse park users] do [interact], I mean you generally see that through sport or through some type of fitness activity where there's teams or even individual sports" (11)

Furthermore, multiple interviewees described how volunteer programs and initiatives stimulated intergroup interactions. For example, one leader stated:

"We do a lot of volunteer stuff that brings people together, you know, clean up parks and that, and so a lot of people that volunteer don't know each other at all, and they come to those events" (2)

The examples provided by leaders suggest programs and events can support intergroup interactions. Active programing which entails cooperation, like volunteering or team sports may be especially valuable in stimulating positive interactions.

Park features & amenities.

Certain park features were seen as particularly conducive to intergroup interactions. Playgrounds were seen as spaces where kids, and sometimes parents, interacted with one another regardless of their race or ethnicity. For example, one person described his city's signature playground which attracts people from across the city:

"You have kids playing with kids from other parts of the city and you have kids playing with kids of different backgrounds. And you have parents sitting on benches next to each other from different backgrounds that they would not see in their little neighborhood park. And it makes it, in my opinion, such a richer experience for everybody involved, you know, parents, the kids. And that's what it takes. It takes these very attractive, draw elements that are very expensive, but once you have that you can get people to come and experience this, this joint experience together" (12)

Leaders also described specific park features such as fitness areas and basketball courts where intergroup interactions had occurred in their parks. For example, one person noted:

"They do [interact], usually around activities, whether it be working out or playing basketball. So much so that there was a young man who had such a great experience at that parks' basketball [court] playing with other people that he wanted to make a donation to create a new basketball court at another park. And so, he funded a new set of basketball courts at another park that were exactly like those ones. He wants to make that experience that he had in interacting and playing basketball with people he would have never otherwise engaged [with]" (16)

The features and amenities in parks appear to have an influence on both intergroup co-presence and interaction, and these connections were discussed by leaders from various regions of the U.S. While having many different amenities conducive to a variety of uses and activities may encourage diverse park use, certain amenities like playgrounds and sport courts appear to support the transition from co-presence to interaction, particularly for youth.

Changes over time.

When asked about intergroup interactions in the parks, a few white leaders from Eastern cities specifically discussed how they felt interactions had increased in their parks over time. For instance, one person stated:

"I think that in the last 10 years or so there has been more of more representation of diversity [in the parks]. Some of the communities that had been largely identified as either majority white or majority Black, you're seeing more of kind of a cross pollination of people, and then that spills out into all of the assets and kind of social touchpoints in every community" (15)

Another interviewee shared a similar perspective, noting how she often saw more interracial groups among younger generations, although such interactions were still more common in larger regional or downtown parks as compared to neighborhood parks:

"People tend to stay with people in their own racial group. You know, you go to the mall, you go to a park, you see people with their little social circle or their family circle or whatever. And it tends to be a very segregated. They're all together in the park, like the white family who's walking here and then a bunch of Black friends walking there but they're in their little bubble at the park, it tends to be that way. I would say though that I do see that it's changing, particularly in our big downtown park and particularly as you get into younger populations. I see a lot more interracial groups. I noticed the change. I feel like we're finally growing up as an age and becoming the nation we profess to be...that wouldn't be the case like in a park in a neighborhood that's largely a segregated neighborhood, then everyone's going to be the same race in that neighborhood park, but if

you go to a large community park, that's when you start to see more racial diversity among, you know, millennials and Gen Z... you see a lot of them at the park so it becomes almost the majority demographic in the park, and it's very racially mixed compared to what it used to be" (13).

The preceding example illustrates the intersection of several study sub-themes, highlighting the influence of residential segregation, the type of park (large signature park versus neighborhood park), and age/generational trends.

Staying in existing social groups.

In contrast to the aforementioned factors which were perceived to support intergroup interactions, several leaders (both white and non-white) felt that even at programs and events, people still tended to stay within their existing social groups of family and friends. For instance, one leader mentioned:

"We haven't done a lot of research on that [the extent to which diverse visitors interact]. I mean I think it's mostly anecdotal, I still think that in large part, people stick with their families and their friends." (8)

One interviewee described an evening event at one of her agency's larger parks which attracted racially and ethnically diverse visitors (i.e., co-presence), but she also felt the attendees generally interacted with the people they came with rather than with others at the event:

"I would say in general [at our well-known evening park event]... you will find that most people are coming together almost as if they're all going to a restaurant or dance together. So, you know, people really are with their own families and whatnot" (14)

These examples underscore the intentionality needed to truly stimulate intergroup interactions in the context of programs and events. Even when racially and ethnically diverse visitors are co-present, interaction may not occur unless program or event activities lend themselves to cooperation across groups of attendees.

Intentional Management Actions to Encourage Interaction of Co-Present Groups

The extent to which park agencies engaged in intentional management actions to encourage interaction of co-present groups varied among participants. Some leaders indicated intentional actions related to youth programs and conversation/dialogue programs, but many leaders' agencies did not engage in intentional actions to encourage intergroup interactions.

Youth programs.

Multiple leaders from different regions discussed intentional youth programs which support intergroup interactions, and the types of intentional programs generally corresponded with the program types that other leaders felt stimulated contact. For example, one person described a youth music event:

> "We have a large teen musical fest that we've had in the last couple of years, and that musical fest invites teens from all across [city] and they meet up at a certain location, and so it's racially diverse and it's also musically diverse and all those things, but yeah the idea really is exposure to other people and cultures" (14)

Others discussed their youth sport programs and why they see them as important for intergroup interactions. For instance, one leader stated:

> "The important part of what we do with tournaments and things like that that we offer around the city is taking these kids from [different communities] and mixing them across

communities of huge diverse lines and income levels. It's very significant because they otherwise will never have that opportunity unless we transport them, which we do into a lot of communities around the city when the kids can mix together and get to know each other... and it just promotes kids and friendship and things like that and sport is a good way to do that" (11)

When asked about intentional efforts to influence intergroup interactions, one leader discussed his agency's intentional inclusion of social justice education into their programs:

"So, my thinking is, you have racists in this country. You've had racism in this country for forever. Just recently they came out of the shadows and into the light. But you know what, I believe our effort is, should be, in our department, to educate kids on racism and social justice and information. Although they're going to go home, and they're going to probably hear something different, if we keep pounding that message of racial equity and social justice, and it's okay to be friends with an African American or a white person, eventually, hopefully, that kid will grow up and not be a racist. That's my, that's how I approach this. I probably won't live to see that happen but that's how I want to approach our efforts in my programs, is to educate kids... I'm not going to change that [older] dude who is a racist. I'm not going to change them. But, you know, I might be able to have an impact on the kids" (1)

Across these examples, desired outcomes related to exposure, friendship development, and education, indicating perceived benefits of intentional efforts to support intergroup interactions among youth.

Conversation or dialogue programs.

Interviewees occasionally described intentional efforts to stimulate intergroup interactions in the context of conversation or dialogue-based programs, although there was no clear regional or demographic pattern to the presence of such efforts. Regarding conversational programs, one person described an educational program intended for people to learn about different religions and cultures:

> "We do listening sessions, even during COVID, we had virtual programs on come listen to a Rabbi, a Catholic priest, and a Muslim, talk about their religions and the differences and open format and learn and learn about these cultures. And so, we do a lot of education. Hopefully, expose people to different cultures and be more inclusive" (12)

Several leaders indicated that while they did not currently have these types of programs, they were either planning them or hoping to have them in the future. For instance, one person described:

> "I would like us to be a place for some of that community conversation or something but we haven't really figured out what that is yet" (5)

Another leader discussed how her agency was part of a larger city-wide effort on racial healing, and as a part of this effort, she anticipated having some type of conversation-based programming:

> "We are working with the city government administration, and they did launch this year in January, a city racial healing effort. And so, as a sister agency, we are a part of that... I don't know yet [what it'll look like] but they'll probably look like a few conversation

circles... maybe some movies or films and discussions, maybe speakers specific to racial healing and so on" (14)

Unintentional or intentionally not doing.

Multiple leaders across the country indicated that intergroup interactions were an unintentional, but positive, outcome of actions geared toward other purposes, such as hosting events that appeal to a diverse constituency or bringing stakeholders together for community engagement. Regarding the latter, one interviewee noted: "I think some of these community engagement processes with some of these park master plans have brought people together that maybe weren't working together before" (5)

In contrast to other participants, two individuals of different ethnicities and located in different geographic regions noted that their agencies are intentionally not doing anything to influence intergroup interactions in their parks, albeit for different reasons. One person emphasized that their agency's work is focused solely on providing quality facilities and programs to all in their city, and the "social side of it" related to interactions was not a focus of their work: "We haven't intentionally offered anything to encourage it [intergroup interaction] because our goal is to provide quality programming that anyone would participate in, so we haven't done any intentional programming to bring different races and cultures together" (6)

Another participant discussed how her city's residents were primarily people of color, whereas the larger region around their city was mostly white. For many other participants, efforts to stimulate diverse co-presence largely were efforts to make parks more welcoming and inclusive to people of color. For this participant however, given that their city was majority people of color and she felt they already served this population well, they did not engage in

"diversification efforts" to encourage regional white visitors (who often were not visiting the urban parks because of perceived safety concerns):

> "Because our city is largely minority, it's really the other way. It's really about the parks system in our city belongs to the residents. As the residents are largely minority, those diversification efforts that we do, we don't put a lot of effort into that. Because we do want to deal with perceptions that people have, misconceptions about safety. And we want to address real concerns around safety because there are some of those too, there are real concerns also. But we, I would say that, just addressing all those sides of the safety concerns is the most that we put in trying to get Caucasian people come to the parks" (16)

Characterization of Intergroup Contact (Co-Presence and Interaction; RQ3)

In discussing instances of intergroup co-presence and interactions in their parks, I asked leaders about how they would characterize this social environment. The majority described intergroup contact in their parks as generally positive. Although perceived as occurring less frequently, instances of negative contact were also described by participants. Results are presented below for the themes of positive and negative contact. A breakdown of the themes, subthemes, and components of the subthemes for this section can be found in Table 17.

Table 17. Characterization of Intergroup Contact (Co-Presence and Interaction)

Themes, **Subthemes**, & Components
Positive Contact
People getting along
• Friendly/cordial interactions
• Respectful environment
Challenges identifying and replicating circumstances
Negative Contact
Infrequent negative contact
Intergroup threat and suspicion
• People of color being looked at like they do not belong
• White people calling police on people of color
• Lack of trust
Park use conflicts and activity appropriateness

Positive Contact

Interviewees generally perceived intergroup contact in their parks as positive, with

subthemes comprised of people getting along and challenges identifying and replicating

circumstances.

People getting along.

Positive contact was often represented by examples of people getting along and being

friendly or respectful, and positive contact was discussed by both white and non-white leaders

across the U.S. For instance, one person noted: "Generally this community is very congenial, and

they do get along" (4). Others expressed their excitement about positive intergroup experiences

in their parks:

"It's [the social environment with intergroup contact] very exciting, it's fun. If you ever

go to like the Sunday farmers market there, you have people of every type there, and

everybody's happy and it's a very wonderful experience (13)

One leader shared an example of users from different ethnic groups with different uses of the parks, noting their respect for one another and a lack of conflict:

> "Where we have the mixed-use groups, there has not been that I'm aware of, a big push to eliminate one group over another because of the color of their skin or maybe their different background. So let me give you an example...So, my cricket group found residence [for their cricket pitch] in an area of town that is predominantly Latino Hispanic, and many of them speak Spanish, and have at least four soccer fields over there. And they're booked on the weekend. Well, what we've learned very quickly about cricket is, they love the weekends too and they can fill up a park like anybody else. So, what you have there is a new user to the park that predominantly was Latino and soccer. Now you've got shared use. You know there's a finite amount of parking and people, like I said right, most people are available on the weekends. So that's when you get to see people in the park most. And I was a little skeptical at first thinking that I would be getting complaints about, 'I can't play soccer anymore', or whatever, and that hasn't happened. And, you know, to me, that's a testament to I think the respect that we have for each other in this environment locally here, but also of our cricket team. They knew the use of that property and they knew what to expect and I told them you know the best way to, I think integrate is, again, extend that opportunity to come play a pickup game of cricket or something, and I think that they've been good neighbors there" (4)

These examples portray park leaders' general agreement that people usually get along in their parks.

Challenges identifying and replicating circumstances.

Leaders also discussed the challenges associated with identifying and replicating circumstances that support positive social environments in diverse parks. One leader who described one park with very diverse usership and positive intergroup interactions indicated a desire to replicate this positive environment elsewhere, but that she hadn't yet figured out how:

> "It's [the social environment with intergroup contact] very cordial and collegial. In fact, you know, people want to replicate it in other places. But no, I haven't been able to do that. I think there's something specific about this one park makes that happen" (16)

While contact was generally perceived as positive, some emphasized the role of the circumstances under which contact occurs. For example, one leader described how acceptance and understanding can be supported by educational cultural celebrations:

> "I think it depends. I think that under certain circumstances that it's very accepting of different ethnicities, different races, different cultures, especially in those places where we're celebrating a particular culture. I think that's when people are accepting other individuals because everyone's trying to learn, kind of a Kumbaya moment" (9)

These prior comments allude to the importance of the circumstances surrounding intergroup contact, and in some cases, the difficulty park leaders face in identifying and replicating these circumstances.

Negative Contact

Although perceived as less frequent, multiple leaders identified negative intergroup interactions that have occurred in their parks, which related to intergroup threat and suspicion

and park use/activity conflicts. Both white leaders and leaders of color in various regions of the country identified examples of negative contact.

Infrequent negative contact.

In describing positive contact, many leaders also noted how they were either not aware of instances of negative contact in their parks or that they perceived these instances to be relatively infrequent. For instance, one person stated:

> "I can't say that there's never been an instance where maybe somebody looks cross at someone else because of maybe their interest or the color of their skin, but it's not something that I believe is predominant. I'm not getting complaints that I'm afraid to go to this park because I fear for what may happen to me because of how I look, or what I'm wearing or you know those things. I don't get that at all. And so that tells me that our spaces tell everybody they're safe spaces to be in" (4)

Another described how he felt there were rarely issues between park users which could be boiled down to race or ethnicity:

> "My experience has been that there have been very, very few instances at least that I'm aware of, where there has been an issue between park goers or park users, because of something that can be boiled down to race or, you know, some sort of ethnic or racial issue or something like that. I think that most people that go to the park systems or utilize the park systems are taking advantage of that outdoor space and they're doing so rather collaboratively" (15)

Intergroup threat and suspicion.

Grouped under the subtheme of intergroup threat and suspicion, several participants described instances of prejudice and people of color being treated like they do not belong in parks. Across these examples, leaders discussed how white park users were sometimes suspicious of people of color in the parks, and how as a result, people of color have had to deal with unwelcoming looks and fear of white people calling the police on them while recreating in the parks.

For instance, one leader shared an example of how in some facilities, particularly trails, people of color tend to get looks like they do not belong, which can lead people to feel unwelcome in these spaces. She emphasized the extent to which someone feels welcome or feels like they belong as a component of equitable park access, suggesting her city has work to do to address this inequity:

> "We have some growing clubs and organizations in our African American and Latinx communities that are really trying to engage community members in the outdoors and in the nature. And there's still an experience, and this pastor [African American pastor who started using trails in COVID] experienced it while he was on the trail with people sort of looking at him as though he didn't belong there, you know, 'who is this' or 'should I be worried about this guy'. So clearly there continue to be experiences for people of color particularly in some areas of town and in some of our facilities particularly our trails and so on, or you know if it's a park in a different end of town, where people, they don't feel welcome. You know like, 'who are you and why are you on this trail', kind of an experience. So, we still have some work to do in a city that really provides true equitable

access throughout, and where people are sharing an experience. So, we need a lot more of those opportunities in our city" (8)

Others discussed how some white park users' feelings of threat and suspicion can lead them to call the police on people of color, which can perpetuate systemic racism. For instance, one leader described:

"To be fair, I feel like, because you're in a culture still where when people cross the racial lines and Black people go into white communities and white people, not all white people but some white people see them as a threat and 'they're scary,' and 'they're suspicious,' and 'what are they doing here'. And you know what do you do to change that culture? That's a big lift. But then, what they do is automatically they say call the police. That's their like knee jerk reaction- call the police. And the police are run by city government. So how do you respond as a city when you're being asked to essentially be the tool of racism of racist residents? How do you respond? And I can't speak for our police department, but I don't know that we're there yet. But coming up with a response that does not contribute to racist behavior, it is critical. And I think that if we were effective at that, Black people would feel much more welcome in parks in white neighborhoods, but right now I don't think they do. And vice versa. I think white people don't go into Black people's parks...but I don't think the Black people call the police on them." (13)

These examples illustrate a potential bi-directional relationship between the extent to which parks are welcoming spaces and the types of intergroup contact which occur in them.

Furthermore, after describing a recently renovated park which attracted racially and ethnically diverse users, one leader discussed how some adult white users were suspicious of

youth of color in the parks. Intersecting with an earlier theme, she described how this was an issue for adults, but not children:

> "We saw especially in this park [recently renovated park] a lot of sort of white middle class moms who really need to figure out that like it was not a dangerous space, they were not in a dangerous space or the presence of certain youth did not make the space dangerous...So we certainly have seen that dynamic, again the kids don't care, kids are fine" (5).

The prior comment illustrates how repeated contact with people of color over time (which is positive) may help white people to "figure out" that they are not in a "dangerous space". While they may be prejudiced and hold stereotypes about people of color, spending time in environments which normalize racial and ethnic diversity may help to minimize these prejudices and stereotypes through providing evidence which disproves them. Conversely, one negative experience could have negative consequences for white users (e.g., reinforced stereotypes and prejudice) and particularly serious consequences for users of color (e.g., no longer feeling welcome at the park or having the police called, like the prior example illustrated).

Broader community conditions may also impact contact. For example, one leader specifically discussed how a lack of trust and suspicion of others' intentions could impact intergroup contact. In this scenario, she described how a lack of trust was related to inequity in investment and gentrification:

> "I think that in some of those spaces where people are harboring some feelings and rightfully so, I'm not even saying that that's not right, but harboring the feelings, the openness and the lack of trust to have the conversation- that is a real barrier...there's just a

lack of trust, 'what is this individual's intention?' 'Why are they here?' 'They just showed up because of gentrification.' Or I hear this a lot, 'oh, they just showed up because there's a bike lane now and there was never a bike lane. I used to not be able to get to work and now all of a sudden there's a bike lane when all I could drive was a bike and I was fearful I was going to get hit by a car and now all the sudden there's a bazillion bike lanes for a bunch of people who don't even really need them,' And there's just kind of like 'why didn't you help me?' 'You're helping people now, but you didn't help me when I really needed it' kind of thing" (9)

Park use/activity conflicts.

Leaders also described conflicts which occurred over the use of parks and the appropriateness of certain park activities. In some cases, use and appropriateness were perceived to be tied to race and ethnicity and in other cases they were not. Regarding the former, one interviewee described:

"We've had instances in neighborhoods where we've hosted an event that's particularly about showcasing culture, and people who live nearby complaining- things like complaining because there's an African drumming group and that some for some people, their notion of what a park is is not that. They have their own interpretations of what you can and can't do in a park and we know that our park users are diverse in what they think is a good thing to do in a park...And so we're constantly challenged with just balancing the very diverse desires and needs of a diverse community and being sure that in our design and in our operations that we don't disadvantage particular groups over others around and the perceptions of what's appropriate in a park." (8)

Regarding the later, another leader noted that conflicts may occur over reservation of spaces, but

he didn't perceive them to be associated with race or ethnicity:

> "We don't really ever have any issue with that type of stuff. We might have issues with
>
> people who both have booked this, well one person has booked the shelter and someone
>
> else took it, you know what. It's not based on race. We haven't had a lot of that kind of
>
> divisiveness" (2)

These examples illustrate that while some conflicts were tied to appropriateness of park activities

across racial and ethnic groups, others were a reflection of more general use conflicts.

Outcomes of Intergroup Contact (Co-Presence and Interaction; RQ4)

Leaders generally perceived positive outcomes of intergroup co-presence and interactions

in their parks, although a few negative outcomes were identified. Results are presented below

within the themes of positive and negative outcomes. A breakdown of the themes, subthemes,

and components of the subthemes for this section can be found in Table 18.

Table 18. Outcomes of Intergroup Contact (Co-Presence and Interaction)

Themes, **Subthemes**, & Components
Positive
Positive park user outcomes
• Relationship building
• Uncovering similarities and shared goals across groups
• Reducing biases and stereotypes
• Cross-cultural understanding and appreciation
• Normalizing multiracial and multicultural environments
Positive agency outcomes
• Successful programs and events
• Emergence of new types of programs and events
Negative
Negative park user outcomes
• Change perceptions of another group
• Reinforce or increase stereotypes or biases
• Reduce extent people feel welcome or that they belong
Negative agency outcomes
• Risk losing some participants or support in community from those who do not value diversity, equity, and inclusion as a priority

Positive

Leaders frequently perceived positive outcomes from intergroup contact in parks; most outcomes related to park users, but others were described relative to the park agency itself. Perceptions of positive outcomes were prominent among white leaders and leaders of color.

Positive park user outcomes.

For park users, leaders identified outcomes related to relationship building, uncovering similarities and shared goals across groups, reducing biases and stereotypes, cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, and normalizing multicultural and multiracial environments. For instance, one leader described how intergroup interactions in parks can bridge divides that separate different groups:

"Relationship building can be a result of them interacting together. Building relationships, bridging those gaps or those divides that separate demographics I think can be a good thing" (1)

Another discussed how she felt that intergroup contact could strengthen the community, noting how parks are a unique space for relationship building across people from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds.

"I think it strengthens the community, it strengthens the fabric of the neighborhood and of the community. And when people will play together and recreate together, I think that's an important bond that maybe doesn't occur in other ways in those fleeting moments of running into each other at the grocery store, although certainly all of those kinds of interactions are important. But you know those parks are a unique place...so people, they're working out in the same gym or they're swimming or they're in a water aerobics class together, and we have noticed that those interactions have resulted in friendships that go beyond the 'now I see you every day because we're both in this place together', but really in ways where there's a deeper connection, where friendships are established...when you have that opportunity for shared experiences, it results in a sort of a more multicultural ethos in the community and in the city that, you know, is hard to create" (8)

Leaders also described the impact of individuals being exposed to people who are different from them. For instance, one person stated: "It's all about exposure. So, exposure breeds, understanding, not necessarily colorblindness because that's not what we're going for, but it breeds awareness and understanding at a bare minimum" (5). Other leaders described additional

outcomes of exposure, and one person specifically emphasized the importance of interactions being positive:

> "I think the consequences are only good consequences. Anytime you have exposure to different people I think it only makes you a more well-rounded individual to see other people as people and as humans with the same desires or wants. And they want the best for their kids and their family too, and they're there to have a good time too and they're law abiding. And anytime that people can interact with people outside of their immediate social clique or their immediate neighborhood. I believe is a good thing. Again, as long as those interactions are positive, which they tend to be in public park settings." (12)

Leaders also described how contact can help to reduce biases and misconceptions. For example, one person tied his perceptions of the value of contact to his background in therapeutic recreation:

> "I think one of the positives for interaction is that you get to know people and that we have more similarities than we have differences. My background's therapeutic recreation, but I've always thought that once we get to know people we have so much more in common than we have different. And I think we bring a lot of biases and misconceptions into situations. And I think that going to events, interacting with people, getting to know people really helps to helps to tear that down and build that. And so, the more we can bring people together, we are the agency that can do that" (2)

Furthermore, leaders noted how contact in parks can help to stimulate cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. For instance, one person stated:

"That [contact] really fosters cross cultural communication and understanding...I think it's important that we understand each other. And that gives me an appreciation for you and who you are, and you have an appreciation, or at least an acceptance for me and who I am. And that's what community is. I mean, we're together as a community, we are different, and that's great. We're similar and that's great...our diversity is an asset." (3)

Intergroup contact in parks was also viewed as a way to help normalize multiracial and multicultural environments. For example, as one leader explained:

"If you have a party in your house and it's a very racially mixed party, well only the people who were in the house know that. But if you're out in a park, it's like, it becomes normal- everybody sees it. It becomes the culture of the community at large. And, you know, only a park can do that or a mall or you know whatever is in the public space, out there for all to see" (13)

Overall, the examples shared above illustrate park leaders' recognition of value of intergroup contact in parks, with the benefits of both exposure and interaction.

Positive agency outcomes.

On the park and recreation operations side, a few leaders discussed agency outcomes from intergroup contact in parks including successful events and emergence of new types of programs or events. For instance, one person noted how one positive outcome is a successful and safe event in her community:

"The outcomes are usually positive because you've had a successful event, people are happy, it's safe. And offering these large scale, safe events with activated parks is really our number one goal. Great that it is ethnically diverse as well, but our number one goal

is to have these opportunities in a safe environment. When you do that, it's a wonderful thing" (14)

When asked about outcomes associated with intergroup contact in parks, one leader described how he hoped that more intergroup contact would spark interest in expanding certain culturally relevant activities to new audiences and recruiting program participants. Earlier in our conversation, he described a recent partnership with a local cricket group that advocated for their sport, and a result, secured funding to build a cricket pitch. Relative to outcomes of contact, he stated:

"I think in my hope is, and because I want my cricket group to come do some youth classes, an outcome is, I would love to see an offering [of cricket] in my own service delivery, that I can actually say this is part of what we do. That is cricket for children. So, in the example I gave you where they [the cricket group] are located in the park where it's primary Latino and heavy bilingual presence, we have a community center there, and that community center services youth. I'm working with the cricket group to let me pull my kids out of our youth center, you give them a cricket lesson. And let's see if we can make that part of a regular thing that we do. So, one outcome is, I would like to see an expanded offering for youth in that particular location" (4).

Negative

Negative park user outcomes.

Negative outcomes were perceived as being relatively infrequent and tied to negative contact experiences. In several cases, the negative outcomes mentioned by leaders could not really be separated from the negative contact itself- the outcomes mentioned were essentially

how the contact manifested (these examples are encompassed in the negative contact section). A few leaders mentioned outcomes extending beyond the contact itself including how negative contact could influence someone's perception of a particular group, reinforce stereotypes, or reduce the extent they felt welcome or that they belonged at a park (discussed relative to intergroup threat and suspicion- see prior examples). For instance, one person noted: "I suppose any one wrong move by any one particular person or group could color some someone's perception" (5). Another suggested contact could reinforce or increase stereotypes or biases: "I think there are sometimes negative interactions where people fall into those stereotypes or bias...but I think that's the worst that we've seen" (16). In general, negative outcomes for park users were largely conceptualized as the contact itself.

Negative agency outcomes.

A few leaders of diverse races, ethnicities, and regions conceptualized negative outcomes more on the agency side. These leaders discussed potential negative consequences of their agency's efforts to influence intergroup contact and more broadly to advance DEI. For instance, one leader whose agency had worked to stimulate intergroup experiences in youth programming and to teach youth about racism described how his agency faced a risk of losing some participants or support in his community from those who do not value DEI (and accompanying policies, programs) as a priority:

> "Oh yeah, a lot [of potential negative consequences]. Mom and dad could pull their kids
> out of my program and say, 'I don't want you to teach my kid that'. So, I mean I think
> that's the biggest negative is that we come across as sort of being this, you know, social
> big brother, right. And that's okay because that's my job. I mean, we are, the programs
> that we provide are for society, to better society. And, if you don't want to participate in

that, okay. If you don't want you to send your son or daughter to participate in that, okay that's fine. But, you know, until my boss is telling me otherwise, I am going to side on that side and push that agenda, because I think it's right and it's fair" (1)

The proceeding quote illustrates the commitment this leader and his agency has to teaching youth about racism and social justice, even in the face of potential consequences. Another interviewee shared an example of pushback from some community members about her agency's DEI work, noting an uptake in complaints about inclusive practices:

"Changing demographics is really tough for communities to accept. And that takes criticism...Some communities will feel threatened. For example, when we play Spanish music, you always hear this- there may be comments about like, 'speak English' or 'why would we play that junk.' So, I will say that these are things that we have heard...I think that the Trump era was really tough for those issues and I think we experienced, much more anti, you know, people felt very comfortable. Whereas I think before, maybe people weren't, didn't like the Spanish music, they weren't comfortable by the Spanish music, but maybe they didn't express it. I think that we have seen in the last couple of years, much more expression about concerns about the inclusive practices of departments...At the department we support the practices and our beliefs of diversity, and in every aspect that we do, so I think we're pretty strong in that regard, but nonetheless I think that there have been much more, there's much more challenges to that...like what we've got challenged on, 'why we did it this way?' and 'why programming changed to allow those people'" (10)

This example intersects with other comments about intergroup threat, while also demonstrating the commitment of this agency to providing inclusive programming.

Discussion

This study explored park agency leaders' perceptions of intergroup contact, including the factors supporting or limiting contact and the perceived outcomes of contact, in the form of both co-presence and interaction. To my knowledge, this is the first study to examine perceptions and actions related to intergroup contact among park agency leaders. The following sections provide a summary of the key findings, their connection to prior research, and implications for both research and practice.

Factors Related to Co-Presence and Interaction between Racially and Ethnically Diverse Park Users

Structural Community Factors

Park leaders across the country indicated that residential patterns and segregation have a notable influence on the co-presence of racially and ethnically diverse park visitors. This is consistent with prior research that has found lower levels of intergroup co-presence in parks located in less diverse neighborhoods (Hillier et al., 2016). Leaders perceived more diverse park visitation in more diverse neighborhoods and in larger destination or signature parks that were generally more centrally located or easily accessible through multiple means of transportation. Parks which meet these criteria may be particularly important settings for future studies of intergroup contact.

Factors Associated with Welcoming Atmosphere of Parks

The extent to which parks were welcoming was identified as a key aspect associated with the diversity of park visitation. In particular, many of the management factors and actions perceived to contribute to diversity of park users were also perceived to contribute to the extent parks were welcoming for people of color. Leaders of various races and ethnicities perceived

parks to be more welcoming and diverse when they were safe, well maintained, and in good condition; this finding is in line with a prior study of park users in Philadelphia (Blinded 1). Relative to park condition, park renovations and investments appear to stimulate diverse usership (often making the park a "destination" park because of its features and amenities). Moreover, leaders described intentional outreach and engagement to diverse community members and the importance of representation of diversity, noting the associations between these factors of equity and inclusion and both the welcoming atmosphere of the park and intergroup co-presence, corroborating research from the park user perspective (Blinded 1; Chapter 3). Park agencies seeking to stimulate intergroup contact, particularly intergroup co-presence, should focus on more equitable and inclusive outreach, engagement, and representation, which likely can also support broader initiatives to make parks more welcoming for all.

Additionally, both white and non-white leaders perceived that the history of segregation and systemic racism in their cities and in parks and recreation has negatively impacted the extent to which parks are welcoming to people of color, and in turn the diversity of park use. Public acknowledgement of systemic racism and steps to address the history of racism in funding allocation and park management can contribute to more equitable park management and may help to support a more welcoming atmosphere in urban parks. Finally, leaders described how park features and amenities as well as programs and events could contribute to parks being welcoming for people of color, and these topics are discussed in more detail in the subsequent sections.

Park Features & Amenities

Leaders across various regions and demographic characteristics felt that intergroup co-presence was more common when parks had features and amenities which appealed to diverse

users and were conducive to a variety of activities and park uses, underscoring the relevance of park design to DEI efforts. Park design, and the cultural values and park uses that it reflects, could be a self-fulfilling prophecy. A park whose amenities accommodate only one or two uses/activities will likely only attract people interested in those specific activities. Research suggesting different uses and preferences for parks among different ethnic and cultural groups highlights the importance and cultural relevance of different park features and types of design (Byrne & Wolch, 2009; Gobster, 2002; Harris et al., 2019; Payne et al., 2002; Vaughan et al., 2018). For instance, prior research suggests that group size and social functions of parks can vary across ethnic groups, with Hispanic or Latino park users visiting in larger groups and using parks more for social gathering purposes compared to other cultural groups (Harris et al., 2019; Vaughan et al., 2018). Findings of the current study corroborate these results, with leaders noting the varying uses of their parks across different ethnic groups. For example, larger pavilions and spaces for gatherings were perceived to be important for Hispanic and Latino users. And, several leaders discussed the growing relevance and demand for cricket in their communities, which is largely driven by the increasing influx of South Indian immigrants to the United States (e.g., Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan; Barrett, 2019).

Overall, how a park is designed and what activities said design is conducive to will undoubtedly impact who comes, and more inclusive park design may support more diverse usership. A park which has a variety of amenities and is intentionally designed to appeal to different park uses and culturally relevant activities may be better positioned to attract more diverse users. However, as some leaders noted, park use and activity appropriateness conflicts may occur, and park agencies can be proactive by providing signage and education around the diverse and culturally appropriate uses of parks.

Furthermore, specific park features and amenities were perceived to stimulate intergroup interactions- in particular, playgrounds were seen as spaces where diverse children often interacted, and parents of children sometimes interacted with one another. Park leaders' perceptions of playgrounds is consistent with a prior study of park users suggesting interaction of co-present groups is more likely to occur when there is some type of "hook," or reason for interaction (Stodolska et al., 2017). Stodolska et al. (2017) suggested that playgrounds can encourage interaction between parents whose children are playing together, and park leaders in the current study appear to also recognize the role of certain park features in stimulating interactions. Sports areas like basketball courts were also seen as contributing to positive intergroup interactions, which is consistent with literature documenting the occurrence of intergroup contact in recreational sport settings (J. Kim, 2012; Lee & Scott, 2013).

Programs & Events

Programs and events with broad based appeal and those that celebrate particular cultures were perceived by most leaders to attract racially and ethnically diverse visitors to their parks. Relative to intergroup interaction, leaders felt that cultural celebrations including music and art events could stimulate not just intergroup co-presence, but also interactions (although they generally did not hold these events with the explicit goal of facilitating intergroup interactions). However, interactions may not always happen organically at these events, as some leaders noted how attendees may opt to remain in their existing social groups. Peters et al. (2010) also identified staying in groups with family and friends as barrier to intergroup interactions in parks, further emphasizing how co-presence does not necessarily translate to interaction. Previous studies in European contexts have also found evidence of intergroup interactions at park cultural events (e.g., Neal et al., 2015; Watson & Ratna, 2011), and findings of the current study support

this relationship in a U.S. context. Park leaders in this study generally perceived intergroup contact at these types of events to be very positive, and as a few leaders indicated, recurring programs and events may also provide the benefit of repeated contact over time to support relationship building (Hodson & Hewstone, 2013; Neal et al., 2015; Pettigrew, 1998). It is possible that cultural festivals and events specifically attract individuals more interested in intergroup contact, and perhaps with higher levels of intercultural awareness and sensitivity, which could, in part, contribute to more frequent and positive interactions. Additional research is warranted to investigate these connections.

Furthermore, sports were perceived to facilitate intergroup interactions, albeit often unintentionally. Prior research suggests that sports provide opportunities for intergroup interactions, and recreational sport settings can possess conditions supporting positive contact (including, but not limited to Allport's initial four conditions; Kim, 2012; Lee & Scott, 2013; Makarova & Herzog, 2014). Active programing which entails cooperation, like sports or even volunteering may be especially valuable in stimulating positive interactions per the "common goals or interests" condition initially suggested by Allport (1954). For some leaders, sports were seen as an intentional strategy for facilitating contact and a way to bring youth from different neighborhoods together in a safe and supervised environment; such intentional efforts were perceived as a key strategy addressing the "racial divide" in our society. A few leaders also noted how intergroup interactions occurred through older adult programming and volunteering. There is a lack of scholarship examining the role of these contexts in facilitating intergroup contact for park and recreation participants, and these may be fruitful areas for future investigation.

Although not a pervasive practice, some leaders discussed current or future plans for conversation and dialogue programs focused on intergroup understanding and social justice

education. These intentional efforts to bring diverse park users together may help to not only stimulate positive contact, but also influence broader outcomes related to prejudice and awareness of systemic racism. These types of initiatives represent an important direction for future investments in parks and recreation which could help to advance social justice and address larger societal concerns like systemic racism.

Characterization and Outcomes of Intergroup Contact

Park leaders, both people of color and white individuals, perceived that intergroup contact was most often positive, but they also indicated that negative contact does occur, albeit less frequently. Leaders described positive contact as being experienced by and beneficial for park users of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Positive outcomes were described as resulting from positive contact, especially interactions; many of the identified outcomes such as relationship building and reducing biases and stereotypes align with prior research (Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Neal et al., 2015; Peters et al., 2010; Seeland et al., 2009; Stodolska et al., 2017). Several leaders felt that intergroup contact in parks can help normalize multiracial and multicultural environments, which speaks to the broad benefits of intergroup contact in public spaces.

Negative contact in parks was described as being experienced primarily by people of color, with negative contact often resulting from the actions of white park users; this is consistent with research suggesting people of color are more likely to experience negative contact than their white counterparts (Enos, 2017). Moreover, perceptions of negative contact in the form of intergroup threat and suspicion are consistent with some prior research from the park user perspective. For instance, in their study of the 606 trail in Chicago, Harris et al. (2019) found evidence of intergroup suspicion and microaggressions from white users, including assumptions

that white users made about safety (and subsequent actions like calling the police) when having contact with Hispanic and Latino users. The 606 has been a catalyst for environmental gentrification in surrounding neighborhoods (Harris et al., 2019), and the association between gentrification and some forms of negative contact were also noted in the current study.

Implications

Findings suggest that many DEI focused actions can make parks more welcoming for people of color and in turn can lead to more diverse park usership, thus stimulating intergroup co-presence by attracting more people of color to parks that historically had more white users. Alternatively, gentrifying neighborhoods that are now attracting more white residents can result in more diversified co-presence through more white users in parks where the majority of visitors had historically been people of color. The later example of diversification through gentrification (which can be connected to large scale park investments) may contribute to concerns about displacement and no longer feeling welcome in the park, particularly among low-income people of color. If park visitation is diversifying for either reason, park agencies should pay attention to this change and work to stimulate positive intergroup interactions that create a sense of intergroup understanding and safety, while minimizing negative interactions.

A lack of trust in local government (stemming from a long history of inequitable resource allocation and concerns about displacement) and in the intentions of the white people now using the parks in gentrified areas may be associated with instances of intergroup suspicion and threat among people of color. For white park users, intergroup threat and suspicion likely stem from prejudice and racist attitudes. Some leaders provided examples which showed how, for white park users, repeated contact with people of color over time (which is positive) can help minimize prejudices and negative stereotypes about safety through providing continued disproving

evidence. However, one instance of contact is not likely to result in these outcomes, and prior research indicates that repeated contact over time is important for the elicitation of positive outcomes (Matejskova & Leitner, 2011; Neal et al., 2015; Pettigrew, 1998). While white park users may benefit over time from repeated contact, one negative experience could have negative consequences (e.g., reinforced stereotypes and prejudice) and particularly serious consequences for users of color. In particular, as park leaders suggested, the prejudiced behaviors of white park users can make users of color feel unwelcome and can jeopardize their physical safety; for instance, examples leaders shared of white park users call the police on people of color who are recreating in parks. Unsupervised park environments lacking intentionality which leave it up to different groups to get accustomed to seeing one another in parks carries a risk of uncertainty with intergroup contact which could undermine broader DEI initiatives. The variability in contact quality (e.g., positive versus negative) underscores the importance of intentional efforts surrounding intergroup contact. Returning to Allport's (1954) initial theory, frequent positive contact is presumed to occur only under certain conditions. A few park leaders in this study recognized the importance of the conditions under which contact occurs, but this topic was only occasionally discussed.

Although leaders discussed how actions that make parks more welcoming for people of color can stimulate intergroup co-presence and may support interactions, a more iterative approach to understanding the complexities of these relationships may be warranted. Leaders indicated how instances of negative contact may serve to reduce sense of welcome and belonging in park spaces, particularly for people of color. Conversely, positive contact may help to reinforce sense of welcome and belonging for all. Figure 9 provides a visual representation of

this iterative relationship where green indicates an increasing effect (i.e., positive relationship) and red a decreasing effect (i.e., negative relationship).

Figure 9. Cyclical Relationship between Intergroup Contact and Sense of Welcome & Belonging

Several equity and inclusion factors/actions identified by leaders may help make parks more welcoming for people of color (e.g., representation, outreach and engagement, safety), but may not be enough to address existing prejudice and racism among white park users which could undermine sense of welcome and belonging through negative contact. Increasing a sense of welcome and belonging for people of color may depend on more head-on, intentional efforts to address negative intergroup contact (such as prejudice and racism) in the parks. Diversity focused efforts in parks which fail to take intergroup contact into account may be unsuccessful in the long run as a result of negative intergroup contact. Intentionality in environments of intergroup co-presence is key. Park agencies should work to both encourage positive contact (which can reduce prejudice and may help limit the occurrence of negative contact) and be proactive in reducing negative contact (which can undermine DEI efforts and negatively impact park users, especially people of color). Proactive approaches to limiting negative contact could include social justice education programs, conversations, and dialogues (like those described by

several park leaders) which stimulate positive intergroup interactions in safe environments with institutional support and supervision, while simultaneously working to educate constituents about racism and experiences of people of color in parks. These may be particularly relevant for cities with higher neighborhood/residential diversity where intergroup co-presence at parks is more common, as well as for larger destination or signature parks which attract more diverse users from various neighborhoods across the city.

Limitations and Future Research

Although efforts were made to ensure geographic representation across the country, results of this study are not intended to be generalizable to all park leaders in urban areas. This study focused exclusively on public agencies, but there are other park management and stewardship leaders (e.g., those from non-profit agencies) whose perspectives are relevant and should be considered in future studies. This study specifically reports on the perspectives of park leaders and their subjective interpretation of intergroup contact in their city's parks. Their perspectives may differ from those of park users. Although I emphasized that no identifying information would be presented in the results and worked to build rapport with participants so they would feel comfortable being honest, there may have been an element of social desirability to some of the questions asked of interviewees. Moreover, it is possible that some participants may have withheld their true perspectives given the zeitgeist of agency leadership with respect to social justice opinions. There may also have been a self-selection bias regarding who agreed to participate in the study; it is likely that leaders who participated in the study may have a greater interest in DEI than those who opted not to participate.

The current qualitative study provides a basis for future studies that could examine perceptions of park leaders in a quantitative format. This type of investigation could provide

more generalizable information on park leaders across the United States. Furthermore, many of

the factors that park leaders perceived were related to intergroup contact have not been directly

investigated among park users. Regarding structural community factors, future research should

explore the influence of spatial residential patterns of segregation on park based intergroup

contact. Relative to management factors, studies of park users should assess the interconnections

between park condition, safety, park features and amenities, programs and events, outreach and

engagement, representation, history of institutional racism, and sense of welcome and belonging.

The influence of several of these equity and inclusion factors has been tested in prior studies

(e.g., Blinded 1; Chapter 3), but the present study revealed additional factors worthy of

investigation. Additionally, park leaders often perceived intergroup contact to be more common

and positive among youth, and future investigations of the conditions which support positive

contact among youth in parks (and its associated outcomes) are warranted. The potential iterative

relationship between sense of welcome and belonging and intergroup contact should be

investigated further, particularly among park users. Finally, this study examined the perspective

of only 16 leaders, and a comprehensive survey of park and recreation leaders, staff, and

volunteers across the United States investigating the topics of intergroup contact, diversity,

equity, and inclusion (from a quantitative perspective) is an important direction for future work.

A quantitative study of these populations could generate more generalizable knowledge and help

to inform DEI practices of park and recreation agencies which support more frequent and

positive intergroup contact.

Conclusion

Intergroup contact is an important aspect of the park visitation experience which

intersects with various DEI factors. Park leaders perceive intergroup contact to be limited in

neighborhood parks due to patterns of residential segregation, but more common in larger signature or destination parks more centrally located in their cities. Leaders believe that factors which stimulate a welcoming park atmosphere and seek to build a sense of belonging can support more diverse usership of parks (i.e., intergroup co-presence). The transition from co-presence to interaction is perceived to be supported by certain park features and amenities as well as various programs and events, underscoring the importance of intentionality in both design and management of parks. Leaders feel most intergroup contact in parks is positive and perceive a variety of outcomes from positive contact such as relationship building, reduced prejudice and stereotypes, and cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. Leaders also recognize instances of negative contact, often in the form of intergroup threat and suspicion which can reinforce or increase stereotypes and biases and can reduce sense of welcome and belonging in parks, particularly for people of color. Findings underscore the need for park agencies to attend to intergroup contact, as it can both support and undermine efforts to make parks more welcoming and safe for all. Findings illustrate the importance of intentionality in both design and management, and provide suggestions for practice and future research.

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Blinded 1.

Blinded 2.

Blinded 6.

Blinded 7.

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Chapter 5 Conclusion

This dissertation investigated intergroup contact in urban parks from the perspective of both park users and park leaders. Chapters 2 and 3 examined the outcomes and supporting conditions, respectively, related to intergroup contact in urban parks from the perspective of park users. Chapter 4 examined the conditions, management actions, and outcomes related to intergroup contact in parks from the perspective of public park agency leaders. Collectively, these studies demonstrate the importance of both quantity and quality of intergroup contact, and findings underscore the benefits to increasing positive intergroup contact in parks and the importance of working to prevent negative intergroup contact in parks. This investigation of intergroup contact helps to connect parks with their contributions to broader social justice priorities, thus offering an avenue for not only addressing intergroup inequalities, but also positioning parks in the minds of key stakeholders as contributors to these timely and relevant priorities.

Key Findings

Intergroup Contact and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Results suggest strong connections between aspects of DEI and intergroup contact. Qualitative findings indicate the roles that equity and inclusion play in supporting diverse park use, and triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrate the role that DEI collectively have in supporting more frequent and positive intergroup contact in parks. From the perspective of both park users and park leaders, aspects of DEI appear to support efforts to promote more frequent and more positive intergroup contact. Among park leaders, the absence of equity and inclusion across their park systems was perceived to limit intergroup co-presence at parks. For instance, leaders discussed how issues of inequities in park quality and a lack of

inclusive programming of parks could limit intergroup co-presence. Furthermore, when park leaders discussed instances of negative contact, leaders sometimes noted tensions between different groups related to inequities either within parks themselves or in the city (e.g., concerns about displacement, gentrification, or inequitable resource allocation). Thus, the absence of equity may undermine contact quantity and partially explain instances of negative contact quality, although more research is needed to better understand these complexities. Circling back to a conceptual model shared in Chapter 1, results of this dissertation support and advance the initial conceptual model. Compared to the initial model provided in Chapter 1, I present here a revised version informed by both quantitative and qualitative study results (Figure 10).

Based on study findings, the intersections of DEI appear to support both a greater sense of welcome and belonging (providing empirical evidence in support of Burnette's (2019) suggestions) as well as more frequent, positive intergroup contact. In the absence of either diversity, equity, or inclusion, leaders perceived sense of welcome and belonging to be more limited, and intergroup contact to be less frequent and occasionally, less positive. For park users, a stronger sense of welcome and belonging was supported by aspects of equity and inclusion (e.g., safety, engagement and representation) and was associated with more frequent and positive intergroup contact. And in the absence of diversity, there would be no intergroup contact. Figure 10 provides a visual representation of these intersections. Although DEI appear to support positive contact, more research is needed to understand how the perceived lack of equity or inclusion would impact contact quality. It is possible negative contact would be more common when either equity or inclusion is missing, but the current study does not offer conclusive evidence.

Diversity
A mixture of individuals from
different racial and ethnic
groups

Equity
The promotion of justice
and fairness in the
processes and
distribution of
resources

**Less Frequent
Intergroup
Contact**

**Frequent,
Positive
Intergroup
Contact**

**Less Frequent
Intergroup
Contact**

Inclusion
All individuals are valued
and engaged, and a
variety of individuals
have power and a voice
in decision making

**No
Intergroup
Contact**

Figure 10. Revised Conceptual Intersections of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Overall, this dissertation provides initial evidence supporting the associations between

DEI, sense of welcome and belonging, and intergroup contact. Although aspects of DEI appear

to support both sense of welcome and belonging and intergroup contact, the relationship between

sense of welcome and belonging and intergroup contact may be more complex than prior

research or community-based initiatives had identified.

Sense of Welcome & Belonging

Findings of Chapter 3 suggest that sense of welcome and belonging can support more

frequent and positive intergroup contact in parks, aligning with and advancing prior research

documenting a connection between sense of welcome and belonging and contact frequency (Blinded 1). Perspectives of park leaders in Chapter 4 corroborate this finding, as leaders felt the welcoming atmosphere of parks supported more diverse park visitation (i.e., intergroup contact in the form of co-presence), which allows for the potential for intergroup interaction. Based on prior literature suggesting that diverse park visitation (a component of intergroup contact) would rely on racially and ethnically diverse individuals feeling welcome and that they belong in parks (Blinded 1; Byrne, 2012), I examined the linear effect of sense of welcome and belonging on intergroup contact in Chapter 3. However, park leaders' perspectives (Chapter 4) offered an alternate take on these relationships- sense of welcome and belonging and intergroup contact could have a more reciprocal relationship not captured in the quantitative portion of this dissertation (or prior studies of intergroup contact). As discussed in Chapter 4, while sense of welcome and belonging may support more frequent and positive intergroup contact, instances of negative contact may serve to reduce sense of welcome and belonging in park spaces, particularly for people of color, and in turn, reduce use of parks among people of color (effectively reducing intergroup contact). Conversely, positive contact may help to reinforce sense of welcome and belonging for all and stimulate more frequent, positive intergroup contact. There may be a feedback loop type of relationship between sense of welcome and belonging and intergroup contact, and this finding underscores the importance and unique contributions of both the quantitative and qualitative portions of this dissertation. Future studies of park users, especially those leveraging mixed methods designs, should continue to investigate the complexity of this relationship.

Parks as a Means to Address Important Social Issues

Documentation of the connection between frequent, positive intergroup contact in parks and a variety of positive social justice-oriented outcomes may help to better position parks as contributors to important social issues, and such positioning could help increase funding for parks and increase their social contributions through evidence-based practices. For instance, Chapter 2 demonstrated that more frequent, positive intergroup contact in parks is associated with lower prejudice, higher interracial trust, higher critical consciousness, and in some cases, stronger civic engagement attitudes and behaviors. Chapter 4 also indicated connections between intergroup contact and relationship building, reducing biases and stereotypes, increasing cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, and normalizing multiracial and multicultural environments. Given the concerningly prominent issues of racism, discrimination, and race or ethnicity-based violence in the United States (and the continued divisiveness of the county as a whole), these pathways between contact in parks and intergroup attitudes, relationships, critical consciousness, and civic engagement are incredibly relevant and represent a promising path forward.

Furthermore, the direct connection between intergroup contact and social justice civic behaviors for white respondents is an important finding of Chapter 2. White individuals hold much of the power within society and as such, are in a position to either uphold the status quo of systemic racism and inequality, or work toward a more equitable society. As MacInnis and Hodson (2019) assert, addressing systemic inequalities relies on the actions of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups, and Chapter 2 of this dissertation demonstrates an important allyship based pathway between intergroup contact and civic engagement for social justice for white

individuals. Future qualitative studies may help to better explain and understand this finding and provide more context as to how to support this pathway among multiple racial and ethnic groups.

Documenting the benefits of frequent, positive intergroup contact in parks (identified both from the park user and park leadership perspective) may help inform positioning and advocacy for park and recreation funding. Prior research indicates that parks and recreation are considered discretionary services, and as such, funding often expands in times of economic prosperity and declines in times of economic hardship (Barrett et al., 2017). The discretionary nature of parks and recreation is evident in the current budget cuts and financial challenges faced by park and recreation agencies as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Roth, 2020b, 2020a). Provision of park and recreation services and delivery of their positive social outcomes relies on consistent funding, and as such, park and recreation agencies often work to more effectively position their services as essential in the minds of key decision-making stakeholders like local policymakers (a position refers to the place a service occupies in the minds of a decision makers relative to other services; Ries & Trout, 1986).

It has been suggested that parks and recreation would be considered more essential if they were positioned as addressing pressing community issues and concerns faced in our society (e.g., Kaczynski & Crompton, 2004). A recent national study examined local policymakers' perceptions of the contributions of parks and recreation to addressing various community issues and found that officials perceived parks and recreation's contributions to social equity/social justice to be relatively low (Blinded 8). Although data were collected prior to the pandemic and the large reckoning with systemic racism in the U.S., the low recognition of the equity and justice contributions of parks and recreation in that study is concerning given that equity is considered to be a key pillar of the field (National Recreation and Park Association, 2021). This

dissertation provides important evidence of the contributions of urban parks to stimulating positive intergroup contact and in turn, positive outcomes like prejudice reduction and increased interracial trust, critical consciousness, and social justice civic engagement. Communication of these social justice-oriented contributions to key stakeholders, including local policymakers, could be very impactful.

As cities across the U.S. are grappling with their histories of systemic racism and continued racism, discrimination, and race or ethnicity-based violence, there may be an increased need for evidence-based practices which can help address racism at both the interpersonal and systemic levels. Frequent, positive intergroup contact represents one potential strategy for addressing these concerns, and findings of this dissertation indicate that urban parks could be a key setting for initiatives which work to stimulate positive intergroup contact. Increased documentation and communication to policymakers on the role of parks in stimulating positive intergroup contact and in turn positive outcomes is one way that parks and recreation could better position themselves as more essential and contributing to a timely and important priority. These approaches may help to elevate the value of parks and recreation in the minds of policymakers. Such efforts may support more consistent funding for parks and recreation that could support DEI efforts to stimulate positive intergroup contact, thus increasing the provision of positive contact benefits.

Strategies for Increasing Positive Intergroup Contact and Limiting Negative Intergroup Contact in Urban Parks

Findings can be used to inform management practices of urban park agencies to increase positive intergroup contact. Relative to increasing positive contact, both quantitative and qualitative findings indicate the importance of advancing engagement and representation that is

equitable and inclusive. Park and recreation agencies should focus on taking an equitable and inclusive approach to gaining input and representing community voices in decision making, providing relevant programs and events which reflect the culture and needs of diverse constituents, and ensuring racially and ethnically diverse representation among staff, leadership, and communications. Such actions can support a sense of welcome and belonging, which is important to stimulating frequent and positive contact. Park agencies and other managing organizations or stewards can leverage the quantitative measures from this dissertation, particularly the engagement and representation measure, to assess and monitor public perceptions of engagement and representation, help inform areas for more equitable management, and document progress/impacts of equity-oriented management actions. Agencies should also focus on safety, as this is perceived by users and park leaders to contribute to sense of welcome and belonging, and in turn, intergroup contact. It is important to focus on both the physical and social aspects of safety, and addressing issues of racism and discrimination should be of utmost priority. Although various safety audit tools currently exist for parks, they primarily focus on the built environment; audit tools should be modified to assess broader safety conceptualizations.

Moreover, qualitative findings indicate that more equitable investment in high quality and well-maintained parks is key to attracting diverse users, and that recent park renovations may help to stimulate intergroup contact. However, park renovations can have some controversy surrounding them, and when they are a catalyst for gentrification and displacement, they may increase inequities rather than decrease them. To help ensure more equitable investment, it is critical for park agencies to focus on anti-displacement strategies and community engagement

that helps to build a sense of ownership from the very start of a project (see Rigolon & Christensen, 2019).

It is also important for park agencies to publicly acknowledge their histories of systemic racism; it is hard to move forward without acknowledging and sharing history, and doing so can help validate the experiences of people of color who remember being explicitly unwelcome in certain park and recreation spaces. Park and recreation agencies acknowledging their role in perpetuating systemic racism is an important first step toward advancing equity and may help support a greater sense of welcome and belonging among people of color, and in turn, may support more intergroup contact in parks. Furthermore, park agencies seeking to stimulate more frequent and positive intergroup contact should focus on providing parks with a diverse assortment of features and amenities conducive to a variety of different activities and uses. Playgrounds and areas for collaborative activities (e.g., sport courts) may be especially useful for stimulating positive intergroup interactions. Playgrounds and other multigenerational spaces may be relevant settings for youth engagement in intergroup contact, which may help to encourage intergroup contact among adults.

A key avenue for limiting negative intergroup contact in parks is to focus on stimulating positive contact using the strategies identified above. Even if park agencies do not see it as their mission to promote positive intergroup contact, they ought not to ignore intergroup contact in parks. Evidence suggests it occurs, and the large variability in quality from positive to negative is critical to understand, as contact can have immediate impacts to park user experiences and longer-term impacts on their intergroup attitudes and behaviors. Park agencies should not assume that parks with diverse usership will, on their own, promote positive contact. It is especially important for agencies to pay attention to the quality of contact in parks conducive to more

frequent intergroup co-presence based on structural community factors (such as larger more destination/downtown/signature parks or recently renovated parks located in more diverse areas or at the intersection of different segregated neighborhoods). Even if agencies are not making decisions based on intergroup contact, contact should not be ignored, as negative contact could undermine other efforts in support of DEI, such as efforts to make parks more welcoming for all. Prior research suggests that stimulating frequent and positive contact requires intentional efforts and actions from park managers and stewards (Blinded 1; Hillier et al., 2016; Matejskova & Leitner, 2011), and the same can likely be said for preventing negative contact.

As a word of caution, the solution to limiting negative contact should not be to limit contact quantity. Segregation is not the answer and taking this approach will only continue to perpetuate the racial and ethnic divides that exist in this country. Rather, limiting negative contact can be done through providing the conditions which support positive contact and providing social justice-oriented educational programming that can help address prejudice and racism among white park users which can be a catalyst for negative contact. The later may be especially important to limiting certain negative behaviors of white park users such as looking at people of color like they do not belong or calling the police on people recreating in the parks. While prior efforts have focused on making parks more welcoming for people of color, and such efforts are important, agencies also need to focus on addressing the behaviors of white users that make parks unwelcoming in the first place. Social justice-oriented educational programming can stimulate positive intergroup contact in supervised spaces (thus ideally reducing prejudice) while simultaneously educating participants on systemic racism, and ideally supporting the development of critical consciousness. If parks are to be welcoming and safe spaces for all,

agencies must attend to and understand intergroup contact in parks, and they should work to minimize negative contact while stimulating positive contact.

Directions for Future Research

The studies in this dissertation investigated intergroup contact in urban parks from the perspective of both park users and park leaders. Findings document the impacts of frequent, positive intergroup contact in parks and provide strategies for increasing positive contact and reducing negative contact. Park leaders identified a variety of management factors not previously examined in quantitative studies of park users including equity in park quality, park agency acknowledgement of institutional racism, and variety of park features and amenities. Future quantitative studies should investigate the influence of these factors on intergroup contact from the perspective of park users. It is also important to better understand the impact of redlining and other racist practices on park access and quality, and future studies should use spatial analysis methods to investigate these relationships. Furthermore, given the identified importance of park design, features, and amenities to stimulating co-presence and interaction, participatory mapping approaches which integrate GIS data with survey and/or interview data may be especially valuable to understanding the spatial dimensions of contact quantity and quality within parks and other recreational settings.

This dissertation focused specifically on urban parks, but there are other important recreation settings in which intergroup contact may occur, and thus a better understanding of contact in these spaces could inform intentional management practices. For instance, recreation centers or swimming pools may be relevant settings for future research. Additionally, findings of this dissertation support the connection between sense of welcome and belonging and intergroup contact, and also offer evidence of a potential iterative relationship between these factors. Future

research is needed to more comprehensively investigate the nature of this relationship. Finally, this dissertation focused only on adults, but park leaders indicated intergroup contact occurring more often among youth, and investigations of intergroup contact in park and recreation spaces among youth is an important direction for future research. Mixed methods approaches may be especially valuable, and researchers should consider incorporating participatory methods like photovoice to better understand youth experiences with intergroup contact in parks.

Concluding Thoughts

Frequent, positive intergroup contact in urban parks appears to have a variety of benefits, and is associated with lower prejudice, higher interracial trust, higher critical consciousness, stronger social justice civic attitudes, and greater engagement in social justice civic behaviors, with many of these relationships robust in comparisons across racial and ethnic groups. These favorable outcomes underscore the potential benefits of intentional efforts to stimulate positive intergroup contact in parks, and the effects of positive contact may actually serve to reduce the occurrences of negative contact through prejudice reduction. Both park users and leaders recognized the occurrence of intergroup contact in parks and how it can vary in quantity and quality depending on a variety of community and park management conditions. Efforts to advance DEI can support a greater sense of welcome and belonging in parks and can support more frequent and positive intergroup contact. Sense of welcome and belonging appears to support positive intergroup contact, but negative intergroup contact may reduce sense of welcome and belonging, indicating a potential cyclical relationship between these constructs. Park agencies should attend to intergroup contact in their parks, as it represents not only an important component of the park visitor experience, but also, positive contact represents an

avenue for advancing social justice and better positioning parks as a contributor to key social

priorities.

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Appendix A Chapters 2 and 3 Survey Instrument

Intergroup Contact in Parks and Recreation Survey

The following survey is focused on your experiences and perceptions of local parks and recreation. The term local parks includes places such as neighborhood parks or community parks where you may visit trails, open spaces, sport fields or courts, playgrounds, etc. The survey will also ask about additional topics including your experiences with people of other races or ethnicities, your perceptions of people of different races and ethnicities, and your overall ideological views.

Section 1: Park and Recreation Use
The first few questions begin by asking about your use of local parks and recreation, which for the purpose of this study includes places such as neighborhood parks or community parks where you may visit trails, open spaces, sport fields or courts, playgrounds, etc.

During the past 12 months, have you visited any local parks in your community (e.g., neighborhood parks, community parks)?*
__Yes __No

On average over the past year, how many days per month did you visit local parks? ___
*If no, have you ever visited any local parks in your community (e.g., neighborhood parks, community parks)?
__Yes __No

During the past 12 months, have you participated in any recreation or leisure activity, program, or event that was sponsored by or took place on areas or facilities managed by your local government's recreation and parks department? This would include, but is not limited to, such things as sports leagues, educational or instructional classes, and special artistic or cultural events in your community*
__Yes __No

On average over the past year, how many days per month did you participate in recreation or leisure activities sponsored by or taking place on facilities managed by your local government's park and recreation department? _
*If No, have you ever participated in any recreation or leisure activity, program, or event that was sponsored by or took place on areas or facilities managed by your local government's recreation and parks department? This would include, but is not limited to, such things as sports leagues, educational or instructional classes, and special artistic or cultural events in your community.
__Yes __No

During the past 12 months have you volunteered for any recreation or park-based organizations in your community?* __Yes __No

On average over the past year, how many days per month did you participate in volunteer initiatives for any recreation or park-based organization in your community?

*If no, have you ever volunteered for any recreation or park-based organizations in your community?

Section 2: Park Perceptions
Next, we are interested in some of your perceptions about your experiences at local parks
People use parks for many different reasons. For example, some like to socialize and others prefer experiences of quiet and solitude. Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

Social and Solitude Motivations I visit parks in my community to...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
To be with my family	1	2	3	4	5
To be with members of my group	1	2	3	4	5
To meet new people	1	2	3	4	5
To experience solitude	1	2	3	4	5
To talk to new people	1	2	3	4	5
To see new people	1	2	3	4	5
To be where it is quiet	1	2	3	4	5
To build friendships with new people	1	2	3	4	5
To be with my friends	1	2	3	4	5

For some people, places in their community can be very important to them. Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

Place Identity	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The parks in my community mean a lot to me	1	2	3	4	5
The parks in my community are very special to me	1	2	3	4	5
I identify strongly with the parks in my community	1	2	3	4	5
I am very attached to the parks in my community	1	2	3	4	5

Some places in a community can feel more welcoming or comfortable than others. Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

Welcome & Belonging	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel welcome at the parks in my community	1	2	3	4	5

I feel like I belong at the parks in my community	1	2	3	4	5
The parks in my community are a comfortable place to hang out	1	2	3	4	5
The parks in my community are for people like me	1	2	3	4	5
I feel comfortable when I visit the parks in my community	1	2	3	4	5
I feel comfortable expressing myself at the parks in my community	1	2	3	4	5
I feel comfortable being myself at the parks in my community	1	2	3	4	5

Next, we are interested in your perceptions about the management of the parks in your community. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Inclusivity and relevance of programs and events

My local park and recreation department sponsors programs and events...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
relevant to my culture	1	2	3	4	5
that encourage interaction among attendees	1	2	3	4	5
that bring together people from different cultures and backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
that bring together people from different cultures and backgrounds to discuss issues in the community	1	2	3	4	5
that celebrate the diversity of our community	1	2	3	4	5
that celebrate the culture and background of people like me	1	2	3	4	5

Input in Decision Making

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My local park and recreation department would be open to my input	1	2	3	4	5
I know how to provide feedback and input to my local park and recreation department	1	2	3	4	5
My input is valued by my local park and recreation department	1	2	3	4	5

My local park and recreation department actively seeks input from my community	1	2	3	4	5
My voice is represented in what happens at local parks generally (programs, events, maintenance, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
My community is represented in what happens at local parks generally (programs, events, maintenance, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

Representation of Racial and Ethnic Diversity

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My local park and recreation department employs people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
People from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds hold leadership positions at my local park and recreation department	1	2	3	4	5
People from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds attend activities, programs, or events sponsored by my local park and recreation department	1	2	3	4	5
Marketing materials and promotions for my local park and recreation department feature people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
My local park and recreation department's social media features people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5

The following questions ask about your perception of safety at the parks in your community.

Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Safety Perceptions

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I generally feel safe at the parks in my community	1	2	3	4	5
I generally feel I am safe from criminal activity at the parks in my community	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I generally feel I am safe from harassment at the parks in my community	1	2	3	4	5
I generally feel I am safe from discrimination at the parks in my community	1	2	3	4	5
I generally feel I am safe from user conflict at the parks in my community	1	2	3	4	5
I generally feel I am safe from interracial conflict at the parks in my community	1	2	3	4	5

What do you feel could be done to help people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds to feel more welcome in your community's parks?

_____

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Public spaces such as parks, recreation facilities, and plazas are important places to express opinions about social issues (e.g., racism, gender equality, economic opportunities)	1	2	3	4	5
Public spaces such as parks, recreation facilities, and plazas are important spaces for community activism	1	2	3	4	5

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Local parks and recreation have been an essential service in my community during the COVID-19 pandemic	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3: Diversity & Intergroup Contact (quantity and quality)

Perceptions of Diversity
Next, we are interested in your perceptions of how diverse your neighborhood, community, and local parks are. When using the term "diverse," we are referring to a mixture of people based on race, ethnicity, or nationality rather than using this term as a synonym for people of color or any specific minority group.

In terms of race, how diverse do you feel the mix of people are in your...

	Not Diverse	Slightly Diverse	Moderately Diverse	Very Diverse
Neighborhood?	1	2	3	4
Community?	1	2	3	4
Local parks?	1	2	3	4

In terms of ethnicity, how diverse do you feel the mix of people are in your...

	Not Diverse	Slightly Diverse	Moderately Diverse	Very Diverse
Neighborhood?	1	2	3	4
Community?	1	2	3	4
Local parks?	1	2	3	4

In terms of country of origin, how diverse do you feel the mix of people are in your...

	Not Diverse	Slightly Diverse	Moderately Diverse	Very Diverse
Neighborhood?	1	2	3	4
Community?	1	2	3	4
Local parks?	1	2	3	4

In this section, we are interested in your experiences with people of races or ethnicities different from your own. We ask questions about the frequency of such experiences and what they have been like. The first series of questions are about these experiences in general, in your daily life.

Daily Life Contact Quantity: We are interested in the amount of contact you have previously experienced in your daily life in your community with people of other races or ethnicities (i.e., different from your own race or ethnicity).

In general in your community,	None at All						A Great Deal
How much contact have you had with people of different races or ethnicities?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How much do you see people of different races or ethnicities?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How much do you interact with people of different races or ethnicities? (e.g., make eye contact, wave, talk, participate in a program together, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How much do you see people of different races or ethnicities interacting? (e.g., gathering together, doing activities together, talking, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Daily Life Contact Quality: For the following questions, please rate your feelings about contact with people of different races or ethnicities in your daily life.

In general in your community,	Very Unpleasant						Very Pleasant
when you have contact with people of different races or ethnicities, do you find it pleasant or unpleasant?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
when you interact with people of different races or ethnicities, do you find it pleasant or unpleasant?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
when you see people of different races or ethnicities, do you find it pleasant or unpleasant?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
when you see people of different races or ethnicities interacting, do you find these interactions to be pleasant or unpleasant?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

While the prior questions focused on your experiences with people of races or ethnicities different from you own in your daily life in your community, we are now interested in these experiences in your community's local parks.

Park Intergroup Contact Quantity: We are interested in the amount of contact you have previously experienced with people of other races or ethnicities (i.e., different from your own race or ethnicity) **in your community's local parks** as well as contact you may have observed between other people in these locations.

At the parks in your community...	None at All						A Great Deal
how much contact have you had with people of different races or ethnicities?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
how much do you see people of different races or ethnicities?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
how much do you interact with people of different races or ethnicities? (e.g., make eye contact, wave, talk, participate in program together, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
how much do you see people of different races or ethnicities interacting? (e.g., gathering together, doing activities together, talking, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Park Intergroup Contact Quality: For the following questions, please rate your feelings about contact with people of different races or ethnicities **at your community's local parks.**

At the parks in your community...	Very Unpleasant						Very Pleasant

when you have contact with people of different races or ethnicities, do you find it pleasant or unpleasant?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
when you interact with people of different races or ethnicities, do you find the contact pleasant or unpleasant?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
when you see people of different races or ethnicities, do you find it pleasant or unpleasant?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
when you see people of different races or ethnicities interacting, do you find these interactions to be pleasant or unpleasant?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section 4: Interracial Attitudes, Ideology

These next few questions ask about you attitudes toward people of other races or ethnicities and your perceptions of different racial and ethnic groups.

Prejudice

I feel the following emotions toward people of other races or ethnicities in general:

Cold (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Warm (7)
Negative (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Positive (7)
Hostile (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Friendly (7)
Suspicious (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Trusting (7)
Contempt (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Respect (7)
Disgust (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Admiration (7)

Interracial Trust

Please indicate your level of trust for the following groups.

	None at All	A little	A moderate amount	A lot	A great deal
How much do you trust White people?	1	2	3	4	5
How much do you trust Black/African American people?	1	2	3	4	5
How much do you trust Hispanic or Latino people?	1	2	3	4	5
How much do you trust Asian people?	1	2	3	4	5
How much do you trust Middle Eastern people?	1	2	3	4	5

Critical Consciousness of Racism

Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
All Whites receive unearned privileges in U.S. society	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The overrepresentation of Blacks and Latinos in prison is directly related to racist disciplinary policies in public schools	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reverse racism against Whites is just as harmful as traditional racism*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
All Whites contribute to racism in the United States whether they intend to or not	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Overall, Whites are the most successful racial group because they work the hardest*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
More racial and ethnic diversity in colleges and universities should be a national priority	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Asian Americans are proof that any minority can succeed in this country*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

*These statements are designed to be reverse coded for analysis, although the respondent won't know this

Section 5: Social Justice Beliefs and Behavioral Intentions

This section includes questions about your beliefs regarding various social issues.

Please rate your agreement with the following statements. I believe...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is not important to make sure that all individuals and groups have a chance to speak and be heard, especially those from traditionally ignored or marginalized groups*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is important to try to change larger social conditions that cause individual suffering and impede well-being	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is important to promote the physical and emotional well-being of individuals and groups	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree		Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree		Strongly Agree
It is not important to talk to others about societal systems of power, privilege, and oppression*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is important to respect and appreciate people's diverse social identities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is important to allow others to have meaningful input into decisions affecting their lives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is not important to promote fair and equitable allocation of bargaining powers, obligations, and resources in our society*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is important to support community organizations and institutions that help individuals and group achieve their aims	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is not important to act for social justice*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

This next section asks about various behaviors that people may or may not do.

Please rate your agreement with the following statements.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I do my best to ensure that all individuals and groups have a chance to speak and be heard.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I talk with others about social power inequalities, social injustices, and the impact of social forces on health and well-being.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I engage in activities that will promote social justice.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I work collaboratively with others so that they can define their own problems and build their own capacity to solve problems	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I volunteer for organizations that promote social justice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I donate to organizations that promote social justice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I sign petitions promoting social justice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I raise awareness about social injustices through posting on social media	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section 6: Parks and Recreation Social Equity

Finally, we are interested in your attitudes about what park and recreation funding/resources should be allocated towards. This section also contains a few questions about behavioral intentions, or things you may or may not be interested in doing in the future.

<u>Attitudes Toward Social Equity Priorities in Parks and Recreation (Funding & Resources)</u>

Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree that park and recreation funding and resources should support the following actions:

Park and recreation funding and resources should go toward...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Increasing recreation program offerings in underserved areas	1	2	3	4	5
Increasing access to local parks in underserved areas	1	2	3	4	5
Ensuring everyone feels welcome in local parks and recreation spaces	1	2	3	4	5
Ensuring all individuals have a voice in local park and recreation planning and management, especially those from traditionally marginalized groups	1	2	3	4	5
Increasing representation of racial and ethnic minorities among all levels of park and recreation staff	1	2	3	4	5
Increasing safety for racial and ethnic minorities at local parks	1	2	3	4	5

Section 7: Demographics

Lastly, we have a few remaining questions and then you will have completed the survey.

How do you generally feel in terms of the following issues:

	Very Liberal	Liberal	Somewhat Liberal	Moderate	Somewhat Conservative	Conservative	Very Conservative

Social Issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Economic Issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

What is your zipcode? _____

In what year were you born? _____

What is your gender? _____ Female _____ Male _____ Nonbinary

Do you have children under the age of 18 living in your home?
____Yes ____No

Do you have access to private outdoor recreation/green space (e.g., backyard, patio)?
___Yes ___No

Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?
____I am of Hispanic. Latinx, or Spanish origin
____I am not of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin

Which of the following categories best describes your race?
_1_ Black or African American   _4_ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific   6_Other, specify
                                 Islander   _____
_2_ White   __5__ Asian
_3_American Indian or Alaskan   _6_ Middle Eastern/North African
Native

Into which income category would you say your household fell in 2019?
_1_ $10,000 or less   _4_ $40,001 to   _7_ $100,001 to   _10_ Don't know
                       $60,000 $120,000
_2_ $10,001 to   _5_ $60,001 to   _8_ $120,001 to
$20,000 $80,000 $140,000
_3_ $20,001 to   _6_ $80,001 to   _9_ Over $140,000
$40,000 $100,000

What is the highest level of education you have completed?
_1_ Some high school   _3_ Some college   _5_ Graduate or Professional degree
_2_ High school diploma   _4_ Associate's or Bachelor's _6_ Don't know
or GED   degree

What is the highest level of education of your mother?
_1_ Some high school   _3_ Some college   _5_ Graduate or Professional degree
_2_ High school diploma   _4_ Associate's or Bachelor's _6_ Don't know
or GED   degree

Appendix B Chapter 2 Supplemental Analysis: Structural Model Not Including Prejudice

A modified version of the structural model (not including prejudice because it was only partially

invariant across groups) was conducted separately for each of the four racial and ethnic groups

(Figure 11).

Figure 11. Modified Structural Model for Group Comparisons

The modified model had a strong fit overall and for both Hispanic or Latino and Black or

African American respondents. Model fit was marginal for Asian and white respondents (Table

19). Across groups, greater park intergroup contact was associated with higher levels of

interracial trust and stronger social justice civic engagement attitudes. For white respondents,

park intergroup contact had a direct, positive relationship with behaviors, but for the other

groups, this relationship was not significant. Across all groups, critical consciousness had a

direct positive relationship with behaviors, and for most groups, it was positively associated with

attitudes as well. Further details of the group analyses can be found in Table 20.

Table 19. SEM Model Fit across Groups

Model	N	χ^2	p	df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Overall Sample	931	406.907	<.001	179	0.951	0.959	0.037	0.064
Hispanic or Latino or Any Race	234	339.712	<.001	179	0.925	0.936	0.062	0.074
Black or African American	235	254.407	<.001	179	0.957	0.963	0.042	0.070
Asian	245	502.537	<.001	179	0.804	0.833	0.086	0.090
White	217	505.191	<.001	179	0.847	0.869	0.092	0.092

Table 20. Paths in Modified Structural Model by Race and Ethnicity

Dependent Variable	R^2	Independent Variables	B	SE	β	p
Hispanic or Latino of Any Race						
Trust	.295	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.419**	**0.072**	**0.543**	**<.001**
Critical Consciousness	.127	Park Intergroup Contact	0.213	0.125	0.164	0.089
		Trust	**0.405**	**0.170**	**0.240**	**0.017**
Social Justice Civic Attitudes	.657	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.857**	**0.140**	**0.687**	**<.001**
		Trust	-0.072	0.134	-0.044	0.592
		Critical Consciousness	**0.301**	**0.083**	**0.314**	**<.001**
Social Justice Civic Behaviors	.284	Park Intergroup Contact	0.147	0.229	0.112	0.521
		Trust	0.190	0.164	0.112	0.247
		Critical Consciousness	**0.454**	**0.115**	**0.453**	**<.001**
		Social Justice Civic Attitudes	-0.036	0.175	-0.034	0.838
Black or African American						
Trust	.264	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.475**	**0.079**	**0.514**	**<.001**
Critical Consciousness	.061	Park Intergroup Contact	0.039	0.131	0.040	0.764
		Trust	0.241	0.148	0.225	0.103
Social Justice Civic Attitudes	.546	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.876**	**0.161**	**0.669**	**<.001**
		Trust	-0.198	0.123	-0.140	0.107
		Critical Consciousness	**0.467**	**0.175**	**0.354**	**0.008**
Social Justice Civic Behaviors	.447	Park Intergroup Contact	0.426	0.256	0.296	0.096
		Trust	0.185	0.144	0.119	0.197
		Critical Consciousness	**0.778**	**0.273**	**0.537**	**0.004**
		Social Justice Civic Attitudes	-0.078	0.175	-0.071	0.658

Dependent Variable	R^2	Independent Variables	B	SE	β	p
Asian						
Trust	.141	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.320**	**0.093**	**0.376**	**<.001**
Critical Consciousness	.135	Park Intergroup Contact	-0.047	0.101	-0.054	0.642
		Trust	**0.387**	**0.139**	**0.384**	**0.005**
Social Justice Civic Attitudes	.438	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.456**	**0.085**	**0.617**	**<.001**
		Trust	0.031	0.074	0.036	0.676
		Critical Consciousness	0.122	0.069	0.142	0.076
Social Justice Civic Behaviors	.427	Park Intergroup Contact	0.174	0.183	0.111	0.339
		Trust	-0.019	0.185	-0.010	0.918
		Critical Consciousness	**1.210**	**0.382**	**0.660**	**0.002**
		Social Justice Civic Attitudes	-0.180	0.248	-0.085	0.468
White						
Trust	.256	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.336**	**0.098**	**0.506**	**<.001**
Critical Consciousness	.202	Park Intergroup Contact	0.535	0.321	0.347	0.095
		Trust	0.371	0.481	0.160	0.440
Social Justice Civic Attitudes	.593	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.787**	**0.141**	**0.760**	**<.001**
		Trust	**-0.386**	**0.283**	**-0.247**	**0.020**
		Critical Consciousness	0.140	0.100	0.209	0.160
Social Justice Civic Behaviors	.665	**Park Intergroup Contact**	**0.746**	**0.284**	**0.476**	**0.009**
		Trust	0.004	0.228	0.002	0.986
		Critical Consciousness	**0.644**	**0.099**	**0.633**	**<.001**
		Social Justice Civic Attitudes	-0.319	0.283	-0.211	0.260

Table 20. Paths in Modified Structural Model by Race and Ethnicity (Continued)

Significant paths are bolded.

Appendix C Chapter 4 Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Intro:

1. To begin, could you please give me a brief overview concerning your agency's mission
   and the scope of your facilities and services?

Throughout the rest of the interview, I am going to be asking questions about diversity, equity,

and inclusion in your city's park system.

Main Questions:

2. To what extent do you feel the parks in your community have racially and ethnically
   diverse visitors?

    a. Are there certain parks that come to mind as being especially diverse or not
       diverse?

3. To what extent do you believe there are barriers to racially and ethnically diverse
   visitation in your community's parks?

    a. If you believe there are barriers, what are they?

4. What actions has your agency taken to support racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion in
   the parks?

    a. Have there been any specific programs to support diversity and inclusion in the
       parks? What about investments? Outreach? Engagement efforts? Staffing?

    b. What has been most successful? Most challenging?

    c. What actions do you think should occur within your agency?

5. How does your agency allocate capital and programmatic investments to address issues
   of social equity?

6. For those parks that attract visitors from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, what do you feel the social environment is like in those spaces?

   a. For example, do diverse visitors generally get along?

7. Do you feel these racially and ethnically diverse visitors interact with each other? And if so, in what ways?

   a. Alternate phrasing (if needed): What is the nature of these interactions?

8. Let's build on this discussion of co-presence and interaction between racially and ethnically diverse park users, or intergroup contact. What do you feel are the consequences or outcomes of intergroup contact in your city's parks?

9. Have there been any specific initiatives to influence interactions across racially and ethnically diverse individuals within the parks?

   a. If so, what has this looked like?

   b. What has been most successful? Challenging?

Conclusion:

Let's step back from intergroup contact and think about diversity and inclusion more broadly,

10. What are the factors that you believe would make parks more welcoming for people of color?

11. What actions do you believe urban park and recreation agencies should take in the future with regard to diversity, equity, and inclusion?

12. Finally, is there anything I did not ask about that you'd like to share or think is relevant to these topics?

Appendix D Chapter 4 Member Checking Sample

Preliminary Findings & Opportunity for Additional Input

The figure below displays themes and subthemes related to several questions I asked each interviewee about racial and ethnic diversity of park users. Specific topics covered included diversity of park visitors; barriers to diverse park visitation; factors and actions related to diversity of park visitors; agency initiatives focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion; factors which make parks more welcoming for people of color; assessment of the social environment in parks with racially and ethnically diverse visitation; factors and actions supporting interaction between racially and ethnically diverse park users; and outcomes of racially and ethnically diverse park visitation. Not all interview questions that I asked you to answer have been analyzed yet- this analysis is specifically focused on co-presence and interaction between racially and ethnically diverse individuals, or intergroup contact, in parks. Other interview responses/topics will be analyzed (and shared with you) in subsequent phases of the project.

Answers to interview questions (i.e., quotes from each interviewee) were descriptively labeled based on topic and similar topics were grouped together. This led to the development of various sub-themes, which were them clustered in broader themes. Several themes and subthemes exist for each research question I sought to answer with the study. As a way to advance the validity of the findings and ensure accurate representation of your words and the meaning behind them, I am requesting your feedback on my classification and interpretation of several of your interview responses. This is also an opportunity to share preliminary findings with you and obtain any additional insights you may have. In the figure below, there are five boxes. One contains the study research questions and a legend for interpreting the graphic, and the others show overall topic, themes, subthemes, and components of subthemes. For each of the four primary boxes, I have selected one quote from your interview which corresponds to one of the subthemes. Please take a few minutes to review my classification of your response and either 1) confirm that the classification makes sense to you and represents your words well or 2) suggest where you think it would be more appropriately classified. This is also an opportunity to add any additional comments/thoughts that you did not mention in your interview.

Urban Park Leaders' Perceptions of Intergroup Contact (Co-Presence and Interaction) Between Racially and Ethnically Diverse Park Users

1: Factors Influencing Co-Presence of Racially and Ethnically Diverse Park Users (RQ1,RQ2)

Perceived influence on diversity of usership: (+) positive, (-) negative, (+/-) mixed

Structural Community Factors

Residential Patterns/Segregation
- Limited neighborhood diversity/residential segregation (-)
- People staying in their own neighborhoods (-)
- Uniqueness of parks and recreation as spaces of intergroup contact (+)

Type of Park
- Regional/destination/signature parks (+)
- Neighborhood parks (-)

Park Access
- Transportation barriers (-)
- Poor walkability to parks (e.g., distance, safety) (-)

Management Factors/Actions

General Welcoming Atmosphere

Park Condition
- Overall quality and facility condition (+)
- Maintenance and cleanliness (+)
- Perceived equity of park quality across city (+)
- Park renovations (+/-)

Safety
- Lighting (+)
- Supervision (+)
- Crime and gang presence (-)

Park Features & Amenities
- Appealing to diverse user groups (+)
- Conducive to a variety of activities and park uses (+)

Programs & Events
- Cultural festivals (+)
- Broad-based appeal programming (+)
- Free or low cost (+)
- Community partnerships (+)

Outreach & Engagement
- Knowledge/information about parks and offerings (+)
- Marketing in culturally relevant media (+)
- Multi-lingual communications and signage (+)
- Equitable input in decision making (+)

Representation of Racial & Ethnic Diversity
- People at the park (+)
- Staff and leadership (+)
- History and art (+)

History of Institutional Racism
- History of racism, segregation, and facilities being unwelcoming to people of color (-)
- Public acknowledgement by park agency and active work to address institutional racism (+)

Research Questions:

RQ1: What factors do urban park agency leaders believe influence intergroup contact (co-presence and interaction) in their parks?

RQ2: What management actions do urban park agencies take regarding intergroup contact (co-presence and interaction) in their parks?

RQ3: How do urban park agency leaders perceive/characterize intergroup contact (co-presence and interaction) in their parks?

RQ4: What outcomes, if any, do urban park agency leaders perceive relative to intergroup contact (co-presence and interaction) in their parks?

Note: Intergroup contact refers to both co-presence and interaction between racially and ethnically diverse individuals

Legend:
Theme
Subtheme
- Component of Sub-Theme

2: Factors Influencing Interaction Between Co-Present Groups (RQ1,RQ2)

Factors Supporting Interaction of Co-Present Groups

Perceived influence on interaction quantity: (+) positive, (-) negative, (+/-) mixed

Programs & Events
- Culture, music, and art events (+)
- Older adult programming (+)
- Sports (+)
- Volunteering (+)

Park Features & Amenities
- Playgrounds (+)
- Basketball courts (+)

Changes Over Time (+)

Staying in Existing Social Groups (-)

Intentional Management Actions to Encourage Interaction of Co-Present Groups

Youth Programs
- Music programs
- Sports

Conversation or Dialogue Programs
- Current
- Future

Intergroup Interaction as an Unintentional Outcome
- Programs and events
- Community engagement
- Outside scope of mission
- Do not make sense on city composition

3: Characterization of Intergroup Contact (RQ3)
(Co-Presence & Interaction Among Racially and Ethnically Diverse Park Users)

Positive Contact (perceived as frequent), note how when unsure perceived as positive in text

People getting along
- **Friendly/cordial interactions**
- **Respectful environment**

Challenges identifying and replicating circumstances

Negative Contact (perceived as less frequent)

Infrequent negative contact

Intergroup threat and suspicion
- People of color being looked at like they do not belong
- White people calling police on people of color
- Lack of trust

Park use conflicts and activity appropriateness

4: Outcomes of Intergroup Contact (RQ4)
(Co-Presence & Interaction Among Racially and Ethnically Diverse Park Users)

Positive

Positive Park User Outcomes (perceived as resulting from positive contact, especially intergroup interaction)
- Relationship building
- Uncovering similarities and shared goals across groups
- Reducing biases and stereotypes
- Cross-cultural understanding and appreciation
- Normalizing multiracial and multicultural environments

Positive Agency Outcomes
- Successful programs and events
- Emergence of new types of programs and events

Negative

Negative Park User Outcomes (perceived as being relatively infrequent and resulting from negative contact)
- Change perceptions of another group
- Reinforce or increase stereotypes or biases
- Reduce extent people feel welcome or that they belong

Negative Agency Outcomes
- Risk losing some participants or support in community from those who do not value diversity, equity, and inclusion as a priority

1: Factors Influencing Co-Presence of Racially and Ethnically Diverse Park Users

Management Factors/Actions → Representation of Racial & Ethnic Diversity:
"Representation [among staff] is important and it's important that people see themselves in this organization, because these parks are theirs. And we want to make sure that people feel welcome and at home in the parks and facilities"

Appropriately Classified? ___Yes ___No (if no, please describe where you would classify it)

Additional Comments (if any):

2: Factors Influencing Interaction between Co-Present Groups:

Factors Supporting Interaction of Co-Present Groups →Programs & Events: "I would say, when there's structured programming going on there, they absolutely do [interact]. But in terms of, you know, if there's just different groups coming to visit the park, not, not necessarily. And I don't know that they would necessarily have intention to."

Appropriately Classified? ___Yes ___No (if no, please describe where you would classify it)

Additional Comments (if any):

3: Characterization of Intergroup Contact:

Negative Contact → Infrequent Negative Contact "I don't feel that anybody is fearful of anybody else or, or anything like that."

Appropriately Classified? ___Yes ___No (if no, please describe where you would classify it)

Additional Comments (if any):

4: Outcomes of Intergroup Contact:

Positive → Positive Park User Outcomes: "The consequences? I think nothing but positive consequences, as far as I'm concerned. That [contact] really fosters cross cultural communication and understanding. Back to some previous remarks that I've made, I think it's important that we understand each other. And that gives me an appreciation for you and who you are and you have an appreciation, or at least an acceptance for me and who I am. And that's what community is. I mean, we're together as a community, we are different, and that's great. We're similar and that's great. But they're both, our diversity is an asset."

Appropriately Classified? ___Yes ___No (if no, please describe where you would classify it)

Additional Comments (if any):

Appendix E Definitions of Key Concepts Used or Developed in this Dissertation

Diversity: A mixture or combination of people of different identities and backgrounds; the term can apply with regard to race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability, and so forth (Cortright, 2018; Extension Foundation, 2021). In this dissertation, the focus is on racial and ethnic diversity, and diversity is used here to refer to a mixture of individuals from different racial and ethnic groups. Importantly, the term diversity is not used as a synonym for people of color.

Person (or people) of Color: A person who identifies with a race or ethnicity other than non-Hispanic white.

Equity: The promotion of justice and fairness in the processes and distribution of resources, and thus equity can be reflected within an agency by the processes and outcomes of resource allocation (Blinded 2; City of Portland Office of Equity and Human Rights, n.d.; Extension Foundation, 2021)

Inclusion: An environment where all individuals are valued and engaged, and a variety of individuals have power and a voice in decision making (Extension Foundation, 2021; FerdMan et al., 2010; Kim, 2020)

Justice: The promotion of ''fair and equitable allocation of bargaining powers, resources, and obligations in society in consideration of people's differential power, needs, and abilities to express their wishes'' (Prilleltensky, 2001, p. 754).

Intergroup Contact: Contact between individuals belonging to different sociodemographic groups (Allport, 1954; Hodson & Hewstone, 2013). In this dissertation, the intergroup contact

refers to contact between individuals of different races and/or ethnicities. Contact can include both co-presence and interaction.

Prejudice: "A preconceived judgment, opinion or attitude directed toward certain people based on their membership in a particular group. It is a set of attitudes, which supports, causes, or justifies discrimination" (Rouse et al., 2011, p. 1144).

Discrimination: "Inappropriate treatment of people because of their actual or perceived group membership and may include both overt and covert behaviors, including microaggressions, or indirect or subtle behaviors (e.g., comments) that reflect negative attitudes or beliefs about a non-majority group" (National Association of School Psychologists, 2019, p. 1)

Racism: "The marginalization and/or oppression of people of color based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people" (Anti-Defamation League, 2020)

Systemic Racism: A form of racism embedded within laws, organizations, and society as a whole. "A combination of systems, institutions and factors that advantage white people and for people of color, cause widespread harm and disadvantages in access and opportunity. One person or even one group of people did not create systemic racism, rather it: (1) is grounded in the history of our laws and institutions which were created on a foundation of white supremacy; (2) exists in the institutions and policies that advantage white people and disadvantage people of color; and (3) takes places in interpersonal communication and behavior (e.g., slurs, bullying, offensive language) that maintains and supports systemic inequities and systemic racism" (Anti-Defamation League, 2020). Moreover, as Feagin (1999) states, "Systemic racism in the United States is a four-centuries-old system that denies African Americans and other people of color

many of the privileges, opportunities, freedoms, and rewards that this Nation offers to White

Americans" (p. 80).

Redlining: An example of systemic racism which limited access to home loans for people of

color, especially African Americans. In the 1930s, The Homeowners Loan Corporation (a U.S.

federal agency) created color coded maps which guided investment through home loans.

Communities of color, especially African American and immigrant neighborhoods, were marked

in red and termed "hazardous," and this practice was used to signal to banks not to provide home

loans to individuals in these communities (Mitchell & Franco, 2018). Public funding was

severely limited in redlined communities of color, translating to very limited funding for public

services and infrastructure. Although redlining was outlawed with the passing of the Fair

Housing Act of 1968, the economic impacts persist today, with high levels of income inequality,

residential segregation, and disparities in access and quality of various social resources (Mitchell

& Franco, 2018; Moxley & Fischer, 2020; Nardone et al., 2021).

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