"MAN UP, BRO!" AN EXPLORATION OF MASCULINE PERFORMANCES IN THE OUTDOOR ADVENTURE FIELD

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents ... *iii*
ABSTRACT ... *v*
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ... *1*
Overview ... 2
Gender & Masculinity Defined ... 4
Forms of Masculinity ... 5
What's at Stake? ... 7
History of Masculinity Outdoors ... 7
Framework and General Research Questions ... 11
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ... *11*
Overview ... 11
Theoretical Framework ... 12
Critical Study of Men and Masculinity ... 12
Performance Theory ... 13
Gender Performance Theory ... 14
Performance ... 15
Performance and power ... 16
Gender performance theory and masculinity ... 16
Unpacking Gender ... 17
Deconstructing the problematic gender/sex binary. ... 17
Gender: a fluid social construct. ... 18
Gender: a performance. ... 18
Masculinity ... 19
Hegemonic Masculinity ... 19
Outdoor Field and Dominant Narratives of Masculinity ... 21
Why Brevard? ... 22
Brevard: A Microcosm of the Outdoor Industry ... 22
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS ... *24*
Overall Approach ... 24
Methodology: Performance Ethnography ... 24
Population and Venue Selection ... 26
Research Roles ... 27
Personal Biography ... 28

Ethical and Political Considerations 29
Methods of Data Generation 29
Co -Performance 30
Interviews 30
Focus Group 31
Data Representation 33
Trustworthiness and Validity 34
Data Analysis 36
CHAPTER FOUR: MANUSCRIPT THESIS OPTION 38
ABSTRACT 40
Introduction 41
Literature Review 43
History of Masculinity Outdoors 44
Gender & Masculinity Defined 45
Competition and Masculinity 46
Dominant Scripts of Masculinity in the Outdoors 46
What are social scripts? 46
Commonly Performed Social Scripts in the Outdoors 47
Social script 1: men's domination in the outdoors. 47
Performance Theory 48
Performance Theory & Gender 49
Methodology and Methods 50
Methodology: Performance Ethnography 50
Population and Venue Selection 51
Methods of Data Generation 52
Methods overview. Act 1 52
Co -performance. 52
Interviews. 53
Intermission: Reflexive journaling. 54
Focus Group: Act 2: 54
Data Analysis and Representation 55
Representation. 55
Data analysis through CAP. 55
Results and Discussion 58
Video Results: 58
Social Script 1 : Masculinity as Performed Competence 58
Performing "as" Competent vs: Performing Competence 59
Masculinity and Performing Physical & Technical Competency 61

Social Orientation Towards Competency 62
Social Script 2: A Competitive Script- Scoreboard Mentality 64
Scoreboard Mentality 64
Conclusion 69
References 71
REFERENCES *79*

ABSTRACT

"MAN UP, BRO!" AN EXPLORATION OF MASCULINE PERFORMANCES IN BREVARD'S OUTDOOR ADVENTURE FIELD

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Masculinity is constructed and reinforced through interaction instead of passively internalized (Connell, 2006). The "space" of the outdoors is predominately regarded in the popular psyche as a *male* space (Kimmel, 1995; Newberry, 2003 & 2004; Warren, 2016). Societal expectations of men can produce harmful performances and representations of masculinity and can be detrimental to men, women, and non-binary individuals as they limit the "correct" ways to perform masculinity. Using feminist theory and performance ethnography, the purpose of this study was to explore how men perform masculinity in the outdoors. I asked two research questions to influence my study: (1) How do men in the field of the outdoors perform masculinities? (2) How do these performances resist, reinforce, or repurpose dominant narratives of masculinity? My methodology was a performance ethnography. Diawara (1996), suggests that performance ethnography explores the communicative actions within specific spaces. In alignment with performance ethnography, my methods were a co-performance (Conquergood, 1991), interviews (Lynch, 2020), reflexive journaling (Ortlipp, 2018), and a focus group (Peek and Fothergill, 2009). There was three distinct results in this study. First, a video that is an expressive representation of qualitative data being used to highlight the experiences of six men, including myself, in Brevard's outdoor field. Second, a discussion of a social script that looks closely at how masculinity is showing up through competency in outdoor activities. And third, the review of a social script entangled in, masculinity, competition, neoliberalism, and capitalism among men in the outdoors.

Keywords: masculinity, performances, outdoors, performance ethnography

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

My bones ached from the cold. Early mornings in the canyons of Southern Utah are the deepest cold I have felt. As I broke free from the icy sarcophagus that was my bivvy, I could hear my co-workers rustling through their food bags. I had used the medical bag as a wind protector the night before to block the biting wind from hitting my nose and cheek. The sun needed to come quickly. I was an assistant guide, leading a team of all boys with two male co-leaders. Young men aged 14-18 grumbled in their Walmart tarps that sheltered them from the biting Utah air, rustling in the sagebrush. My comrades crushed the icy snow as they began making breakfast consisting of ramen and coffee with slabs of butter; a bit barbaric, just as intended. I was on my way to making oats with dates, brown sugar, raisins, and the blackest coffee my Aeropress could muster.

My emotional connection with my two co-leaders was warm and welcomed. Each morning we would laugh and connect over the survival of the cold night and discuss the facts of life, nature, and our previous lives. Specifically, John cheated death from cancer, spoke on his LSD-induced free solo experiences, and endured a life of epilepsy. Eric discussed music festivals, his tumultuous relationship with his Dad, and how he and his brother had grown stronger from a strained household. My offering was about my previous life as a "frat bro" and how too much substance consumption and poor decisions had temporarily ruined my life. We quickly found that although we were the ones leading wilderness therapy, in many ways, we shared similar emotional pains with the kids who slept in their tarps near us.

The vulnerable and emotional connection with these men had formed over five weeks; we had spent 36 intermittent days working physically, emotionally, and spiritually alongside one

another. Early morning chats around a smoky pine fueled fire, anxious glancing exchanges throughout the day, and laughing under the evening stars solidified our unique bond as a united band of wilderness therapy guides. Each time I would leave the desert, I felt a void. I craved the male emotional nourishment found in the expansive wild spaces. I would return to the wild, rugged mountains of Telluride to share the harrowing tales of my weeks in the field. As we partied in a ski town during winter, we spent our nights shacked up in a sticky knock-off Irish pub, having bro talk about bags we'd peaked, runs we'd skied, and girls we wanted. In moments of clarity, I craved the desert magic that supported genuine male connection; a brotherhood. This feeling of deep connection is a rarity among men in the outdoors. I feel lucky to have experienced it.

Overview

In the wilderness of Utah, I experienced gentle, supportive, and vulnerable forms of masculinity. However, I have many stories where I did not experience or perform masculinity in that way in the outdoors. It has been far too familiar for me (as well as my male friends) to perform in hypermasculine ways while engaging in outdoor activities and with each other in outdoor spaces. Prescribed gender roles and societal norms, particularly about how a man *should* be/do "masculine" have the potential to construct how people enter social spaces and can shape the space themselves (Connell, 2005). For example, "the outdoors" as a space, "outdoor adventure activities" as recreational pursuits, and "masculine" as a way of performing one's gender are all often inextricably tied to one another. What it means to be "masculine" often entails liking the outdoors, knowing how to "survive off the land," getting hands dirty, chopping wood and building campfires. Reciprocally, what it means to be "outdoorsy" is often linked to tropes of masculinity such as being "rugged" and being emotionally stoic. With this in mind, it is no

surprise that the majority of outdoor adventure activities such as hiking, kayaking, climbing, and mountain biking are dominated by men. Specifically in 2022, 95.5 million males participated in outdoor activities as compared to 81.2 million females (Annual Outdoor User Report, 2022). While these numbers provide insight into the inequitable nature of the outdoors, similarly dominant masculine culture can act as a barrier towards more equitable spaces for men, women, and non-binary outdoor users. Societal expectations of men can produce harmful performances and representations of masculinity and can be detrimental to men, women, and non-binary individuals (making the outdoors less accessible), and nature (a dominant mindset that negatively impacts the natural world), as it limits the "correct" ways to perform their gender. Therefore, it is important to state that in this study, while I often use the terms, "males," "men," "females," "women" and "non-binary individuals" I'm also acknowledging that gender does not exist on a binary and is instead fluid.

Therefore, a clear need exists (that has been noted by the industry) to work towards making the outdoors a more equitable space for folx who identify as women and non-binary (Kennedy, 2023). One way to do this is by understanding the ways men perform their masculinities while participating in outdoor adventure activities. If we continue to make room in the industry for multiple performances of masculinity in the outdoors, perhaps we can shift narratives linking harmful hypermasculine performances with outdoor adventure activities. This "crack" in the dominant masculine narratives could also make space for more gender performances making outdoor adventure activities feel more welcoming for men, women, and non-binary individuals. Shifting narratives linking harmful hypermasculine performances to what it means to be "outdoorsy" is also critical for men recreating in these spaces. Often in outdoor adventure activities, men seek to perform their gender in hypermasculine ways. Additionally, an

emergent theme clarifies that the space itself has no determined or "inherent" masculinity to it. Peoples' social performances within certain spaces make the spaces gendered terrain. At best this can be limiting and at worst can be damaging emotionally or can have real physical consequences. For example, Brookes' (2007) research on outdoor-related fatalities suggests that teenage boys participating in outdoor activities take unnecessary risks. An example of unnecessary risk-taking among teenage boys is exposure to high consequences or exposed terrain, resulting in falling. Brookes' (2003a, 2006) work highlights seven incidents in outdoor education programs where teenage boys were fatally injured from unsupervised moments and poor decision-making. In the United States alone, behavioral risks account for about half of all deaths (Mokadad et al., 2004). Spaces that uphold dominant narratives of male norms likely exert pressures to partake in risk-taking activities (Gilmore, 1990). With both of these needs (to increase inclusivity for women and non-binary individuals and to normalize a variety of different ways to perform masculinity in the outdoors for men), the purpose of this study is to explore how men perform masculinity in outdoor spaces in relation to dominant narratives of masculinity. Before I expound on some of the narratives of men in the outdoors, I will first define *masculinity* and *gender,* noting specifically how both are performed and socially constructed.

Gender & Masculinity Defined

What is gender? Simone de Beauvoir (2011) best summarizes gender by stating, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (p.283). Although this quote pertains to women, de Beauvoir indicated that gender is something acquired or achieved. It is not something one *is* but something instead that one *does*. In this paper, I define masculinity as "the roles, behaviors, and attributes that are considered appropriate for boys and men in a given society" (Hubbard & Greig, 2020, p.2). Johnson and Cousineau (2018) further elaborate on masculinity as a practice

being expressed through body, personality, and culture. The social construction of masculinity suggests that to be associated with a specific social group (like being a man) prescribed social performance is necessary in an effort to “fit in.” Masculinity is socially constructed and commonly assigned to the male sex (Kimmel & Messner, 1998). The definition of masculinity changes and masculinity is performed differently depending on culture and setting (Pringle et al., 2011). It is common for masculinity to be paired with male biology (such as having a penis and certain levels of testosterone) (Connell, 2005), though this is not a requirement; a biological female can perform in a masculine way just as a biological male can. Masculinity, like gender, is performed, or as Butler (1988) argues, is *performative*, meaning that the performance of masculinity literally makes one a “man.” Gender performativity is best discussed by Judith Butler (1988) who suggests:

> The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again.(p. 526).

Butler’s (1988) logic suggests that the performance of masculinity from men is socially prescribed and learned through exposure to male spaces. Connell (2005) affirms that preconceived exposure to gender roles and societal norms can potentially construct how people enter social spaces. Men with the intention to perform their masculinity “correctly” are playing the roles that are expected of them societally (protector, provider, stoic, tough, physically strong).

Forms of Masculinity

One of the most historically dominating forms of masculinity is hegemonic masculinity, brought to light by Connell (1995;2005). Hegemonic masculinity is associated with power and domination and is founded on male privilege and social inequity, specifically toward women. (Connell, 1995; 2005). The outdoors, a male-dominated arena, is riddled with elements of hegemonic masculinity (Kennedy, 2023). Hegemonic masculinity has been heavily critiqued and now the term appears to be less relevant in more recent research studies, inspiring researchers to pursue other forms of masculinity (Pringle et al,. 2011).

A newer form of masculinity is *hybridized masculinity* (Kennedy 2023; Duncanson, 2015). This type of masculinity promotes performances of non-stereotypical masculinity in the outdoors and can challenge structures of power. Examples of challenges to hegemonic structures in the outdoors are: teaching skills outside of stereotypical gender roles, confrontation of sexist language, non-competitive spaces, and increased social justice awareness. (Kennedy, 2023; Halzula-Delay & Dyment, 2003; Oakley et al., 2018; Warren et al., 2018). Performances of healthy non-stereotypical masculinity can create a more positive and inclusive space.

Importantly, in this paper, I refrain from using the more often recognized word "toxic" to refer to masculinity. Toxic masculinity is associated with dominating others through aggression, competition, misogyny, and homophobia (Harrington, 2021; Kupers, 2005). The term "toxic" perpetuates confusing popular culture language that insufficiently categorizes men. This claim is not to state that "toxic masculinity" is not real; instead, it supports the limitations associated with an insufficient analysis of behaviors associated with men. I will be using words such as "harmful," "damaging," "hyper-masculine," and "non-stereotypical." However, men can also share positive and inclusive performances of masculinity in male-dominated spaces, such as the outdoors. These often rare occurrences of positive male camaraderie promote a sense of

community and brotherhood. In the outdoor field, a review of men and their gender performativity is necessary (Kennedy, 2023). The outdoor field is comprised of unique sub-industries within the outdoors, such as outdoor education, adventure education, experiential education, and environmental education (Dyment & Potter, 2015). This definition of "outdoor field" (Dyment & Potter), is a nebulas idea, and I am including each of the previously mentioned sub-industries in my meaning of "outdoor field".

What's at Stake?

Currently, men are overrepresented in the outdoors (Epstein et al., 2011). As more people access outdoor spaces, harmful constructions and representations of masculinity are challenged (Jacobs, 2020). In Kennedy's (2023) study, he suggests that within outdoor spaces led by men, gender inequity is significantly higher if men are performing stereotypical variations of masculinity. Kennedy (2023) suggests that stereotypical masculinities within the outdoor field are being challenged. Duncanson (2015) supports this by noting that developing variations of gender-equitable masculinities are becoming more relevant in the outdoor field. Challenging traditional narratives of masculinity in outdoor spaces can liberate men from constructed social norms and hegemonic structures present in outdoor spaces (Jacobs, 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how dominant narratives of masculinity impact men who work within the in the outdoor field and who enter outdoor adventure spaces with a unique level of seriousness.

History of Masculinity Outdoors

The inseparable relationship between the outdoors and masculinity has been long-standing within the literature (Humberstone, 2000; Jordan, 1992). Historically the outdoors has been understood as a masculine-dominated space (Kimmel, 1995; Newberry, 2003 &2004;

Warren, 2016). Westernized masculine narratives commonly advance the notions of "rugged individualism," which promotes self-reliance, resourcefulness, and independence, principles historically expected of men that have since weaved into male roles in outdoor spaces. (Bazzi et al., 2017). Men in these spaces, and their lives as a whole, are encouraged to be bold and aggressive (Warren, 1985), resulting in men promoting their masculinity by conquering and taming the outdoors (Cronon, 1996; Godtman et al., 2020; Kinnaird & Hall, 1994). Additionally, wild, rugged, untamed outdoor spaces have been directed to appeal lustful and tempting to the male gaze, which refers to a generalization of how men view the world (Godtman et al., 2020; Gunnarsdóttir, 2011; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000a).

Fundamental expectations of men expose the intertwined relationship between masculinity and outdoor spaces. Furthermore, critical components of the social construction of masculinity instill a belief that men should be attracted to the outdoors, especially as they can be dominant. Western cultural portrayals of men influence cultural values and social norms. Therefore the values and norms associated with men needing to fulfill specific roles in the outdoors have become the standard (Kivel & Johnson, 2009). The idea of a rugged male creates hazy images of a bearded lumber-jack type. This male archetype, a Paul Bunyonesque individual, will chop a month's wood supply, climb a mountain, harvest a deer, trim his beard, and take his photo before his handmade log cabin, all before breakfast. Men participating in outdoor adventure spaces are often expected to "bag some peaks," "stomp a jump," "send it," "huck-it," and "crush" the natural world around them as they conquer outdoor spaces. It is important to understand a spectrum of approaches in outdoor adventure spaces. On one end of the spectrum people can enter spaces with a "playful" or leisurely approach (King and Church, 2015; Stebbins, 1997). On the other end of the spectrum individuals can enter outdoor spaces

with a “rigid” or “dominant” approach, in reference to Stebbins (1982), ideas on serious leisure. Men in outdoor adventure spaces can commonly be found on the latter end of the spectrum, approaching leisure in a more stern or aggressive fashion (Bordelon, 2019; Scott & Schafer, 2013; Stebbins, 1982). Outdoor adventure spaces are dynamic and evolving, due to spaces being made, recreated, and repurpose within the world. These outdoor adventure spaces entail recreation and potential facilitation in an outdoor setting where teaching, learning, and experiences occur. Ewert and Sibthorp (2014) suggest, an outdoor adventure is comprised of an interaction with an outdoor environment, some exposure to risk, and reasonably unforeseeable outcomes. Additionally, Ewert and Sibthorp (2014) imply the ideas and concepts of adventure entail a stage of triumph in the conclusion and re-entry stage of an experience. These ideas on triumph dove-tail into the notion of a victor or imply notes of “conquering.” Narrative of achievement coincide with colonialism. Specifically, historic white, westward expansions of the United States parallel the ideas of victory, triumph, and conquering (Jackson, 2018; Stavrianos, 1967). Men then continue to advance the archetype of maleness by embracing conquering and dominating narratives rooted deeply in outdoor spaces, as shown by the men before them (Peter, 1993). Men then are left on the front lines of defending their masculinity, trying to uphold societal standards expected of them.

Typical socially acceptable descriptions of men are competitive, demanding, aggressive, stoic, physical, and objective (Connell, 2005; Humberstone, 2000; Kennedy, 2021; Kimmel, 1995). Wild spaces and rugged terrain are traditionally tailored for men, whereas for women, the home is traditionally viewed as their domain (Bialeschki, 1992; Jacobs, 2020; Little, 2002).

Gendered performances promote roles like men carrying axes and chainsaws, while women wield brooms and dusters. Gendered expectations are also seen within the outdoor field.

Technical, “hard” skills are typically associated with men, while emotional, “soft” skills are associated with women (Gray, 2016; Overholt & Ewert, 2015). Examples of gendered skill sets are a male instructor being tasked with facilitating a day’s experience and a female instructor’s task is associated with conflict resolution within the group.

The wilderness is constructed to privilege traditional Western gender social norms (Botta & Fitzgerald, 2020). Men are encouraged to be attracted to the outdoors; it is a space that supports our privilege. The expected socialization of prescribed gender roles is reflected societally and in wild spaces (Botta & Fitzgerald, 2020), and the construction of masculinity is derived from the life and influence of society (Connell, 2005). Leisure spaces, such as the outdoors, act as a site that reproduces masculinity (Johnson et al., 2008). The societal pressure of traditional masculinity conveys messages that men should inherently be associated with wild places. Conformity to socially normalized gender roles can be damaging to men both emotionally and physically (Mayor, 2015; Solbes-Canales et al., 2020; World Health Organization, 2002). Men are encouraged to hide vulnerability and specific emotions. Additionally, men in outdoor spaces are commonly associated with physical risk, for example, attempting harder technical outdoor pursuits that result in injuries or fatalities. (Tilstra et al., 2022). An entanglement of risk, outdoors, and men can be harmful and damaging. Throughout this thesis, I intend to highlight the theme of masculinity in the outdoors: revealing the implications of harmful masculinity, exploring alternative forms of masculinity, and emphasizing the importance of changing harmful “hypermasculine” narratives for the betterment of the outdoor field. The hope is that this research encourages men to reflect upon and allow themselves to experience healthy and positive expressions of masculinity. Additionally, this work encourages more meaningful and positive spaces for men who work and live in

hypermasculine outdoor terrain. This audience for this proposed research is first and foremost for men, though I hope that leaders in the field (regardless of gender identity) can find some parts useful. Discussions and critiques of harmful and damaging forms of masculinity must start with men (us) first and my goal is to begin a conversation here in these pages and in my local community: Brevard, NC.

Framework and General Research Questions

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how men perform masculinity in outdoor spaces in relation to dominant narratives of masculinity. I used performance ethnography to focus on the performance of the male gender within the outdoor field. The two research questions driving the continued exploration of this study are:

1. How do men in the outdoor field perform masculinities?
2. How do these performances resist, reinforce, or repurpose dominant narratives of masculinity?

I will begin with a literature review, explain my selected methodology and proposed methods, and lastly have chosen to produce a manuscript of this study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

In this chapter, I discuss the formation of the Critical Study of Men and Masculinity. Theories associated with this branch of gender and feminist studies will guide my methodology and methods. I will discuss performance theory, introduce gender performance, unpack and explain the social construct of gender, talk about critical masculinity studies, and conclude with why I have selected Brevard, North Carolina, as my proposed location for this study.

Theoretical Framework

Studies on men and masculinity are longstanding (Hearn & Howson, 2019). Men have dominated many writing arenas, such as science, academia, literature, religion, etc. Often these writings were by men for men. However, for a long time, topics like gender have been viewed as off-limits to men and regarded as predominately women's terrain. In this gendered territory, men have seemingly become "ungendered" or "neutral" to gender societally and structurally (Hearn & Howson, 2019; Lloyd, 1984). Words like "you guys" (used to refer to women or a mixed-gender group) and the default "he/him" pronouns used to describe animals whose sex isn't obvious, "look how cute he is" highlight the fact that men's gender has become the baseline. What it means to be masculine and a man is societally prescribed.

Often times the world is viewed through a lens of men and masculinity. Historically this male lens has gone unchallenged. However, that is assuredly no longer the case. Studies now cover men and masculinity through critical assessment and exploratory rationale.

Critical Study of Men and Masculinity

My proposed is a **C**ritical **S**tudy of **M**en and **M**asculinity (CSMM). According to Hearns and Howard (2021), CSMM studies highlight:

> "how the gendering, yet absent presence, of men and masculinities, is located within systems and relations of gender power and domination, and how understanding this necessitates drawing on the full range of feminist and critical gender and sexuality scholarship, as part of feminist, women's and gender studies." (Hearns & Howard, 2021, p.19).

Foundationally, this study, like all CSMM studies, builds on "historical, cultural, relational, materialist, anti-essentialist, de-reified and deconstructive studies on men and masculinities"

(Hearns & Howard, 2021, p. 22). And, it is a project where I will carefully think and re-think the implications of power dynamics for myself, my participants, and men readers. This aligns with the foundations of CSMM which "resists the potential to re-center men's power and moves, if only implicitly, towards the de-centering, the "Othering" (Staszak, 2009), of men, through both naming and deconstruction" (Hearns & Howard, 2021, p. 22). Overall CSMM are necessarily comprised of numerous compounding influential theories. Therefore, for this proposed CSMM study, I was influenced by a variety of theoretical lenses including critical masculinity theory and performance theory camped in feminist theory. I will explain each in more detail below.

Performance Theory

Goffman's (1959) performance theory metaphors the world as a theatrical production to explain the world's social interactions.

> "A given social front tends to become institutionalized in terms of the abstract stereotyped expectations to which it gives rise, and tends to take on a meaning and stability apart from the specific tasks which happen at the time to be performed in its name. The front becomes a "collective representation" and a fact in its own right." (Goffman, 1959, p.27)

This logic applied to gender suggests performances of masculinity are social acts representing acceptable stereotypes of men. Goffman's ideas around performance imply that actions eventually can socially solidify and institutionalize if they are continuously performed. Regarding masculinity, a common trope is that men are emotionally stoic. As men continue to project this social narrative of emotional stoicism, it becomes a collective social representation. Therefore, it is understood and common in Western culture for men to be emotionally stoic. In

this study, I am going to be using performance theory to explore how men perform masculinity in outdoor spaces in relation to dominant narratives of masculinity.

Goffman's (1959) performance theory suggests that social life is made up of performances acted out by individuals and teams of people. These performances happen in two main areas: "front-stage "and "backstage." Front-stage performances occur when others are watching (Cole, 2021). Front-stage behavior is commonly influenced by culture and people's acceptance. "Backstage" performances arise when no audience is present or there is reduced pressure to perform specific actions associated with cultural norms. People performing backstage are less worried about how they are being perceived (Cole, 2021). It is common and expected for a person to keep their "front-stage" performances separate from their "backstage" life (Cole, 2021). An example from Goffman includes thinking about the life of a waiter/waitress. The waitress or waiter acts a specific way in front of a customer and acts another way once they are back behind the closed "employees only" door. The "front-stage" is interacting and serving guests and the "backstage" is the "employee-only" space. Naturally in this example, the waitress/waiter feels more comfortable to drop their act when not around the "audience," or customer. Goffman's performance theory can also be applied to the performance of gender.

Gender Performance Theory

Throughout this paper, gender will continue to be explained and unpacked. First, it is important to understand the big picture of gender performance theory, specifically regarding masculinity. Butler (1988) states, "It seems fair to say that certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in way." (p.527). If we combine the previously discussed ideas of Goffman, and apply them directly to what Butler is stating, it

would suggest that the way we "do" gender is our way of acting out our gender. This is explored in the following sections.

Performance

In life, "One learns through performing, then performs the understanding so gained" (Turner, 1982, p. 94). Turner suggests that performances are watched, learned, and practiced, creating a cycle of performances. "Displaying performance competence is central to all communication marked as a performance" (Bell, 2008, p. 32). An example of performing my gender with social competence in Brevard's outdoor field might look like:

I pull into the put-in of the Tuckasegee River, with Lynyrd Skynyrd playing loudly, windows down, with the smell of stale beer still stained into my beard. When I get out, I am finishing my red bull, spilling the last sip on my Tennessee Vols football jersey, and crush the can on the hot pavement. I chuck the red bull can into the back of my dirty 4runner, as my friend pulls up to the put-in. I give him a subtle head nod, and wait for him to get out. As he steps out I holler, "whaddup dawg." Eagerly I show I am already steps ahead while I reach to untie my kayak from the roof rack. Once I have my boat down, he has stepped out of the car, I awkwardly and excitedly walk to his car to give him our classic greeting, a powerful knuckle bump to signify our "How's it going?" wordless exchange. This narrative explains the covert communication inherent to the paddling space outlined above.

"Performance is a communicative process. All performances are transactional communication events between speakers and listeners" (Pelias, 2007, p.15). In this narrative ways in which I am performing and expressing my masculinity are by the music I listen to, the car I drive, the Red Bull I drink, the stale tinge of beer still embedded into my beard. My performances of this interaction reiterate social roles of: a man, a boater, a beer drinker, an

outdoorsman. They communicate my gender to my friend, who is the listener, audience, and team member. I have chosen performance ethnography to explore how men are performing masculinities in outdoor spaces in relation to dominant narratives of masculinity.

Performance and power. Butler's theories on gender provide insight into the relationship between power and performance. Butler (1993a) suggests, "there is no power construed as a subject that acts, but only a reiterated acting that is power in its persistence and instability" (p.9). Butler is specifically discussing gender. The societal performances of gender dictate and illuminate the power of the social machine of the world. The theory of symbolic interactionism specifically explains the power dynamic between performance and power. Symbolic interactionism describes how society is constructed and maintained by repeated social actions (Carter & Fuller, 2015). Carter and Fuller (2015), suggest that gender is a result of symbolic interactionism. Society is a unique power, gender is a cog in the machine of society whose "correct" performance continues to instill a certain way to do gender. "Power contributes to the construction of social performance…" (Alexander, 2011, p.4). The performance ethnography methodology (discussed in the next chapter) provides space for power structures, like gender, to be challenged.

Gender performance theory and masculinity. Similar to Butler, West and Zimmerman state, "A person's gender is not simply an aspect of what one is, but, more fundamentally, it is something that one does, and does recurrently, in interaction with others" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p.140). For example, Sallee and Harris (2011) review how gender performances occur in interaction with others. They looked at undergraduate college men would perform their gender when being interviewed by either a male or female interviewer. They found that, men who were being interviews by a male, displayed "sexual prowess and dominance over women" (Salle &

Harris, 2011, p. 414). However, in contrast, Salle & Harris (2011) found that "…men interviewed by the female researcher presented themselves as thoughtful and rejecting of stereotypical gender roles" (p.414). In relation to performing gender, these men changed their performance of masculinity depending on the gender of the researchers. In reference to Goffman's ideas on "front-stage" and "backstage," we see that the college-aged men were operating somewhat "backstage" towards the male research and more "front-stage" towards the female researcher. This continues to reiterate the unique performances of gender in association with social interactions. It is important to continue to explore gender in the context of performance.

Unpacking Gender

Deconstructing the problematic gender/sex binary. The term *sex*, is defined as, " the physical characteristics used to identify differences between males and females" (Rushton et al., 2019, p.2). *Sex* is commonly associated with the biological make-up of an individual, like physical features or chromosome make-up (Morganroth et al., 2021). This approach to the categorization of *sex* creates a problematic binary when discussing *gender* (Hyde et al., 2019). *Gender* refers to an associated performance or self-identification to promote one's social role (American Psychological Association, 2018; Wood & Eagly, 2015). A binary approach to both *sex* and *gender* creates and reestablishes a problematic social power that assumes people develop and maintain specific physical characteristics and an understanding to abide by social stereotypes inherent to their chromosome makeup (Butler, 1990; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2020, Morganroth et al., 2021). A binary necessarily excludes a variety of genders that we know exist (eg. agender, genderqueer, non-binary, etc). And, one's biological sex and one's gender are never necessarily connected (eg. a person's biological sex might be female but they may identify as male in most

settings). Therefore, it is important to state that in this study, while I often use the terms, “men” “women” and “non-binary individuals” I’m also acknowledging that gender does not exist on a binary and is instead fluid.

Gender: a fluid social construct. Gender is a social construct and is not a fixed or static identity. Gender is a product constructed and performed through social interactions (Berkowitz et al., 2010). Connell (2006) emphasizes that masculinities and femininities are constructed and reinforced through interaction, instead of passively internalized. Gender is something one fundamentally does when interacting with the social world (Berkowitz, 2010; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Scholars, such as, Collins (2000), Lorber (1994), and Risman (2004), theorize that gender as a social construct compounds the collection of “identities, interaction, and institutions in shaping the gendered distribution of power, privilege, and resources” Berkowitz, 2010, p.133). Associating gender as a performative act (Butler, 1988) provides insight into the non-binary, fluid tendency, that gender performativity truly is.

Gender: a performance. Gender identities are socially represented through acting out societal norms of “masculine” and “feminine” behaviors. Adherence to socially acceptable representations of masculinity and femininity reinforces the gender binary. However, the performance of gender is less binary and more on a sliding scale. Stereotypical assumptions of how to perform gender can influence people’s everyday social promotion of self. Examples of “doing” gender include performances like how one dresses, how they talk, what they eat, and what they drink. These unique promotions of self are used to help define one’s gender to their social audience, or the world around them (Goffman, 1959). Specifically with gender, performances are “scripted” meaning there is a specific way to “do” masculinity, that when done correctly supports and reinforces the institutionalized power of gender. After gaining a broader

understanding of gender performance it is essential to assess and unpack men and masculinity critically.

Masculinity

Masculinity is challenging to define. Overall, the ideas, concepts, and literal terms of "masculine" and "masculinity" refer to many practices, configurations, assemblages, identities, types, structures, and institutions (Hearn & Howson, 2021). In line with the theoretical foundation of feminism and critical studies of men and masculinity, gender is understood as a social construct. Throughout this review, I will the previously mentioned definition of masculinity: "the roles, behaviors, and attributes that are considered appropriate for boys and men in a given society" (Hubbard & Greig, 2020, p.2). Culture is a cause and effect of masculine behavior (Johnson & Cousineau, 2018). Rooted in cultural differences, masculinity is a fluid construct with multiple possibilities of representation depending on cultural and social influences (Johnson & Cousineau, 2018). A critical element of dominant masculinity is its dialectical or opposing stance to femininity (Connell, 2005; Johnson & Cousineau, 2018). Masculine power is balanced in a way that "*masculine*" is valued over "*feminine*" (Johnson & Cousineau, 2018). A hierarchical stance is commonly present in dominant narratives of masculinity and can be categorized as hegemonic masculinity. A brief look into dominant categories of masculinity, such as hegemonic masculinity, will provide insight into what dominant narratives of masculinity are being projected and presented currently.

Hegemonic Masculinity

The ideas around hegemony in societal structures are commonly attributed to Antonio Gramsci, around the early 20th century (Johnson & Cousineau, 2018). Gramsci developed that hegemony is a process implemented by hegemons, leaders who are dominant and create norms to

continue to support those in power (Boswell, 2004; Johnson & Cousineau, 2018; Wallerstein, 1983). Gramsci theorized that hegemony appears within society and is embedded into social structures. More specifically, hegemony in society is wielded and flexed by those granted power against those who have less power (Johnson & Cousineau, 2018). Dominant narratives of masculinity are prime examples of powerful hegemonic social structures. Dominant social narratives of masculinity can be categorized as hegemonic masculinity.

Rose and Johnson (2017) suggest,

> Hegemonic masculinities refers to sets of practices in which dominant social positions of men are promoted at the subordinated social positions of non-masculine identities. Values and activities associated with hegemonic masculinity involve toughness, strength, conquest, domination, heterosexuality, breadwinner, strong, stoic, emotionally detached, pragmatic, etc., even as these aspects are enacted and expressed in diverse ways. (p.4)

Hegemonic masculinity is a strong performance of masculinity (Johnson & Cousineau, 2018) embedded in cultures.

Connell's (2005) seminal work around the robust societal structure of hegemonic masculinity has clarified how hegemonic masculinity shows up in day-to-day life. Masculinity is pliable based on the performance of gender roles throughout society (Johnson & Cousineau, 2018). Examples of gender performances can be seen in physical physique, social action, emotional presentation, etc. (Johnson & Cousineau, 2018). Hegemonic masculinity is rooted in domination. Domination leads to power and access to the "Other" (Staszak, 2009). "Other" refers to those who do not fall into the ideal category of hegemonic masculinity. However, as many organized representations of hegemonic masculinity are rewarded throughout Western societies, peak masculinity is seemingly unachievable. Not all men, if any, can be live up to the

societal tropes of “being a man,” all the time such as: strong, athletic, gregarious, bearded, good drivers, tough, emotionally stoic… etc. Hegemonic masculinity damages many groups of people and individuals, including other men. It is crucial to expose dominant narratives of masculinity present in day-to-day society. One specific venue where dominant and hegemonic narratives are present is the outdoor field.

Outdoor Field and Dominant Narratives of Masculinity

A need for scholarly work addressing hegemonic masculinity in outdoor spaces is becoming necessary (Kennedy & Russell, 2021; Kennedy, 2023). An adherence to hegemonic masculinity can be negatively impactful on men’s health (Hearn, 2015; Vandello, 2022), reinforce gender inequity (Connell, 2005; hooks, 2004), and can foster hostility towards the environment (Hultman, 2017). Hegemonic masculinity is currently the most influential form or variation of masculinity (Beasley, 2019; Hearn & Howan, 2021; Kennedy, 2021). Messerschmidt (2019) encourages the differentiating of popular representations of masculinity and true, proper, hegemonic masculinity that presents to be more patriarchal. However, I believe that representations and performances of popular masculinity stem from the umbrella of hegemonic masculinity. This is supported by more recent critiques of a newer form of masculinity, “hybrid-masculinity,” that still adheres to underlying characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (Duncanson, 2015; Kennedy, 2023).

Although the outdoors is foundationally a male or masculine place, a rise in binary gender parity within the outdoors has occurred more recently (Gray, 2016). The outdoor field is comprised of unique sub-industries within the outdoors, such as outdoor education, adventure education, experiential education, and environmental education (Dyment & Potter, 2015). Due to a rise in binary gender parity and established curriculum norms associated with the outdoor field,

there appears to be more room than ever to perform alternative masculinities (Dyment & Potter, 2015; Ewert & Sithorp, 2014; Humberstone, 2000; Kennedy, 2021, McCaughtry and Tischler, 2010). Humberstone (2000), urges that the outdoor community has its own unique culture and community, encouraging Kennedy (2021) to attest that as an industry this makes room to push back against normalized hegemonic masculinity. Similarly, McCaughtry and Tischler (2010) encourage outdoor education leaders and participants to move away from more competitive, physically driven activities, and focus more on activities that include team building, or less individualized performance moments. My proposed study explores performances and variations of masculinity appearing in the outdoor field, specifically in Brevard. In the next section, I will discuss why Brevard is a good fit for this proposed work.

Why Brevard?

Brevard's unique outdoor community quickly grows in notoriety as a small outdoor mecca and its proximity to countless outdoor activity venues has motivated me logistically to pursue this study. Secondly, as a member of the outdoor field, I am excited to give back to the community I am in connection with regularly, both in personal capacities and professionally. Being in this community has motivated me to propose this work. In the outdoor field, where risk is inherent to many outdoor activities, it is particularly important to understand how masculinity narratives influence men's outdoor behavior.

Brevard: A Microcosm of the Outdoor Industry

The outdoor field overall is a large industry creating influential economic ripples. Specifically, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis provided that the outdoor recreation economy accounted for 454 billion dollars in 2021(BEA,2021). More specifically, North Carolina's tourism industry was responsible for upwards of $26.8 billion in 2022 (EDPNC,

2022). While North Carolina is presenting a formidable installment into the overall outdoor industry, Brevard is simultaneously gaining national recognition in popular media sources for being an elite outdoor area, enticing tourist dollars to flock to Brevard.

To give some perspective, the biking industry alone in Western North Carolina, where Brevard is located, contributed $30.2 million toward local biking areas (Bradley & Maples, 2017). More locally, residents in and around Brevard spend around $18.2 million on biking in the Western North Carolina Area annually, specifically in Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests. Additionally, 60% of annual mountain biking users in Western North Carolina are local residential bikers (Bradley & Maples, 2017). This data provides a glimpse into the local communities' tenacity to pursue local outdoor adventure.

Specifically, Brevard, North Carolina, is a hotbed for outdoor enthusiasts (Farris, 2010). According to Smithsonian Magazine, Brevard is on the top 15 list of small towns to visit and is continuously gaining notoriety. Brevard's location gives it quite the backyard playground, consisting of local access to more than half a million acres of the stunning Pisgah National Forest wilderness. Also, Brevard's regional proximity to other recreational hotspots, such as the French Broad River, Gorges State Park, and Dupont State Recreational Forest, draws tourists from around (Kiniry, 2021). The abundance of resources for outdoor lovers creates a community that works hard to support tourism and plays hard too.

Another boastful layer of Brevard's outdoor credibility is associated with the local liberal arts college, Brevard College's Wilderness Leadership and Experiential Education (WLEE) program. The WLEE program produces dozens of proficient college degree-holding outdoor professionals on an annual basis that immediately contribute to the local economy in Brevard and the larger body of the national and global outdoor field. Brevard, North Carolina, is a microcosm

for the larger ecosystem of the outdoor field. Not only am I a local here in Brevard, but I am also an active working professional, past student, and avid biker, paddler, climber, angler, and hiker associating and contributing to the economy of the outdoor field present to Brevard.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Overall Approach

The purpose of this study was to explore how men are performing masculinities in outdoor spaces in relation to dominant narratives of masculinity. My research questions are:

1) How do men in the outdoor field perform masculinities?

2) How do these performances resist, reinforce, or repurpose dominant narratives of masculinity?

In the interest of addressing these questions, I performed a Critical Study of Men and Masculinity. Specifically, I used a performance ethnography as a methodology. My methods include a co-performance, mobile interviewing in performative spaces, reflexive journaling, and a focus group. I conducted this study with self-identifying males who are located and working in Brevard's outdoor community. In the following section, I will then detail my methods, research collaborators, analysis plan, and data representation.

Methodology: Performance Ethnography

Ethnography is used to study the culture of a group of people to gain a holistic "insider's" understanding of a group or culture (Kramer and Adams, 2017). Ethnography is more than a single technique; it is a suite of techniques used to understand better cultural and social phenomena experienced by people and groups (Rose, 2022). Over time, unique forms of ethnography have developed, focusing on different aspects of and settings for culture, including

digital ethnography (Cousineau, 2021), autoethnography (Price, 2015), and performance ethnography (Denzin, 2018) which used for this study.

Performance ethnography involves creating “opportunities to perform their cultural understanding by observing, participating in performances, and/or representing their findings to others through performance” (Conrad, 2004 p.15). Performance ethnography is blended and camped within performance studies (Rodine, 2023). Performance studies encompass the performances of social life, including the performance of social constructs (Rodine, 2023). A performance ethnography overall provides opportunities to observe and participate in performative acts (Rodine, 2023). The theoretical undertones of performance ethnography suggest that each day of life comprises a series of performances (Jones, 2006). Masculinity is a gendered social performance (Butler, 1988). Butler’s theory of gender as a performance provides support that daily life is full of performative acts.

The values and ideas of performance ethnography are a good pairing with critical men and masculinity studies based on the challenge of inquiring further about selected performances of individuals. Specifically, performance studies act as a powerful and useful method to explore structures of power that exist in everyday life (Rodine,2023). However, challenges do arise when conducting a performance ethnography, or any performance-related study. An example of a challenge specific to performance ethnography is the ill-defined category of research. A lack of clarity on what specifically is categorized as a performance ethnography can impact the understood value of potential results (Rodine, 2023). Performance ethnography is an appropriate methodology when exploring performances associated within leisure spaces.

For example, Sallis (2003) conducted a performance ethnography to explore masculinity in an all-boys school setting. Within this study, high school-aged boys challenge hegemonic

masculinity, a standard categorization of dominant and powerful masculinity (Connell, 2005). The participants in this study acknowledged their role in promoting and performing hegemonic masculinity. They provided a stance and pushback against a dominant structure; hegemonic masculinity. Their performance ethnography came in the form of a scripted play, acting out scenes of hegemonic masculinity in hopes of illuminating the harmful narratives commonly associated with hegemonic masculinity.

Cultural structures, like race and gender, are powerful but only provide a brief background representation of actual social life. Individuals and groups expose a more intricate entanglement of people and cultural structures (Alexander, 2011). An example of this would be the cultural representation of a self-categorizing mountain biker in the Asheville area. Identifying factors of how they choose to perform their race, gender, and sexuality could amplify clues into their role in cultures or groups. “Culture possesses us as much as we possess it; culture performs and articulates us as much as we enact and embody its evanescent qualities” (Conquergood, 2013, p.17). Performance ethnography is well suited to unveil hidden processes of power (Madison, 2006). I have chosen to pursue a performance ethnography based on curiosity and exploration of how men perform dominant narratives of masculinity in outdoor spaces.

Population and Venue Selection

My specific population was based on a convenience sample, meaning I chose the individuals who participated in this study (Stratton, 2021). The individuals who were selected for this study are community members of Brevard who self-identify as male, are at least 18 and have been participating in professional outdoor field work for more than two years. The specific research sites were dependent on selected outdoor activities. We paddled, climbed, biked, hiked, and fished in local areas where an overlap of professional and recreational time is spent. Examples

of the specific sites included the Tuckasegee River, Lower Black Mountain, Cathey's Creek, Art Loeb Trail, Cedar Rock, and other appropriate venues. The selected venues for outdoor activities were on public access land, rivers, rock, and trails. I relied heavily on natural spaces and outdoor pursuits to catalyze continued trust and rapport building. Nature opened space for more connectedness and a sense of belonging as a group (Li, 2021). This group of men supported one another uniquely throughout this study.

Based on the time I poured into these relationships, I had a foundational pre-existing trust and rapport with these individuals. I needed to gain credibility by participating in outdoor activities with efficiency and skill. The role of the participants in this study was to be collaborative co-researchers. They helped me share the existing status quo of what it means to be a man in the outdoor field. These men are all living within the outdoor field of Brevard, are white, self-identify as male, and are cisgender. Examples of our occupations are summer camp administration staff, teachers at outdoor education schools, fly-fishing guides, and mountain-biking technicians. A collaborative research process helped give language, voice, and a platform for men in the outdoors to share important narratives and experiences.

Research Roles

I cherish the personalities and friendships of the individuals I engaged with in this study. Although I was the primary investigator of this proposed project, resistance to normalized hierarchical relationships in research encouraged the decision to create a collaborative team of participants. A team consisting of community members, friends, and peers, of Brevard created a space to embark on a collaborative exploration of the performativity of masculinity and how it impacts each of us. As a crew, we shared some of the burdens in creating this project. The duties

and responsibilities of myself, the primary investigator, and the valued collaborative team members are indicated below in *Table A*.

Table A

Primary Investigator	• Logistical Planning of Outdoor Activity • Activity Participation • Focus Group Participation • Interview Questions (3) • Focus Group Topics (5) • IRB Approval • Data Analysis Results Presentation
Researcher Collaborator	• Logistical Collaboration • Activity Participation • Focus Group Participation • Focus Group Topics (1)

Personal Biography

My identities directly influenced this study because I am a part of a privileged community. I cannot detach from the inherent power of being a white, hetero, cis male in the outdoor spaces. Additionally, I work and frequently play in predominately white male spaces. My performances impacted my overall approach to this study.

My connections to the participants of this study were unique. I have not had direct conversations about masculinity with them previously and I feel that socially navigating the realm of this study was challenging. I have had very few instances where discussing masculinity was a theme of outdoor activity spaces. I mentally prepared myself to navigate these relationships with intention and loyalty to my project and the relationships themselves. I was reflexive throughout this process and heard what my collaborators told me. I was willing and able to be challenged and questioned on avenues of masculinity. Open communication was my first step in reflexivity.

Ethical and Political Considerations

I received IRB review. IRB processes addressed were my desire to conduct research in spaces that are hazardous by nature, such as rivers, rocks, and trails, which are an integral part of my study. A second area of the IRB process that was unique was my participation in an all-male group. My pre-established relationships with my proposed research collaborators was a form of selection bias. Lastly, I videoed and recorded my participants and ensured it was done ethically.

Methods of Data Generation

Five individuals within Brevard's outdoor field collaborated with me on this research. My research began by contacting these individuals and asking them to join me on this project. Based on their skills, we participated in various outdoor activities together. These outdoor activities included white-water paddling, mountain biking, rock climbing, backpacking, hiking, and fly fishing. These outdoor activity spaces are referred to as "performative spaces." In alignment with performance ethnography, my methods were: *co-performance*, *interviews*, *reflexive journaling*, and a *focus group*. This study involved the following steps: Specifically, I thought about the outdoor field as a stage and the interactions like a piece of theatre. I went on 1-on-1 outdoor adventures with five male community members on the stage in Brevard (Stage 1), captured the outdoor activity data using techniques of co-performance, capturing those interactions via Go-Pro, used a reflexive journal to capture my insights about the activity (Intermission), and finally gathered the men who participate for a focus group (Stage 2)..

Stage 1: I went on day-long outdoor activities with each participant one-on-one. I engaged with my fellow collaborative researcher while using the method of *co-performance* (Conquergood, 1991) I took a Go-Pro camera into these performative spaces to support my performance and observations. Throughout the day, I used *interviews* (Lynch, 2020) to discuss

topics of masculinity. In these interviews, I recorded with the Go-Pro and asked multiple interview questions that will be discussed later in this document.

Intermission: After each 1-on-1 day with individual participants, I reflexively journaled about the ways in which we both performed masculinity in the performance spaces.

Stage 2: The research collaborators and I gathered in a *focus group* after completing the one-on-one day-long engagements in performative spaces. The focus group was structured with discussion topics based on themes from the *interviews*. In the focus group, participants discussed topics around masculinity within the outdoor field of Brevard, North Carolina.

In sum, the methods I selected for this study were 1) *co-performance, 2) interviewing*, 3) *reflexive journaling* and 4) a *focus group.* The section below will look more intentionally at the process of each proposed method.

Co -Performance

This study used co-performance as a method of data generation. A co performance in this setting is explained as a performance that demands the researcher's body to be present and active in its meaning (Conquergood, 1991; Madison, 2006). Conquergood was adamant that an observatory stance (often called, "participant observation") continued to develop a sense of "othering" in a performance ethnography (Madison, 2006). I (author 1) co-performed my masculinities throughout the day with each participant on our 1-on-1 outdoor trips and used a Go-Pro in these performative spaces to catalog our physical co-performances and the spaces themselves.

Interviews

Specific to this study my interview formatting was influenced by mobile interviewing (Lynch, 2020). This is a unique variation associating an interview space with movement. Mobile interviewing looked like participating in outdoor recreation alongside my research collaborators

in which we performed our masculinities. In this study, examples of interview questions asked during the performative spaces were:

Tell me about a time you were masculine in the outdoors?
Tell me what it's like to be competitive as a male?
What pressures do you feel as a male in outdoor spaces?

These are a few questions asked and many were expanded with an ethnographic approach.

Participation and competency as a researcher in these outdoor activities was essential; and vital elements of this research. An ability to "hold my own" in these spaces built more genuine rapport and expressed commonalities in performances. Therefore, I chose this specific method because many of the spaces represent masculine performativity and because I perform my masculinity in these spaces.

As a collaborative member of this research, I performed my ideation of masculinity by working towards a certain level of competency in these outdoor activity spaces. I also become equipped to perform appropriate gender norms within the unique cultures inherent to these activities. These important details inherent to mobile interviewing encouraged my fellow research participants to engage more fully in the process (Greenwood et al., 1993).

As with the co-performances, the interviewing sessions were recorded with a Go-Pro. These recordings captured the physical space, dialogue, and structured interviews. The topics and themes delivered from the co-performances, Go-Pro footage, and the interview sessions were brought into the focus groups to discuss commonalities, differences, and themes experienced.

Focus Group

A focus group provided a voice and a community for all associated with this study. A foundational strength of focus groups is that this method is socially-oriented and has the potential for unique learning from participants in a communal atmosphere (Marshall et al., 2022). Focus groups typically comprise a maximum of 10 and a minimum of 4 and are typically selected because they share similar characteristics relevant to the study and research question (Marshall et al., 2022). My sample size of 5 was manageable for collecting purposeful conversation and in-depth field notes, resulting in a powerful focus group.

Peek and Fothergill (2009) suggest that focus groups can foster a social support network for participants. This support network has the potential to encourage critical thinking about how we, as a group of men, are interacting with the natural world and the other users in it. As another effort to promote collaboration, each member contributed one question to the focus group session. This intentional support network had the power to liberate fellow male users from harmful narratives of masculinity in Brevard's outdoor field. As the primary investigator of this study, I provided my discussion prompts, similarly to my peers, along with an extra set of backup questions in case the conversation needed to be bolstered or redirected. Specifically some of the focus group questions I created were:

What does masculinity mean to you/y'all?
What is the difference between being a man and being masculine?
What do you assume are overlapping performances of masculinity within the performative spaces experienced?
What is the pressure of being a male in the outdoor field of Brevard, North Carolina? Where are they coming from?

A deeper dive into all-male focus groups creates fascinating dynamics of face-to-face research. An all-male group can act as an obstacle when trying to connect emotionally based on gendered performances (Flood, 2013). However, an all-male group can lend itself to a very deep richness of data that explores men and gender (Flood, 2013). This potential richness motivated me to create a community space for these fellow men via a focus group. In Flood's (2013) study, he participated in focus groups with all-male populations. Flood (2013) emphasizes matching participants with similar class, race, gender relations, interests, and hobbies, which is often advocated in qualitative methods, as a way to minimize power inequity and an increased empathy and rapport tactic. I determined a select group of men with similar characteristics and attributes to participate in this study.

Data Representation

I used **C**reative **A**nalytic **P**ractice (CAP) to represent my data through Go-Pro footage. Specifically, I thought about Brevard's outdoor field as a stage and the interactions like a piece of theatre. I went on 1-on-1 outdoor adventures with five male community members on the stage in Brevard (Stage 1), captured the outdoor activity data using techniques of participant observation, capturing those interactions via Go-Pro, used a reflexive journal to capture my insights about the activity (Intermission), and finally gathered the men who participated for a focus group (Stage 2). CAP is a process that can express and promote what one has learned through a creative platform like poems, plays, visual techniques, etc. (Parry & Johnson, 2007). In this study, I used CAP to represent my data through narratives that include an amalgamation of the collected data. Creative Analytic Practice is well suited for work that provides the context of lived experiences and the intricacies of life and leisure (Parry & Johnson, 2007). Specifically, in my study, the lives of my fellow researchers and their perceptions or performances of

masculinity displayed the current climate of gender performativity in Brevard's outdoor field. The most useful data for CAP was collecting data with the end goal of creative representation (Berbary, 2015). I compiled video footage over the course of these 1-on-1 moments and of the focus group. At the conclusion of filming, I compiled the footage into a video that is an expressive representation of qualitative data being used to highlight the experiences of six men, including myself, in Brevard's outdoor field. The findings of this video highlight the role of competition we experienced, and generally positive male connection occurring in the outdoors. I used CAP to represent my data in a way that aligns with and represents entire presentations not just texts.

The use of visual data for representation has been done in the past. Spencer & Paisley (2013) conducted a duoethnography regarding performances of femininity in leisure spaces when watching the reality show, *The Bachelor*. Spencer and Paisley recorded themselves watching the show, and then reflexively documented the happenings after watching the episode. Spencer and Paisley's usage of CAP, video recordings, and reflexive writing displays their voices being present and necessary in their research (Spencer & Paisley, 2013). In another study, Berbary represents her data regarding a Southern White sorority girl's experience in a dialogue including fictionalized themes told in story form. Berbary's usage of CAP to represent her data emphasizes the many creative and unique ways to soften the academic voice associated with the research realm.

Trustworthiness and Validity

CAP is a way in which the author analyzes themselves and the world around them to gain a broader understanding (Spencer & Paisley, 2013). Richardson (1993, 2000) views CAP as a unique way to literally do reflexivity. Due to the immersive nature of a performance

ethnography, viewed through a CAP lens, a series of questions to justify trustworthiness and validity is imperative. These questions are both for the researcher, reader, and potential “Other” associated within a study. A performance ethnography guided by a CAP approach demands unique guiding processes due to on its critical and post-structural position. Berbary (2015) in association with Richardson (2000, p.254) provide these eight themes and subsequent questions, which are:

1. “**Substantive contribution**: Does this piece contribute to our understanding of social life?” (Richardson, 2000, p.254)
2. “**Aesthetic merit:** Does this piece succeed aesthetically? Is this text artistically shaped, satisfying, complex, and not boring?” (Richardson, 2000, p.254)
3. “**Reflexivity**: How did the author come to write this? How was the information gathered? Ethical issues? Is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgements about the point of view?” ((Richardson, 2000, p.254)
4. “**Impact**: Does this affect me? Emotionally? Intellectually? Generate new questions? Move me to write? Move me to try new research practices? Move me to action?” (Richardson, 2000, p.254)
5. “**Express a reality:** Does this text embody a fleshed-out embodied sense of lived experience? Does it seem “true”—a credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the “real”?” (Richardson, 2000, p.254)
6. “**Rigorous Data Collection:** Was the data collected in a way that can be documented? Has the researcher considered alternative, creative, and/or arts-based data collection procedures? Is the data rich enough for thick description and robust context?” (Berbary, 2015, p. 41).

7. “**Onto-epistemological and theoretical sense:** Is CAP the most useful for the researcher’s purpose, ability, preference, and audience? Does it align with the underlying philosophies of the research? If not, has the researcher explained these tensions?” (Berbary, 2015, p. 41).
8. “**Genre “Props”:** Is the representation respectful of the traditions of a certain genre? Would artists in that genre positively evaluate your use of it? If the researcher departs dramatically from typical expectations for a genre, do they explain this choice and rationale?” (Berbary, 2015, p. 41).

Berbary (2015), suggests CAP representation engages multiple overlapping ideas and makes room for new and unique ways to display research. Therefore, old “traditional” ways checking validity and trustworthiness are not applicable in a CAP setting.

Data Analysis

My data analysis felt unique, I went through and reviewed all recorded camera footage at the conclusion of each day. I would reflexively journal each night after uploading my Go-pro footage. Journaling abundantly at the conclusion of each research block provided crucial guidance to produce the video with both a critical and creative lens. The video analysis included categorizing each person’s interviews into sections. Once this step was done, I was able to largely theme out some of the interview answers and place them into categorizes. Examples of these categories were: Hypermasculine Approaches to Outdoors, Professionalism in the Outdoor Field, and The Role of Competition among Men in the Outdoors.

Once these categories were adequately fulfilled with interview data, I began to create my video. Throughout my video editing process, I chose to compile data that is representative of the theme: The Role of Competition among Men in the Outdoors. This video creation process

provided me with a rich understanding of my data itself. Consistently interacting with my data in this form provided me with the creativity and freedom to plot a unique storyline embedded in the video.

Later, I conducted a focus group. At the time of my focus group, I was still not certain of all the themes within my collected video data. A result of the unknown themes was the focus group acted more as a connection space, than it did a data gathering moment. Our focus group lasted 2.5 hours and was filled with conversation and connection, recorded via Go-Pro. I feel strongly that this space was crucial for the overall ethos of this project. It provided a space for six men, including myself, to connect.

The space that was created and held is representative of the feminist underpinnings of this study. We, a group of men, were able to connect in wholesome and direct conversations. There is a unique bond existing with all six of us that now holds its own power and support. I am now keenly aware of how CAP as a process entangles the researcher in a unique way. My connection to my data provided me with the ability to critically and creatively develop my results.

The results of this study were shared with the group after this project. This research group has the power to continue to be a supportive communal group. The results created a community for men in Brevard's outdoor field. This group can continue to act as a support system in the promotion of healthy performances of masculinity. A healthy promotion of masculinity within Brevard's outdoor field is rippling outward into the greater community to evoke more positive gender performativity, specifically in cis-gender males performing masculinity.

CHAPTER FOUR: MANUSCRIPT THESIS OPTION

Per the Western Carolina University Experiential and Outdoor Education Handbook, I have chosen to complete the manuscript thesis format option. This option requires Chapters One, Two, and Three plus a full-length journal manuscript formatted to the requirements of a specific journal. The following chapter contains my complete manuscript, which I have chosen to submit to the Journal of *Gender, Place*, and *Culture*. This journal requires authors to submit a manuscript of up to 9,000 words and written in APA format. Please note that the journal requests images are placed within the document where referenced.

"MAN UP, BRO!" AN EXPLORATION OF MASCULINE PERFORMANCES IN THE OUTDOOR ADVENTURE FIELD.

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ABSTRACT

Masculinity is constructed and reinforced through interaction instead of passively internalized (Connell, 2006). The "space" of the outdoors is predominately regarded in the popular psyche as a *male* space (Kimmel, 1995; Newberry, 2003 & 2004; Warren, 2016). Societal expectations of men can produce harmful performances and representations of masculinity and can be detrimental to men, women, and non-binary individuals as they limit the "correct" ways to perform masculinity. Using feminist theory and performance ethnography, the purpose of this study was to explore how men perform masculinity in the outdoors. I asked two research questions to influence my study: (1) How do men in the field of the outdoors perform masculinities? and (2) How do these performances resist, reinforce, or repurpose dominant narratives of masculinity? Methodologically, Diawara (1996), suggests that performance ethnography explores the communicative actions within specific spaces. In alignment with performance ethnography, my methods were a co-performance, interviews, reflexive journaling and a focus group. There were three distinct results in this study. First, a video that is an expressive representation of qualitative data being used to highlight the experiences of six men, including myself, in the outdoor field. Second, a discussion of a social script that looks closely at how masculinity is showing up through competency in outdoor activities. And third, the review of a social script entangled in, masculinity, competition, neoliberalism, and capitalism among men in the outdoors. Throughout this paper the entanglement of masculinity and the outdoor adventure field are explored.

Keywords: masculinity, performances, outdoors, performance ethnography

Introduction

My comrades, also wilderness therapy guides, crushed the frozen southern Utah snow as they began making breakfast consisting of ramen and coffee with slabs of butter; a bit barbaric, just as intended. Each morning we laughed and connected over the survival of the cold night and discuss the facts of life, nature, and our previous lives. Specifically, John cheated death from cancer, spoke on his LSD-induced free solo experiences, and endured a life of epilepsy. Eric discussed music festivals, his tumultuous relationship with his dad, and how he and his brother had grown stronger from a strained household. My offering was about my previous life as a "frat bro" and how too much substance consumption and poor decisions had temporarily ruined my life.

The vulnerable and emotional connection with these men had formed over five weeks; we had spent 36 intermittent days working physically, emotionally, and spiritually alongside one another. Early morning chats around a smoky pine-fueled fire, anxious glancing exchanges throughout the day, and laughing under the evening stars solidified our unique bond as a united band of wilderness therapy guides. Each time I would leave the desert, I felt a void. The desert was "safe", non-judgmental, calm; different. I craved the male emotional nourishment found in the expansive wild spaces. I would return to the wild, rugged mountains of Telluride to share the harrowing tales of my weeks in the field. The mountains of Telluride were wild, harsh, socially demanding, and burdening. As we partied in a ski town during winter, we spent our nights shacked up in a sticky knock-off Irish pub, having bro talk about peaks we'd bagged, runs we'd skied, and girls we wanted. In moments of clarity, I craved the desert magic that supported genuine male connection, a brotherhood. This feeling of deep connection is a rarity among men in the outdoors. I feel lucky to have experienced it.

In the wilderness of Utah, I experienced gentle, supportive, and vulnerable forms of masculinity, from both me and others. However, I have many stories where I did not experience or perform masculinity in that way in the outdoors. It has been far too familiar for me (as well as my male friends) to perform in hypermasculine ways while engaging in outdoor activities and with each other in outdoor spaces. Prescribed gender roles and societal norms, particularly about how a man *should* be/do "masculine" have the potential to construct how people enter social spaces and can shape the space itself (Connell, 2005). For example, "the outdoors" as a space, "outdoor adventure activities" as recreational pursuits, and "masculine" as a way of performing one's gender are all inextricably tied to one another. Reciprocally, what it means to be "outdoorsy" can often be linked to traditional tropes of masculinity such as being "rugged" and being emotionally stoic. Societal expectations of men can produce harmful performances and representations of masculinity. These performances can be detrimental to men , women, and non-binary individuals (making the outdoors less accessible), and nature (a dominant mindset that negatively impacts the natural world), as it limits the "correct" ways to perform their gender. If outdoor users can review and repurpose socially "correct" ways to perform our genders within outdoor spaces, hegemonic structures, narratives, and undertones present in outdoor spaces can be challenged and possibly even dissolved. In order for there to be room to challenge these structures of power the resistance must continue to be developed top down. The spaces power holders must be involved in the change. As men continue to repurpose the "correct" ways of doing their gender, continued space for non-traditional performances of gender can be more readily welcomed.

A clear need exists within the outdoor field to work towards making the outdoors a more equitable space for folx who identify as female and non-binary (Kennedy, 2023). The outdoor

field is comprised of unique sub-industries within the outdoors, such as outdoor education, adventure education, experiential education, and environmental education (Dyment & Potter, 2015), and others, such as outfitter and outdoor gear/apparel stores. This definition of "outdoor field" (Dyment & Potter), is a nebulas idea, and I am including each of the previously mentioned sub-industries in my meaning of "outdoor field". Specifically when discussing the outdoor field I am focusing on outdoor adventure and recreation, as the "outdoor field." One way to make the outdoors become more equitable is by understanding the ways men perform their masculinities while participating in outdoor adventure activities. A "crack" in the dominant masculine narratives could also make space for more gender performances making outdoor adventure activities feel more welcoming for men, women, and non-binary individuals.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how men are performing masculinities in outdoor spaces in relation to dominant narratives of masculinity. My two research questions were:

1) How do men in the outdoor field perform masculinities?

2) How do these performances resist, reinforce, or repurpose dominant narratives of masculinity?

Before I expound on some of the narratives of men in the outdoor field, a review of the literature on masculinity and gender notes specifically how both are performed and socially constructed.

Literature Review

There is an abundance of literature surrounding the history and role of masculinity within the outdoors. These theories associated with gender and feminist studies guide both my understanding and approach to these topics, as well as my methodology and methods,

necessitating a discussion of performance theory, gender performance, gender as a social construct, and the dominant scripts of masculinity.

History of Masculinity Outdoors

The inseparable relationship between the outdoors and masculinity has been long-standing within the literature (Humberstone, 2000; Jordan, 1992). Historically in Westernized culture and literature the outdoors has been understood as a masculine-dominated space (Kimmel, 1995; Newberry, 2003 &2004; Warren, 2016). Men in these spaces, and their lives as a whole, are commonly encouraged to be bold and aggressive (Warren, 1985), resulting in men commonly promoting their masculinity by conquering and taming the outdoors (Cronon, 1996; Godtman et al., 2020; Kinnaird & Hall, 1994). Fundamental expectations of men expose the intertwined relationship between masculinity and outdoor spaces.

The idea in popular psyche of a “rugged male” creates hazy images of a bearded lumber-jack type. This male archetype, a Paul Bunyon-esque individual, will chop a month’s wood supply, climb a mountain, harvest a deer, trim his beard, and take his photo before his handmade log cabin, all before breakfast. Men participating in outdoor adventure spaces are often expected to “bag some peaks,” “stomp a jump,” “send it,” “huck-it,” and “crush” the natural world around them as they conquer outdoor spaces. Some men continue to advance these archetypes of masculinity by *embracing* conquering and dominating narratives, rooted deeply in outdoor spaces, as displayed by the men before them (Peter, 1993). Others then, are defending their performances of masculinity (that perhaps look more feminine), trying to uphold societal standards expected of them. Leisure spaces, such as the outdoors, act as a site that reproduces masculinity (Johnson et al., 2008). The societal pressure of traditional masculinity conveys messages that men should inherently be associated with wild places. Importantly, one way that

men continue to promote and reinforce societal standards associated with masculinities in outdoor spaces is through competition. Before unpacking competition and masculine performances, it is important to understand *gender* and *masculinity* as social constructs.

Gender & Masculinity Defined

Simone de Beauvoir (2011) best summarizes the social construct of gender by stating, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (p.283). Although this quote pertains to women, de Beauvoir indicated that gender is something acquired or achieved. It is not something one *is* but something instead that one *does*. In this research, *masculinity* (a performance associated with gender) includes "the roles, behaviors, and attributes that are considered appropriate for boys and men in a given society" (Hubbard & Greig, 2020, p.2). Johnson and Cousineau (2018) further elaborate on masculinity as a practice being expressed through body, personality, and culture. It is common for masculinity to be paired with male biology (such as having a penis and certain levels of testosterone) (Connell, 2005), though this is not a requirement; a biological female can perform in a masculine way just as a biological male can. Masculinity, like gender, is performed, or as Butler (1988) argues, is *performative*, meaning that the performance of masculinity literally makes one a "man." Judith Butler (1988) discusses gender performativity and suggests:

> The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again (p. 526).

Butler's (1988) logic suggests that the performance of masculinity from men is socially prescribed and learned through exposure to male spaces. Examples of traditional male spaces are golf clubs, weight rooms, bars, hardware stores, climbing gyms; a designed place for men to

occupy. Not only are these spaces for men to occupy, they also act as a stage for men to perform their gender; to perform their masculinities. These spaces are stages where men are expected and encouraged to perform in particular ways. Connell (2005) affirms that preconceived exposure to gender roles and societal norms can potentially construct how people enter social spaces. Men with the intention to perform their masculinity "correctly" are playing the roles that are expected of them societally (protector, provider, stoic, tough, physically strong).

Competition and Masculinity

An extension of Connell's (2005) significant work on hegemony suggests that masculine archetypes, such as toughness, emotional stoicism, violence, competitiveness, etc. are associated with overrepresented male spaces or hypermasculine terrain. "The great outdoors" is riddled with hegemonic tropes associated with outdoor spaces and gendered terrain (Kimmel, 1995; Newberry, 2003 & 2004; Warren, 2016). Many outdoor spaces such as climbing, mountain biking, and hiking, (Outdoor Foundation, 2022), are rising in their overall gender participation percentages, which can create a more gender-neutral space. These spaces are developing into more gender- neutral terrain. Yet, some outdoor activities have potentially created a "residual" male space. Specifically, outdoor adventure activities have over time developed into a masculine-rich social enclave (Matthews & Channon, 2014). This means that pockets of outdoor adventure activities can harbor specific acceptable behaviors and instances. Cashdan (1998) suggest that men are socialized to be more competitive than women. This would be considered a masculine trope; men are expected to be competitive.

Dominant Scripts of Masculinity in the Outdoors

What are social scripts? Goffman (1959) suggests performances are "scripted" meaning there is a specific adherence to a prewritten script. In other words, "One learns through

performing, then performs the understanding so gained" (Turner, 1982, p. 94). Conquergood (1991), suggests that these performances and a framing of "doing" can reveal intricate representations of performances embedded into cultures and spaces. Furthermore, if the outdoors are viewed as a "setting" or stage, it is important to understand how the actors are performing on this stage or in this setting.

The "setting" or "stage" has been designed by those who primarily exist within the space (Conquergood, 1991). We know from the literature and lived experience, the outdoors is predominately male, and has a historical development by men and for men. Therefore, the "setting" and "script" of the outdoors have been written and influenced by men, and for men. A "setting" and "script" must be occupied by performers, who are capable of reading it. In this study I explored how men perform their masculinities in the outdoors.

Commonly Performed Social Scripts in the Outdoors

Social script 1: men's domination in the outdoors. Conquest tendencies have been and are continuing to stem from the outdoor adventure field (Hall, 2011). Men's desire to dominate in outdoor spaces can be directly tied to a notion of conquest. The lineage of this "conquest" is primarily stemming from settler colonialism (DeBrew et al., 2024, Hall, 2011). More so, settler colonialism is historically an oppressive system stained by westward expansion and the actions of removing indigenous communities (Hixson, 2013). Debrew and colleuges (2024) continues to contend that outdoor adventure experiences are commonly associated with social privilege (Beames, et al., 2019; Finney, 2014; Taylor et al.,2021), and an individualistic approach (Roberts, 2012; Roberts, 2018). These characteristics, such as "individualism" (Bazzi et al., 2017), and "social privilege" (Matthews & Channon, 2014), are commonly tied to conquest in outdoor spaces and are also common tropes associated with men and their performances of

masculinity. Continued interest in these performed social scripts with men in outdoor spaces can continue to develop a repurposing or resistance to these normative scripts. Next, reviewing performance theory will re-emphasize how performances can be socially impactful.

Performance Theory

Goffman's (1959) performance theory metaphors the world as a theatrical production to explain the world's social interactions. A given social front tends to become institutionalized in terms of the abstract stereotyped expectations to which it gives rise, and tends to take on a meaning and stability apart from the specific tasks which happen at the time to be performed in its name. The front becomes a "collective representation" and a fact in its own right.(Goffman, 1959, p.27)

These performances happen in two main areas: "front-stage "and "backstage." Front-stage performances occur when others are watching (Cole, 2021). Front-stage behavior is commonly influenced by culture and people's acceptance. "Backstage" performances arise when no audience is present or there is reduced pressure to perform specific actions associated with cultural norms. People performing backstage are less worried about how they are being perceived (Cole, 2021). It is common and expected for a person to keep their "front-stage" performances separate from their "backstage" life (Cole, 2021). An example from Goffman includes thinking about the life of a waiter/waitress. The waitress or waiter acts a specific way in front of a customer and acts another way once they are back behind the closed "employees only" door. The "front-stage" is interacting and serving guests and the "backstage" is the "employee-only" space. Naturally in this example, the waitress/waiter feels more comfortable to refrain from performing their act when not around the "audience," or customer. Goffman's performance theory can also be applied to the performance of gender.

Goffman’s ideas around performance imply that social actions eventually can socially solidify and institutionalize if they are continuously performed. For example, how men should be expected to perform their masculinity in the outdoors. In this study, I used performance theory to explore how men perform masculinity in outdoor spaces in relation to dominant narratives of masculinity. Goffman’s performance theory can also be applied to the performance of gender.

Performance Theory & Gender

Butler (1988) states, “It seems fair to say that certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in way.” (p.527). Similar to Butler, West and Zimmerman (1987) state, “A person’s gender is not simply an aspect of what one is, but, more fundamentally, it is something that one does, and does recurrently, in interaction with others’ (p.140). Specifically with gender, performances are “scripted” meaning there is a specific way (that is socially “acceptable”) to “do” masculinity, and when done “correctly” reciprocally supports and reinforces the institutionalized power of gender.

Turner suggests that performances are watched, learned, and practiced, creating a cycle of performances. Both historically and currently, performances associated with outdoor adventure spaces are entangled with male performances that embrace traditional tropes of masculinity. A cycle commonly continues forward because men are continuing to be the dominant influencers within these outdoor spaces. Dominant narratives of masculinity are being performed in the outdoor field. “Displaying performance competence is central to all communication marked as a performance” (Bell, 2008, p. 32). Additionally, the cycle is reciprocated because men, and other users are having to adhere to a specific social script. This social script commonly supports male archetypes within the outdoors. In order to fit into many of

these spaces performances are following the guidelines of learned masculinity inherent to these spaces. This adherence and cyclical performances led me to engage in this study.

Methodology and Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore how men are performing masculinities in outdoor spaces in relation to dominant narratives of masculinity. The research questions were:

1) How do men in the outdoor field perform masculinities?

2) How do these performances resist, reinforce, or repurpose dominant narratives of masculinity?

To address these questions, I (author 1) performed a critical study of men and masculinity. Specifically, I used performance ethnography as my methodology. My methods included a co-performance, interviews, reflexive journaling, and a focus group. I conducted this study with men located and working in Brevard, North Carolina's outdoor community.

Methodology: Performance Ethnography

Performance ethnography is concerned with people's ways of communication. Diawara (1996) suggests that performance ethnography explores the communicative actions within specific spaces. Performance ethnography "privileges the body as a site of knowing" (Conquergood, 1991, p.351). Gender is something we perform (Butler, 1988; Goffman, 1959) daily with our bodies. In order to understand how men perform masculinities in outdoor spaces, performance ethnography is a strong methodology for this study. Specifically, for this study performance ethnography is used to explore and further understand the intricate tendencies of men to perform their gender. Performance ethnography is established under the guidance that "bodies harbor knowledge about culture, and that performances allows for the exchange of that knowledge across bodies." (Jones, 2006, p.339). Additionally, performance ethnography

originated from a turn in social sciences (Denzin, 2018) providing a venue to challenge sources of power (Madison, 2006) and to think more critically about societal norms. Therefore, it has allowed for me to do critical work as well. Critical work for me has come in the form of self-analysis and critique on how I personally choose to perform and represent my masculinities when in outdoor adventure spaces.

Population and Venue Selection

My specific population was based on a convenience sample (Stratton, 2021) of five men. The individuals who were selected for this study are community members of Brevard who self-identify as men, are at least 18 and have been participating in professional outdoor recreation for more than two years. Brevard is a unique physical space for this study to take place. A few reasons why is because of its geographic location. Brevard is an outdoor mecca surrounded by rural Appalachia. Brevard's culture is influenced by rural North Carolina heritage, and the sprawling city culture of Asheville and Greenville to the north and south. Apart of the town's overall outdoor ethos is it's "old-school" approach to the outdoors. Examples of this "old-school" mentality are seen in multiple outdoor adventure activities, like climbing, white-water boating, and mountain biking. This "old-school" approach to the outdoors plays a key role in how men are choosing to perform their masculinities. The ethos of the town and its activities can be overlayed to gender performances as well. The "old school" ethos is what makes Brevard such a unique place for this study to occur. Throughout this study I refer to my fellow researchers as co-performers (Conquergood, 1991). We partook in the participants most skilled outdoor activity, as indicated in the table below:

Table 1: Population Selection.

Name	Age	Preferred Outdoor Activity	Outdoor Recreation based Profession
Chris	24	White Water Paddling	Summer Camp Professional
Ezekiel	30	Rock Climbing	Summer Camp Professional
Jason	24	Fly-Fishing	Fly- fishing Guide
Griffin	27	Hiking	Semester School Teacher
Lucas	25	Mountain Biking	Bike Sales Manager

Methods of Data Generation

In alignment with performance ethnography, my methods were a co-performance (Conquergood, 1991), interviews (Lynch, 2020), reflexive journaling (Ortlipp, 2018), and a focus group (Peek & Fothergill, 2009). After obtaining institutional IRB approval and all participant consent, I began this study. I provide an overview of the methods organized in the three acts below.

Methods overview. Act 1: I viewed the outdoor field as a stage and the social interactions as a piece of theatre. I organized 1-on-1 outdoor adventures with five male community members in Brevard, captured the outdoor activity data using techniques of a co-performance via Go-Pro, and conducted interviews. The first two methods implemented were a co-performance and interviews and will be unpacked below.

Co -performance. This study used co-performance as a method of data generation. A co performance in this setting is explained as a performance that demands the researcher's body to be present and active in its meaning (Conquergood, 1991; Madison, 2006). Conquergood was

adamant that an observatory stance (often called, “participant observation”) continued to develop a sense of “othering” in a performance ethnography (Madison, 2006). I (author 1) co-performed my masculinities throughout the day with each participant on our 1-on-1 outdoor trips and used a Go-Pro in these performative spaces to catalog our physical co-performances and the spaces themselves.

Interviews. Specific to this study my interview formatting was influenced by mobile interviewing (Lynch, 2020). This is a unique variation associating an interview space with movement. Mobile interviewing looked like participating in outdoor recreation alongside my research collaborators in which we performed our masculinities. In this study, examples of the mobile interview questions asked in the performative spaces were:

Table A1: Interview Questions.

Tell me about a time you were masculine in the outdoors?
Tell me what it’s like to be competitive as a male?
What pressures do you feel as a male in outdoor spaces?

These are a few questions I asked and many were expanded upon organically, in alignment with an ethnographic approach.

As with the co-performances, the interviewing sessions were recorded with a Go-Pro. These recordings captured the physical space, physical performances and dialogue during the structured interviews. The topics and themes delivered from the co-performances, Go-Pro footage, and the interview sessions were brought into the focus groups to discuss commonalities, differences, and themes experienced. Next I will discuss the intermission phase of this study, which included reflexive journaling as the implemented method.

Intermission: Reflexive journaling. Reflexive journaling was the intermission phase of this study and was crucial. Not only did it provide me with consistent handrails when wading through my data, it has also provided a space to create with a critical lens. Ortlipp (2008), suggests that a reflexive journal can be a tool for novice researcher when navigating and reshaping their analysis. Similar to Ortlipp (2008), I intentionally used my reflexive journaling as a tool to provide an unfiltered space to note my reactions and thoughts on the experiences, performances, and meanings. Journal entries provided a critical and raw analysis of my gathered data (and became data themselves). I reviewed each videoed co-performance and interview data set and reflexively journaled with the prompts of:

Table 2: Reflexive Journaling Prompts.

How did I perform my masculinity today in this space?
How was masculinity resisted?
How was masculinity reinforced?
How was masculinity repurposed?

Focus Group: Act 2: I gathered the five research collaborators in a focus group. Throughout this focus group session we connected over shared experiences within the bounds of this study and in broader every day experiences.

A focus group provided a voice and a community for all associated with the proposed study. A foundational strength of focus groups is that this method is socially-oriented and has the potential for unique learning from participants in a communal atmosphere (Marshall et al., 2022). This intentional support network and group size provided the space and power to potentially liberate fellow male users from harmful narratives of masculinity in Brevard's outdoor field.

As the primary investigator of this study, I provided multiple discussion prompts. Similarly, my peers also contributed at least one personal discussion prompt. Some of the focus group questions created were:

Table A2: Focus Group Prompts.

What does masculinity mean to you/y'all?
What is the difference between being a man and being masculine?
In what outdoor space did you experience the most transformation in your personal performance of masculinity?
At what point can an individual surpass the stereotypical expectations of society to be masculine?

In sum, the methods I selected for this proposed study were 1) *co-performance, 2) interviewing*, 3) *reflexive journaling* and 4) a *focus group.* The section below will look more intentionally at the process of each proposed method.

Data Analysis and Representation

Representation. In this study, I used Creative Analytic Process (CAP) to represent my data through a video, narratives, and reflexive journaling. CAP is a process that can express and promote what one has learned through a creative platform like poems, plays, visual techniques, etc. (Parry & Johnson, 2007). In this study, I used CAP to represent my data through a video, narratives, and reflexive journaling. Creative Analytic Practice is well suited for work that provides the context of lived experiences and the intricacies of life and leisure (Parry & Johnson, 2007). Specifically, my co-performers and I performed our masculinities in a variety of ways, in order to represent embodied performances as "results" CAP provided the most freedom to do so.

Data analysis through CAP. My data generation took several different forms throughout this research project. I engaged in interviews with my co-performers in outdoor spaces,

reflexively journaled, and conducted a focus group. My data analysis process began with reviewing all recorded camera footage at the conclusion of each day. I would then reflexively journal each night after uploading and re-watching my Go-pro footage. In addition to re-watching and writing as a way of doing data analysis, I also compiled a video compilation of the results. The process of creating this video was central to the data analysis process. Journaling abundantly at the conclusion of each research block provided crucial guidance to produce the video with both a critical and creative lens (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). The video analysis included categorizing each person's interviews into sections. Once this step was done, I was able to largely theme out some of the answers and place them into categorizes using cultural intuition. Cultural intuition is a researcher's unique sensitivity to a study's data. (Bernal, 1998; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Rocha et al., 2016). Cultural intuition and a witnessed sense of urgency or buy-in around specific topics, in both the performative spaces and the focus group, led to the categorization of specific topics. Examples of these categories were: Hypermasculine Approaches to Outdoors, Professionalism in the Outdoor Field, and The Role of Competition among Men in the Outdoors. Throughout my video editing process, I chose to compile data that is representative of the theme: The Role of Competition among Men in the Outdoors. This video creation process provided me with a rich understanding of my data itself. Consistently interacting with my data in this form provided me with the creativity and freedom to plot a unique storyline embedded in the video.

Later, I conducted a focus group. At the time of my focus group, I was still not certain of the themes within my collected video data. A result of this was the focus group acted more as a connection space, than it did a data gathering moment. Our focus group lasted 2.5 hours and was filled with conversation and connection, recorded via Go-Pro. I feel strongly that this space was

crucial for the overall ethos of this project. It provided a space for six men, including myself, to connect.

The space that was created and held is representative of the feminist underpinnings of this study. We, a group of men, were able to connect in wholesome and direct conversations. There is a unique bond existing with all six of us that now holds its own power and support. I am now keenly aware of how CAP as a process entangles the researcher in a unique way. My connection to my data provided me with the ability to critically and creatively develop my results. Therefore, in the next section, my results, I represent my data through CAP in three instances:

- Through a video The Role of Competition Among Men in the Outdoors. This video is an expressive representation of qualitative data being used to highlight the experiences of six men, including myself, in Brevard's outdoor field. The findings of this video highlight the role of competition we experienced, and generally positive male connection occurring in the outdoors.

- A social script titled: Masculinity as Performed Competence. In this section of my results I look closely at how masculinity is showing up through "competency" in outdoor activities.

- A social script titled: A Competitive Script-Scoreboard Mentality. In this section I review my video to see how instances of competition directly showed up and were captured on camera. The review of this social script highlights the entanglement of masculinity, competition, neoliberalism, and capitalism among men in the outdoors.

The video and the scripts explored below are analyzed by social theory, relevant literature and cultural intuition as an ethnographer. Lastly, it is within the viewers responsibility to interrogate, resist, or inquire their own meanings from this content (Hamera, 2011).

Results and Discussion

Video Results:

The Role of Competition Among Men in the Outdoors.

This video depicts a compilation of performances from the five days in the field and will be referred to in the following two sections. As performance ethnography points to embodied knowledges it is important to view this video first before engaging with the text below.

Social Script 1 : Masculinity as Performed Competence

Reflexive Journal Narrative: I roped up and glanced upward. My hands and feet met the rock face. A few feet off the ground the bolt felt higher than usual. Although the climbing was easy my palms started to sweat. I slugged up the North Carolina slab. Damn, I wish I had brought some chalk. I decided to start the day on the hardest of the three routes. Was I trying to make a statement...? I kind of wanted to go ahead and get the harder one done... but I also kind of felt like it was a power move...? I finally reached up and clipped the first bolt smiling down at Ezekiel to make sure he saw that I was clipped in. As I moved up the sparsely bolted run out, I placed a few cams in the wall. Once I made it to the top, I looked back over the view of Pisgah; the fall colors were something special. As I was lowered to the ground, I left the pieces of trad gear in the wall for Ezekiel. As I got myself situated, Ezekiel pulled the rope, and began to tie in. I unlaced my shoes and without making eye contact and awkwardly asked him, "Do you feel good about cleaning the route?" I'm glad I left those cams up there… a little sketchier than I remember. Why did this last question feel so awkward? An infringement on another guy's

physical or technical competency, I would never…except maybe a little? I wanna make sure he is safe up there. He's only clipped into one spot, its fine; but two is "safer"… it should be two… he should really clip into the master point…. I should just let it slide, it's against "bro-code" to call him out… what a delicate balance.

Performing "as" Competent vs: Performing Competence

A social script delivered in this study was masculinity showing up as, "performing competent" and "performing as competent." Hanging critically onto one key difference in these comparisons, the word "as." In this study, competency showed up in two intertwined ways, physically and technically (demonstrating knowledge/skill).

In the climbing portion of my study, with Ezekiel, the performance itself is us climbing. As he is climbing I am a viewer, or an audience member. As, an audience member, I am trying to figure out if Ezekiel is, in fact, competent, as a climber. This is where the script really gets rich. Ezekiel's scripted performance led me as an audience member to *believe* in his role, performing competence as a climber. His representations as a performer, his clothes, his shoes, his language, his demeanor, all of these moments are a part of the script; they are a part of the role, these are "means of symbolic production" (Alexander, 2011, p.83). These "means of symbolic production" (Alexander, 2011, p.83) increase the believability of his role; of his performed competence. Additionally, Ezekiel climbed the route with comfort and relative ease. "Successful performance seems natural…an effortless expression, true to life." (Alexander, 2011, p.4). As an audience member the entirety of the performance was leading me to the conclusion that he was performing competency in this space, specifically physical competency and technical competency.

However, before he left the ground I asked him, "Do you feel good about cleaning?" to which his response was "Yes." Not only was his response to this question, "yes," his actions and scripted behaviors on the wall, aligned with this notion of performing competence. His hands were steady when clipping bolts, his rope didn't end up behind his foot, his knot was clean and the correct length. As a viewer, I assumed that he is in fact performing competence. But, when he got to the anchors he only clipped into one bolt. This small minute detail is a waiver in his otherwise flawless performance. He successfully performed competency as a lead climber, however, his actions when he got to the anchor led me to believe that his approach to cleaning the climb was a "performance *as* competent." In other words, perhaps he wasn't fully competent technically with this skill, but choose to perform as such to uphold normative masculine veils of "expertise."

As a piece of theatre, in the scene with Ezekiel, I realize that I shift into the position of an attending audience member. My role as a researcher, co-performer, and friend, shifts. I am now watching from beyond the stage; from within the audience. I shed my role as co-performer. As an audience member, I cannot interject myself into the scene (Goffman, 1959). An interjection in this moment would be a threat to his sense of masculinity within this space. My role, as an audience member and importantly as a man sharing this space with him, is to continue to support his performance in that space. It would be inappropriate in regards to the social script to insert myself into the scene, and try to interject my opinion (perhaps in this case resulting in challenging his masculine performance of competency). We experience "a fusion between actors and audience" (Alexander, 2011, p.85). As the audience, we cannot interject into the scene. It is common within the social boundaries of our world to not challenge these performances. It is

common and expected to simply continue to play the part, as an audience member, or co-performer.

As an audience member, I am able to decipher my own meaning from Ezekiel's actions. A small waiver in his acting role, clipping one bolt, indicated to me, the audience member, that he was indeed playing the role of "performing as competent" opposed to "performing competence."

Masculinity and Performing Physical & Technical Competency

The physicality of the climbing scene is important and alludes to masculinity being performed through physical competence. Physical competency looks like, "Can I make it up this climbing route that my friend just did?" In the shared space with Ezekiel he was absolutely physically competent when climbing the route. His motions were consistent and steady, he was not bothered by the terrain or impacted by the difficulty; at least from my audience perspective. Ezekiel performed physical competency. Let's imagine his performance appearing differently: Imagine the scene, his legs were shaking, pouring sweat, missing clips; (we've all been there) that would be indicative to me, an audience member, that he was not performing physical competence, but instead was performing as physically competent.

Physical competency and masculinity are entangled together in unique variations. An example, of my intention to perform competence in this study can be seen in the video, at 1:36. I intentionally rolled over in my kayak, and quickly rolled it back up. I am performing as physically competent. I am performing an action to Chris, trying to indicate my competence of a paddler. Alexander (2011) develops this moment by stating that, "Actions are performative insofar as they can be understood as communicating meaning to an audience" (p.82). In this situation, Chris is an audience member, I am the performer, I am performing as competent with

my skill to roll. Indicating to Chris my abilities to paddle, however, I would not categorize myself as a very competent paddler.

Another fellow co-performer, Griffin, provides insight into his personal experiences with performances of physical competence. Griffin begins to discuss his experiences of performing physical competence at 8:16, and specifically progresses into his desire to be knowledgeable, preluding the conversation of performing as technically competent.

Performing technical competency or performing as technically competent in the climbing scene parallels physical competency, but is inherently unique by itself. Technical competency looks like, "These cams are placed correctly." or, "This is the right knot for this situation."

In another instance of this study where I myself "perform as technically competent" is in discussion about a potentially dangerous river feature. When kayaking with Chris, at 3:57, in the video, I ask, "Does this rock on the corner ever freak you out? In this moment, I "performed as technically competent," because I already knew the rock was a hazard. However, my intention behind the probing question was to invite Chris to affirm my technical competency, or my level of competency on the water. This action in itself confirms my desire to perform competent, but similarly reinforces that in actuality, I was performing as competent.

Social Orientation Towards Competency

"Performing competence" or "performing as competent" is not a positive or negative performance. However, the social scrutiny placed upon people, especially men, to be competent leads both performers and audience members to feel like there is something inherently wrong about their performance. A social expectation and stereotype of men, is that they must be competent individuals (Tomal & Jones, 2015). Also, men are commonly held to a higher standard of being competent than women (Tomal & Jones, 2015). In many cases these

expectations of higher performances are entangled with masculinity, and prejudices against women (Eagley & Karau, 2002). This trends closely to hegemonic structures that are present within certain realms of society, especially in the outdoor arena. The social narrative that men are more competent than women can continue to be challenged if more genders are equally represented in these spaces (Tomal & jones, 2015) such as outdoor adventure spaces. Additionally, equal representation of power in these spaces is imperative for change. Meaning, leaders of outdoor programs, head guides, lead instructors, etc. should be equally represented.

Social structures of power dictate what is categorized as socially acceptable behavior and reasonable actions (Alexander, 2011). Society has told men that if they aren't competent, they are lesser. This is directly tied to the fact of men being powerholders for so long, particularly in outdoor spaces. "Power contributes to the construction of social performance…" (Alexander, 2011, p.4). Men's performances must align with a continuation of this power. If they are revealed to not be competent in these spaces, their performance of masculinity is jeopardized.

This happens commonly in outdoor spaces, especially with men participating in outdoor adventure activities. As previously mentioned, this happened to me in this study too. Multiple times I performed as: a competent fly-fishermen when tying on a random fly from my fly box to start my day on the river, instead of knowing exactly what was hatching. I performed as competent when I had to look at my phones GPS in secret while hiking. I performed as competent when I fumbled my way through a conversation about bike mechanics and new components on my friends bike.

Other examples of this are present within the social world. Teachers performing as competent, but in reality praying a student doesn't challenge them on a particular point, people

cooking at home performing as competent but burning their dinner. These social performances are abundant and covert in societies day to day lived experiences.

In closing this social script, these performances of competency in this study invited me to think more critically of how I show up with others in the outdoors, and how they might be showing up too. This social script allowed for me to see more clearly how frequently subtle instances of masculinity show up as "performed competency" or/and "performed as competent."

Social Script 2: A Competitive Script- Scoreboard Mentality

As seen in the literature, a dominant narrative associated with men is that we are *supposed to be* competitive (Cashdan, 1998). As this study continued to unfold, many instances of the pressure of competition in the outdoors were highlighted. The results of Social Script 2, come from consulting my reflexive journal entries, emphasizing moments from my video, and exploring how this script is impacting the outdoor field or outdoor spaces.

Scoreboard Mentality

Reflexive Journal Entry*: As we continue to ride and have good chit chat, we subtly began an unspoken jockey for whose tire was ahead, even by just a few inches. Later in the ride, I made sure Lucas went first, shamefully admitting that he was way faster, therefore worthy of the first line down. As I descended "Middle Black" my brakes squeaked loudly, annoyingly announcing to the forest of my cautious descent. As I rounded the corner where I could see Lucas, I let off my brakes and was trying to go wide open at the bottom.*

This narrative begins in the video at 5:34. When discussing competition with Lucas, I specifically asked him, "Do you think that competition is inherent to outdoor recreation… specifically between men?" He responded at 6:43, with, "Yes," and further elaborated that he felt like the pressure is from, "…society. I think it's from a longstanding pressure that men have to

perform physically at the peak of their ability." Lucas concurred, adding, "and the person who comes in first…. Is the best male… it's all connected to this weird competition." Lucas's answer supports a very overt representation of masculine performance through competition. He articulated clearly that the pressure to compete is associated with masculine performances. Uniquely, competition between adults is commonly subtle and indirect (Cashdan, 1998). Overlaying Butler's theories on performativity suggest that men are conditioned to use competition as a tool to both connect and establish social hierarchy amongst a group. Therefore, many outdoor adventure pursuits are inherently riddled with "pervasive and powerful symbolism" (Matthews & Channon, p.374, 2021) associated with masculine archetypes and tropes. Many of the tropes affiliated with outdoor adventure have traces of hegemonic masculinity weaved into their fabric. Competition plays a key role in supporting Western narratives of masculinity (Drummond, 1995). Spaces involving outdoor pursuits can inherently develop their own social cultures. If a specific performance of masculinity is consistent in these spaces, a preservation of masculine notions can exists. A certain performance becomes expected (Matthews & Channon, 2021).

Ezekiel demands that he feels pressure to compete when he is participating in outdoor activities with other men. In his interview at, 10:19, he states:

> "I think as a whole I'm more intrinsically motivated with outdoor recreation than I am extrinsically motivated, but ya know, if I'm going out climbing with my best friends…, then I'm going to want to show them I am good at climbing. When I see them do something cool, I wanna be able to show them that I can also match their style, match for their flashing up something…, so yeah, I absolutely do feel some degree of competition. I

think that most of it is internal, but there is a certain level of competition to it that's external, and related to my masculinity and how I perform it."

Ezekiel also feels some amount of pressure to perform his masculinity through competition. He is able to clearly state that most of this competitive spirit is coming from an intrinsic place. Additionally, his degree of competing in this space is somewhat more covert in its nature. It is not necessarily jockeying for a particular position, or openly challenging someone when climbing. His answer suggests that the response to a competitive call is through action and reciprocation of style or technique, a more veiled extension of competition.

Jason and I discussed a more overt representation of competition, a scoreboard mentality when entering the outdoors and specifically, when participating in fly fishing, with other men. At, minute 1:50, my reflexive journaling narrative is as follows:

We splashed up towards the next hole. Jason paused and began to cast upstream into the small rifle above. After he ran his flies through the main drift line, it was my turn. I quietly moved up towards the gravel bank, trying to be somewhat stealthy, always a bit of a challenge in clunky wader boots. I casted once not really where I wanted it to be. I reset with a delayed roll cast. The yellow chubby Chernobyl was quickly met with an eruption and a flash of gold from beneath the surface. Boom, my internal scoreboard notched one. I was relieved to be on the board. I knew the unspoken competition was now truly underway.

The imaginary scoreboard to performances of masculinity in the outdoors is expanded upon by Jason, who at, 3:19, he suggested, "…I think with other people… it's more of a competition… to prove my aptitude… at whatever I'm doing." A scoreboard approach to the outdoors will continue to be important in these results.

Reflexive Journal Narrative*: My phone buzzed. I clumsily reached towards my side table fumbling for my glasses and phone. Through squinted eyes I glared at my screen. A text from Chris, for a moment I thought he might be bailing on me. When I opened the text, Chris asked me for my electric air pump for his canoeing float bags.*

Well shit I thought… should I be canoeing too?

Is it a wimp play to bring a kayak at today's level?

Am I a poser?

I know canoeing is more old school.

Canoeing is a little bit cooler...

Canoeing is more masculine…

Damn, my lime green kayak was already on my car.

My time spent with Chris on the river opened up some very engaging dialogue, as did all these interviews. Chris's thoughts on competition are somewhat in line with the scoreboard approach that was emphasized in the fishing space. Regarding competition, he stated at, 4:46:

> I see this playing out in outdoor recreation, like that tick list of… oh, I paddled this river, or I've biked this trail, or I've climbed like 5.15, trying to hit those tick lists. There is a competitive nature in that sense.

In Chris's statement there is quite a bit to unpack, especially if we incorporate the dialogue I exchanged with Jason. There is a "scoreboard" mentality showing up in these spaces, the "scoreboard" can look like competition between a group, individuals, or the space itself. Chris's beliefs about there being a tick list, coincides with the scoreboard approach to being in these outdoor spaces. There is an essence of a "rat race" mentality when we engage with Chris's ideas about always on the hunt for the next certification, the next river to paddle the next rock to climb.

Not only is it covertly capitalistic (Hall, 2011), it's also entangled with traces and narratives of masculinity; conquest, taming, domination (Cronon, 1996; Godtman et al., 2020; Jackson,1994; Kinnaird & Hall, 1994).

This dialogue with Chris opens the conversation about these pressures creating a cycle of conquest. Reciprocated actions and behaviors associated with "conquest mentality" (DeBrew et al., 2024) could potentially be stemming from a neoliberal capitalistic approach to these outdoor spaces and the field in general. Characteristics entrenched in both masculinity and capitalism, such as "individualism" (Bazzi et al., 2017), and "social privilege" (Matthews & Channon, 2014), are commonly tied to conquest in outdoor spaces and are also common tropes associated with men and their performances of masculinity. Consulting the literature would suggest that in the pursuit of "checking these tick lists", we could be continuing to limit the ability to challenge structures of hegemony that are perpetuating inaccessible and inequitable opportunities to get outside (Beames, 2019). Specifically, while these certification and badges of competency propel the field of the outdoors forward, they could also be acting as a barrier to access. An individualistic approach to these outdoor spaces, like obtaining certifications or "ticking" off rivers, resembles a capitalistic approach (Hall 2011). Specifically, what is capitalistic about these points is the consumer approach, the "rat race" mentality of getting mine before someone else gets it. This masculine narrative of elite performances; the highest certification, the hardest rivers, the most challenging climbs, is intertwined with capitalism. Always reaching for the next progression into the elite category, is a representation of masculinity, it is also a nod to neoliberal approaches to a resource, like the outdoors (Salzinger, 2016).

This approach to the outdoors and the elitist vs non-elite is a potential moment that men are performing within the outdoors. Pursuing the outdoors with this mindset can be traced to the

messages being received culturally. Cultural values in the United States have consistently been shifting to encourage a culture that values risk and adventure (Bell, 2017). Men, as we know are more drawn to risky behavior (Cashdan, 1998; Gilmore, 1990). Therefore the potential for this neoliberal approach of consumption towards the outdoors could be showing up through men's actions in outdoor activities; risk, consumption, competition, are all potential neoliberal tools to advance this covert social script forward.

Furthermore, associated risk with male behaviors (Gilmore,1990) portrays images of rugged individualism, and other common masculine narratives associated with men in the outdoors. This continued narrative of rugged individualism in the outdoors reminds us of a male archetype, a Paul Bunyonesque individual, who will chop a month's wood supply, climb a mountain, harvest a deer, trim his beard, and take his photo before his handmade log cabin, all before breakfast. The neoliberal ideas of individualism (Smith, 2019) and the pursuit of these achievements are downplaying the inequities present within the outdoors (Scharff, 2011). These narratives have a close tie to imperialism and colonialism; which are commonly associated with neoliberal ideologies. (Rose & Paisley, 2012; Warren, 2016).

Conclusion

Competition can show up in unique ways, especially when men are participating in outdoor spaces with other men. After completing this study, I feel like my awareness of the social script of competition is elevated. I am more aware of how men can use competition and competitive acts to challenge one another, to encourage learning, to create space for one another. This predetermined "masculine" script resulting in a drive to compete covertly or overtly, could lead to hurdles for "Others" hoping to access these spaces.

Additionally, I feel like competition can be a good thing for men; at least for the men I participated in this study with. In the social script performed in this study I think that the competition presented in these spaces resulted in the creation of powerful and positive male spaces. I felt supported in these spaces, and felt like competition was a tool being used in order to connect and playfully challenge one another when used in a positive fashion. Specific instances in my video of positive male camaraderie can be seen at: 0:43; 2:27; 3:48; 5:23, among many other instances.

The two dominant scripts performed in this study were "performing competency" and "performing as competent" and secondly, a script entangled with masculinity and performances of competition. The analysis of these social scripts has allowed me to think critically about countless social scripts being performed in the spaces I occupy. Specifically, my approach to how I spend time in the outdoors with other men has been challenged and repurposed. I am hopeful that the results of this study continue to promote the challenging of dominant narratives that are present in the outdoors.

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