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Hiker Trash and Trail Dogs: An Ethnographic Inquiry into Human Nature in the Trail Space

Jody A. Chinchén

Central Washington University, jody.chinchen@gmail.com

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HIKER TRASH AND TRAIL DOGS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INQUIRY INTO
HUMAN NATURE IN THE TRAIL SPACE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

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by

Jody A. Chinchon

June 2016

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

We hereby approve the thesis of

Jody A. Chinchon

Candidate for the degree of Master of Science

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

Dr. J. Hope Amason, Committee Chair

Dr. Kari I. Gunderson

Dr. Robert Perkins

Dr. Rodrigo Renteria-Valencia

Dean of Graduate Studies

ABSTRACT

HIKER TRASH AND TRAIL DOGS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INQUIRY INTO HUMAN NATURE IN THE TRAIL SPACE

By

Jody A. Chinchon

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In the face of declining trail maintenance budgets and increasing recreational use, we must develop a critical understanding of trail culture, including the motivations, perspectives, and experiences of various users and how they intersect with one another. Trail use on National Scenic Trails (NSTs) may represent a deeper symbolic yearning to seek out meaningful connections with nature, self, and community. This study seeks to understand: (1) How trails are built and paved with meaning, (2) how trails foster and sustain social, symbolic, and material landscapes, through performance of work and leisure; and (3) the relationship between the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) as an idea, and the National Trails System (NTS) as its practice. NSTs provide an ideal backdrop for studying how such connections and relationships are formed and sustained. Using ethnographic methods, this research will provide a descriptive account of the emergent cultural domain of trail builders and trail users, as two deeply immersed stakeholders. Washington State is the terminus for two intersecting National Scenic

Trails: the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT) and the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNT), making it an ideal study area for understanding cultural phenomena associated with deeply immersed trail culture. Understanding the well-developed trail culture on the PCT may help provide insight for management challenges associated with the emerging trail culture on the newly designated PNT to provide guidance for better management of NSTs and, to some extent, all trails.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
Problem.....	2
Purpose.....	3
Significance.....	4
Discussion.....	5
II CONTEXTUALIZING NATIONAL SCENIC TRAILS.....	7
Introduction.....	7
Historical Context.....	7
Sociopolitical Context.....	11
Socioeconomic Context.....	13
The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.....	16
The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail.....	18
Discussion.....	20
III LITERATURE REVIEW.....	22
Introduction.....	22
Constructing the Social Space.....	22
Pilgrimage.....	25
Volunteerism.....	29
Trail Dogs.....	35
Sustainable Trails.....	37
Discussion.....	38
IV METHODOLOGY.....	39
Introduction.....	39
Positionality.....	43
Discussion.....	44
V INFRASTRUCTURAL ARCHITECTS: TRAIL DOGS.....	46
Introduction.....	46
Landscapes in Transformation.....	50
The Museum Out There.....	52
Constructing the Trail Stage.....	59
Discussion.....	69

VI THE TOURISTIC SPACE: HIKER TRASH.....	71
Introduction.....	71
The Hiker Identity.....	72
Balancing Authenticity with Communitas.....	75
Transformation.....	78
Understanding and Managing Pilgrim Behavior.....	80
Discussion.....	88
VII HIKE YOUR OWN HIKE: CONSTRUCTING A TRAIL IDENTITY.....	90
Introduction.....	90
Immaterial Values.....	91
Cost of a Thru Hike.....	92
Calories: “The Most Important Piece of Gear”.....	94
The Resupply.....	96
Trail Magic.....	98
“Seeing” the Trail: Signage, Iconography, and Insignia.....	99
Shrine Construction and Other Interpretations of LNT.....	102
Trail Names.....	104
Discussion.....	105
VIII “GETTING TO LIVE”.....	107
Introduction.....	107
The Paradox of Seeking Safety in the Wilderness.....	110
In Search of Belonging: Disconnecting to Connect.....	112
In Search of Excellence: Esteem and Self-Actualization.....	113
The Significance of Flow.....	116
Discussion.....	120
IX ACCEPTING DEFEAT: THE DESCENT TO SELF-DESTRUCTION.....	122
Introduction.....	122
Carpentered Culture.....	125
PTD: Post Trail Depression.....	128
Taking the Trail Home.....	130
Discussion.....	131
X CONCLUSION.....	133
Introduction.....	133
Contesting Values.....	134
Work and Leisure Performances.....	138

Emotional Stomping Grounds, Moral Hunting Ground.....	140
Sustainable Infrastructure, Enduring Resource.....	145
Conclusion.....	150
REFERENCES.....	153
APPENDIXES.....	164
Appendix A—Map	165
Appendix B—Survey.....	166
Appendix C—Gear List.....	168
Appendix D—TRTA Thru Hike Trail Angel Guide.....	169

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Map of National Scenic Trail System.....	10
2	PCT logo.....	16
3	PNT logo.....	18
4	The museum in here.....	54
5	Tahmahn-awis poem.....	67
6	Resilience-based science model.....	150

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Trails have been dictating human mobility patterns for thousands of years. At some point, when our mobility took us to the farthest most remote corners of the Earth, and we shifted our subsistence patterns from nomadism to sedentism, egalitarianism to hierarchy, and immaterialism to accumulation—I propose that our mobile habits simply transformed. I do not seek to rewrite that history, but to learn from it and see where it is taking us. After all, trails are all about determined forward movement—so determined, in fact, so narrow and confining in scope, that it is difficult at times to differentiate between incidental mobility and dogmatic momentum, and we forget to question our assumptions about trails. Perhaps it is the timelessness of trails that encourages us to forget about them. Perhaps there is a larger force at work.

Every spring, an emergent and mounting user group of hikers across the country lace their shoes, hoist their packs, and walk away from their life. Most often their departure from society is temporary, but some never look back. “Thru hiking” is a burgeoning phenomenon that is little understood; yet its growing popularity has far-reaching implications into the transformation of recreational values for wild places. Long trails create corridors of connectivity, uniting federal and nonfederal land-managing agencies, wilderness with communities, and creating a vested sense of place to locals. Long trails may also represent a deeper symbolic yearning to seek out meaningful connections with nature, and to both deconstruct and reinforce constructed boundaries through the simple act of walking. National Scenic Trails (NST) provides just such

opportunities, hosting a complex network of connecting corridors across the United States.

This study will focus on sections of two NSTs that traverse through and intersect in Washington State, the oldest of which, the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), was designated in 1968, and the most recent, the Pacific Northwest Trail (PNT), in 2009. The PCT is a 2,650-mile north-south route that travels through California, Oregon, and Washington. The PNT is a 1,200-mile east-west route that travels from Glacier National Park in Montana, through Idaho, and Washington to its terminus at the wilderness coast on the westernmost boundary of the Olympic National Park. My study seeks to understand what trails do for us, what we do for trails in turn, and ultimately what the relationship between recreation and conservation is.

Problem

The National Scenic Trail System appears on a map as a network of neutrally charged linear corridors traversing the United States. NSTs offer innumerable benefits (USFS 2015a); however, the challenges associated with an extensive and contiguous trail corridor are multi-layered and multi-faceted, with potential for conflict akin to any large-scale conservation area (Thomas 2015). Increasing use generates concerns as to whether user experiences or the landscape itself are threatened, whether management and trail towns are equipped to handle such increases; and whether the trail is engineered in such a way that it can handle traffic increases. Numbers of thru hike attempts and completions vary, however what is not debated is that the PCT has experienced an annual increase in thru-hike attempts, with completion rates perhaps quadrupling in the last decade, with a

fairly consistent completion rate hovering around 50 to 60 percent (Martin 2015, PCTA n.d.(a)). Attempts are expected to increase even further with the 2013 release of best-selling novel *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail*, which has also been made into a popular film that was released in 2015 (Martin 2015).

In 2015, it is estimated that upwards of fifty people attempted a thru hike of the PNT.¹ However slight this number may appear, it is still a significant increase for the PNT. By comparison, in 2015, management applied a first ever cap at fifty people *per day* on departures from the southern terminus of the PCT. Meanwhile discussions of “sustainability” and “carrying capacity” are fast becoming increasingly pertinent to trail planning and management.²

Purpose

This research will show how a neutrally charged landscape can be transformed into a powerful sociopolitical and sociocultural symbol by constructing something as seemingly innocuous as a trail. I will begin by setting the historical context that provided a nation with 60,000 miles of trails, and how the management of trail space came to be negotiated amongst stakeholders. Guided by Erving Goffman’s (1959) framework for revealed stages of authenticity, I will contextualize trails as a social space. This framework will provide support for my understanding of trail use in terms of construction, performance, contestation, and sustainability.

¹ PNT Advisory Council Meeting. Sandpoint, Idaho. October 14-15, 2015.

² *Ibid.*

My research will seek to draw out how we define trails and how trails define us through our experiences on them, and through the use, consumption, and stewardship of the trail space. By studying the well-developed trail culture on the PCT, management challenges may be observed and addressed for the emerging trail culture on the PNT, providing for a more adaptable framework for the future management of NSTs. In this research I will seek to answer the following questions:

- 1) How are trails built and paved with meaning through performance of work and leisure?
- 2) How do trails foster and sustain social, symbolic, and material landscapes?
- 3) What is the relationship between wilderness as an idea, and trails as its practice?

Significance

According to the National Trails System Annual Report, NSTs "offer unmatched quality of life experiences in outdoor recreation, education, scenic transportation, and access to the precious natural and cultural resources that define us as a Nation" (Federal Interagency Council on Trails 2010: 23). The Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) has been called "one of this nation's most important recreation assets" (Ogden 2008:15), offering an adjournment from urban stressors. NSTs claim to provide a context that dissolves boundaries, builds partnerships, inspires citizen stewards, improves quality of life, promotes economic growth, and fosters resilient communities through connectivity (USFS 2015a). NSTs also foster opportunities for transformation. According to Kimmett (2015), recreational values have effectively undergone two fairly recent forms of transformation in community and social phenomena. First, recreational values have

shifted from small groups of casual recreationists and groups of small parties to large-scale organized social events and more active and participatory forms of recreation such as trail running and mountain biking. The second is an influx in stewardship in the form of volunteerism (Kimmitt 2015). Thru hiking is another trail use whose growing popularity has far-reaching implications for understanding the transformation of recreational values for wild places as corridors of connectivity, dissolving sociopolitical boundaries, and uniting wilderness to communities. The first may implicate shifting values for solitude, and the latter, evidence of changing socioeconomic societal conditions outside of wilderness and trail space. These phenomena will be revisited in greater detail.

Management of NSTs, and trails in general, must remain adept and adaptable within the constraints of legislative criteria to continually, and neutrally, assess the costs and benefits of up and coming recreational pursuits in order to optimally steward trails, and maximize on opportunities for the public to enjoy the outdoors by maintaining relevancy. This study will seek to broaden an understanding of the value of NSTs in terms of trails as a transformational social space, and in terms of sustainable use and management.

Discussion

My research questions engage both a passive relationship with trails—what do trails do for us, as well as an active relationship—what do we do for trails. I will also be framing wilderness as a neutral space upon which the emotional practice of trails unfolds. For a wilderness advocate and a trail enthusiast, I will be making some difficult, perhaps

even heretical, claims. I will be divorcing wilderness from trails, and reconstructing them under cultural, institutional, and theoretical frameworks. Once the resource—wilderness—has been divorced from its infrastructural practice—trails—and reframed given this new understanding, the two can then be remarried. This sort of critical analysis that attempts to eliminate careless assumptions inherent to the conservation and recreation movement are essential to better manage and sustain both the wilderness and trails systems.

CHAPTER II

CONTEXTUALIZING NATIONAL SCENIC TRAILS

Introduction

This chapter will examine the institutional, sociopolitical, and sociocultural frameworks upon which trails were deconstructed, restructured, formalized and reintroduced to the nation. This process created a powerful value system that continues to resonate in the conservation movement, and reinforced a growing division between work and leisure. Trails, in fact, are the product of a widely accepted idea that people must have access to wild places in order to value wild places. Muir (2013: 7) famously wrote in 1901, “I have done the best I could to show forth the beauty, grandeur, and all-embracing usefulness of our wild mountain forest reservations and parks, with a view to inciting the people to come and enjoy them, and get them into their hearts, that so at length their preservation and right use might be made sure.” Trails are the implied infrastructure behind this assertion, which will be reexamined and looked at critically throughout this document.

Historical Context

In 1964, the Wilderness Act first outlined the purposes and definition of wilderness as having “outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation” [PL 88-577 1964, Section 2(c)]. Furthermore, recreation is described as “*one of the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness*” (emphasis added). The Act is clear in that recreational pursuits should comply with the desired wilderness condition, “retaining its primeval character and influence.” In 1964, this may

have been much more attainable than it is now, with recreational pursuits in continual transformation and, by and large, flourishing.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson called for a feasibility assessment to construct and sustain a nationwide system of trails (Department of Interior 1966). With one momentous letter, Johnson captured three important values that resonate to this day. First, he calls upon Americans to explore and rediscover nature as a source of leisure and exercise. He explains, “The forgotten outdoorsmen of today are those who like to walk, hike, ride horseback, or bicycle... Old and young alike can participate. Our doctors recommend and encourage such activity for fitness and fun” (DOI 1966: 3). It is also important to note that the “forgotten outdoorsmen of today” are no longer pioneers, but recreationists who are perhaps nostalgic of the pioneer. Visiting the outdoors reinforced a growing rift between work and leisure, and a source of prestige defined by who gets to use this newly minted infrastructure. No longer is nature a place that is within and around us, but it is a place to go. It is “out there.” The intent of a nationwide trail system was to inspire a recreational boom, and the pursuit of leisure. Second, Johnson compelled a nation gripped by fervent construction of roads and railroads toward a new paradigm – to unite a nation by trail. He states, “... We must have trails as well as highways. Nor should motor vehicles be permitted to tyrannize the more leisurely human traffic” (DOI 1966: 3). Third, Johnson calls upon, or fortifies, an emerging value for aesthetics: “As with so much of our quest for beauty and quality, each community has opportunities for action” (DOI 1966: 3). Finally, Johnson states his ultimate objective to construct a vast trail infrastructure comprised of “more than a hundred thousand miles” (DOI 1966: 3).

In response, a team of federal interagency representatives, consisting of the Department of Interior's now-defunct Bureau of Recreation (BOR), the National Park Service (NPS), the United States Forest Service (USFS), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) set out to assess the potential of trails as a promising nascent resource in response to a "crisis in outdoor recreation" (DOI 1966: 19). Two short years later, the National Trails System Act (NTSA) was established in 1968 with the goal of "provid[ing] for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population and in order to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation..." [PL 90-543 1968, Sec. 2(a)]. According to American Trails, the National Trails System (NTS) fell short of Johnson's forecast for "more than a hundred thousand miles" (DOI 1966: 3), but is still impressive. The NTS totals more miles than the Interstate Highway System, comprised of over 60,000 miles of trail, eleven National Scenic Trails, nineteen National Historic Trails, and over 1,000 National Recreation Trails, in addition to thousands of miles of converted rail-trails. Not one state, including Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico, has been exempted from hosting a trail, in one form or another that is part of the NTS (American Trails n.d.(a)). The NTSA followed in the footsteps of the Wilderness Act by only four years. Effectively, humans were booted out of the perceived "pristine" places that were left and then necessarily reintroduced in this new institutional context, as tourists. The outcome of Johnson's letter, whether intentional or not, for better or worse, was the marriage of recreation and conservation, and the birth of a powerful value system enveloping the conservation movement. Trails

made wilderness personal, transformative, and accessible. The NTS and the NWPS became intertwined into one collective unit. This creates an interesting paradox between two resources that, in many ways complement and bolsters one another, but at the same time, if not managed appropriately, could also precipitate the unraveling of the NWPS. Additionally, whether by foresight or happenstance, public lands planners and managers were given the means and the toolbox to connect fragmented protected areas by a nationwide system of trail corridors. It was the same mindset, a brand new phenomenon of land protection efforts that inspired the creation of a nation connected by trail.

For the purposes of this study, I will be focusing on NSTs (Figure 1). NSTs range from 220 to 4,600 miles in length, and are distributed throughout the United States (USFS 2015a). These corridors are, in most cases, physical trails, following the nation's



Figure 1: Map of the National Scenic Trail System showing the eleven trails that currently makes up the system. Black circle indicates study area (USGS 2014a).

natural geophysical features: the Continental Divide, the Pacific Crest, and the Appalachian Mountain ranges to name a few. Others have more modest agendas. High alpine mountain ranges connected by low elevation valley corridors generally make up the system of trails that now crisscross the nation. Within these eleven NSTs, I will be focused on two, the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) and the Pacific Northwest Trail (PNT). I will be primarily contained within Washington State, where the PCT and the PNT intersect, and eventually terminate (or commence) at their respective locales.

Sociopolitical Context

National Scenic Trails (NSTs) are particularly interesting in terms of social space and have become increasingly popular in recent times. NSTs offer opportunities to restructure and reconstruct trails such that they better reflect society's values and maintain relevancy to greater numbers of people. NSTs provide opportunities to connect trails that have otherwise "lost value," provide a compelling case of need to build new trails to create contiguous corridors, and provide hikers with magnified opportunities for transformative thru-hikes. NSTs appeal to an increasingly popular form of deeply immersed touristic mobility that involves "hiking through." The act of hiking through requires hikers to become deeply immersed in the trail's corridor, and to give up an element of self-sufficiency whereupon hikers become reliant upon the occasional trail town stop. The thru hiking phenomenon has been largely mobilized by innovations in ultralight gear technology, and welcoming conduits.

All NSTs are thus predominantly fluid and linear landscapes-in-transformation, frequently changing tread and length, and NSTs are no exception (PCTA n.d.(a)). NSTs

travel through federal, state, municipal, and privately owned jurisdictions. In spite of, or because of, this depth of complexity, the Forest Service is designated as the lead managing, or administering, federal agency for both trails, and works in partnership with the Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA) and the Pacific Northwest Trail Association (PNTA) to manage the entire length of each respective trail. These partnership organizations are non-profit private sector organizations, and will be examined in more detail in the coming sections. The Forest Service employs one individual as manager and liaison for the entire length of the trail, and the PCTA has twenty-one paid staff, and five regional coordinators. Each regional coordinator is dispersed across six regions, and is responsible for stewardship of approximately 500 miles apiece (PCTA n.d.(b)). Similarly, the Forest Service employs one individual as manager and liaison for the length of the trail, while the PNTA currently employs five paid staff, including two regional coordinators. The PNT is divided into five regions: the Rocky Mountains, Eastern Washington, North Cascades, Puget Sound, and the Olympics (PNTA n.d.(a)).

Trails provide the constructed infrastructure that provides public access to a 110 million-acre National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) and has stimulated a multi-billion outdoor gear and tourism industry. Yet concomitantly, the Forest Service (USFS) is experiencing a multi-million dollar trail maintenance deficit and ongoing reduction of recreation staff (U.S. GAO 2013, Short 2015, USFS 2015a, USFS 2015b). Further, trails transform an otherwise neutrally charged, in many cases protected landscape into a powerful sociopolitical and sociocultural symbol. NSTs provide a cultural domain that declares to dissolve boundaries, build partnerships, inspire citizen

stewards, improve quality of life, promote economic growth, and foster resilient communities through connectivity (USFS 2015a).

Socioeconomic Context

Trail use has been on the rise since the passage of the National Trail System Act in 1968 [PL 90-543 1968, Sec. 2(a)], which called for the creation and protection of a vast trail system in the United States. Furthermore, people are using trails in more novel and meaningful ways, and in increasing levels and complexities of place attachment through deeper immersion. In itself, this trend might be a good thing. However, this increase is in sharp contrast with declining wilderness and trail management budgets.

The USFS's annual trail maintenance budget is \$77.5 million, and declining, yet the agency is tasked with sustaining a trail system that would require \$300 million per year (GAO 2013), which explains why only one-quarter of the USFS's trail system are up to standard (USFS 2015b). Added stressors include the instability of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a federal program which was created in 1964 to protect recreational resources. The LWCF is funded, not by tax dollars, but rather is captured from revenues from offshore oil and gas leasing. The recent instability is due to the fund's expiration of two twenty-five yearlong authorization blocks, which ended in 2015. The LWCF was temporarily extended, but only until 2018, at which point, it will again come under pressure. Perhaps the most significant stressor is the increased funneling of funds toward fire suppression that is diverted from "non-crisis" programs, such as trail maintenance, recreation and heritage programs, and restoration projects. Between 1995 and 2015, the cost of wildland firefighting efforts increased from 16 percent to 52 percent

of the Forest Service's total budget (USFS 2015b, Short 2015). Consequently, recreation, wilderness, and heritage programs have experienced a 15 percent budget reduction since 2001 (USFS 2015b), while full time recreation staff has declined by 30 percent since 2002 (USFS 2015b), alongside a similar decline of seasonal temporary trail workers and wilderness rangers. Meanwhile, the face of this, there is a \$263 billion and growing global outdoor tourism industry that is largely and almost exclusively enabled by trails (Saintz 2015). As funding decreases and recreation staff becomes stretched thin, federal agencies increasingly rely on partner organizations, volunteers, and benefit from marketing efforts and contributions from special interest groups (Selin and Chevez 1995; Davenport, Anderson, Leahy, and Jakes 2007; USFS 2015a). These trends must be examined critically, and treated with foresight, rather than by happenstance.

There is abundant evidence of the economic benefits of trails (Bowker, Bergstrom, and Gill 2007; MacDonald 2011; USFS 2015a). Trails have been ranked as the second most important "community amenity," contributing to a 1 to 6.5 percent increase in property value for homes that fall in proximity to trails. For property that is immediately adjacent to trails, property value may increase by as much as 20 percent (USFS 2015a). Many small businesses have gotten off the ground as a direct response to thru hiking, while many larger corporations have enjoyed a thriving market for outdoor gear. Sources of revenue for businesses are both gear related and associated with tourism industry in trail towns, and local businesses in trail towns often experience substantially increased profits during peak hiking season (USFS 2015a). In Cascade Locks, Oregon, where the PCT crosses from Oregon into Washington via Bridge of the Gods, a waitress

mistook my group of sweaty starving friends for thru hikers after a particular arduous trail adventure. We corrected her, and cracked a joke, “Why? Do we smell that bad?” Unfazed, she gushed, “We love thru hikers here. They’re our favorite people. I mean, we love you all too, but thru hikers are our absolute favorite” (Paraphrased, personal conversation, August 2015).

The face of trail economics is in flux. While NSTs remain in the realm of federal management and public land, the source of political strength is fast falling into the realm of corporate control. The outdoor gear industry is a formidable influence that has a lot to lose. In Hanscom (2012), Black Diamond’s CEO Peter Metcalfe, flexed his political muscles by threatening to relocate a twice-annual Outdoor Retailer event that contributes “tens of millions” of dollars into the Salt Lake City economy if the State of Utah didn’t reconsider a proposal to open protected public lands to road building and drilling. The governor succumbed, if only temporarily. These political standoffs are invaluable. If the outdoor tourism industry were to organize itself and play a more active role in countering the trail deficit, or more generally, align themselves in the fight to protect the public lands through which our trails travel, they would certainly become a serious contender that would influence the sustainable infrastructure of trails. For now, however, labor is passed off to volunteer crews as professional federal trail crews and instrumental wilderness rangers become increasingly phased-out of recreation programs. This economic gap ultimately reinforces Goffman’s (1959) suggestion that backstage spaces and its essential infrastructure are rendered obscured and thus devalued. This framework will be utilized throughout this document. In light of the economic conditions of trails and evident case

of need, it is worthwhile to consider and define the relationship between what it is exactly that trails do for people and what people do for trails, in order to better understand the consequences of a degraded wilderness and trails system.

The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail

The PCT is one of two (alongside the Appalachian Trail) NSTs to be designated by the NTSA in 1968. A number of people are held accountable for the beginnings of the idea of a Mexico-to-Canada corridor. Though the PCT is the product of innumerable advocates, as with many NSTs, Clinton C. Clarke is most commonly attributed the title “father of the PCT.” It was Clarke who organized the first border-



Figure 2: PCT logo

to-border conference in 1932 (PCTA 2014). There was an organized community and advocacy group surrounding the trail since the 1930s. In 1971, the Pacific Crest Trail Club was founded by Clarke’s successor, Warren Rogers, followed by the Pacific Crest Trail Conference in 1977. Ten years later, the two affiliates merged. It wasn’t until 1992 that the Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA), as it is recognized today, was officially formed, and began actively lobbying in Washington D.C. in 1997 (PCTA 2014). The PCTA’s vision is largely responsible for the modern day character of the trail, as it has come to its present day fruition. The PCT traverses 2,650 miles north-south from Mexico to Canada along the Cascade Crest (Figure 1). Geographically, the PCT crosses a series

of mountain ranges, “rock and ice” topography, making it a logical wilderness corridor. Indeed, 54 percent of the PCT is designated wilderness (USGS 2014b). Its elevation ranges from nearly sea level at the Oregon-Washington border on the Columbia River to 13,200 feet in the High Sierra of California. The PCT travels through forty-nine wilderness areas, eight national parks, two Native American sovereignties, twenty-five national forests, and seven Bureau of Land Management districts. At least seventy-three towns and more than 1000 parcels of private land are within or in close proximity to the trail’s corridor (Alta Planning 2008).

The PCT is often compared to the Appalachian Trail (AT), in part because both trails gained NST status alongside one another in 1968 and have enjoyed a process of fruition together. The PCT has a reputation as being more remote than the AT, with thru hikers accessing trail towns less frequently. The PCT’s gentle gradient and finer tread is in part due to traversing the relative ease of a ridgeline across a series of mountain ranges, but also because the PCT was designed for equestrian and pedestrian use, unlike the AT, which is characterized by more rugged topography ill-suited for horse and was thus constructed for foot traffic only (Magnanti 2015). The natural topography of the trail, and its inherent remoteness, has been used since its inception to justify its preservationist principles as a wilderness pathway. The PCT’s Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), finalized in 1980, states only that, the characteristics of the PCT should “provide for a diversity of appropriate outdoor recreation opportunities limited principally by the carrying capacity of the area and the Congressional restriction on motorized use” (USFS 1982: ii). However, the CMP goes on to clarify that the PCT,

“traditionally has served horseback and foot travelers. This use pattern, accepted by most visitors to the trail, should be continued” (USFS 1982: 2). This effectively locks the PCTA and the USFS into a very static, unbending management criteria, which has been the source of enormous conflict as recreational values transformed and mutated into increasingly novel ways, and more complex value systems. The PCTA mission statement today reflects this: “to protect, preserve and promote the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail as a world-class experience for hikers and equestrians, and for all the values provided by wild and scenic lands” (PCTA n.d.(c)) One theme throughout this document will reveal the transformative nature of trails, and reinforce the challenge of managers to balance the inherent dynamism of trails with the relatively enduring and well-preserved “nature” of the wild places through which they travel.

The Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail

One of the main objectives of this paper is to apply observations of trail culture toward future management of NSTs, and to anticipate future challenges in the face of increasing use. Also, comparing the “old” with the “new” can provide insight as to how managers are adapting to changing recreational phenomena and demands reflective of society’s values. As such, I will also look to the emergent Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNT). The PNT is among the youngest of the

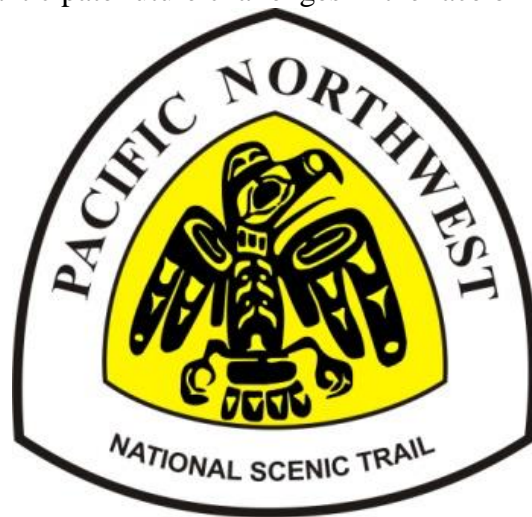


Figure 3: PNT logo

NSTs, designated in 2009, and travels from the Continental Divide in Montana, at Glacier National Park, to the Pacific Coast on the Olympic Peninsula, through Olympic National Park (Figure 1). The trail travels through three states (Montana, Idaho, and Washington), three national parks (Glacier, North Cascades, and Olympic), and seven national forests. About 80 percent of the trail is on federal land and 15 percent is on state land. Approximately 5 percent travels through private land and 0.2 percent through tribal land.¹ The PNT travels through six wilderness areas, three national parks, one Native American sovereignty, seven national forests, and travels through or in proximity of eighteen trail towns (USFS 2015a).

Both trails endure the complexities associated with large-scale linear conservation units, defying sociopolitical boundaries and necessitating mutual collaboration. However, unlike the PCT, the PNT does not yet have a well-developed trail culture, even lacking continuity in these early stages. Rather, the trail is a series of connected trails, logging roads, and paved roads. About 400 miles of the PNT still utilizes motorized routes and extensive sections of road walking (PNTA n.d (a)), and many sections still lack adequate insignia and signage. By law, NSTs are not intended to overlay motorized routes, so the implication of designation requires that planners prioritize moving the trail off roads. The PNT's most unique quality is that, unlike the majority of NST routes, it follows an east-west route, connecting two key NSTs: the PCT and the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT). Designation of the PNT has brought visionaries such as the PNT's

¹ Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Advisory Council meeting. Sandpoint, Idaho. October 14-15, 2015.

founder, Ron Strickland, closer to their goal of a 7,700-mile sea-to-sea route that would connect five long distance trails (Strickland n.d.).

Ron Strickland, then a college student, conceived the Continental Divide to Coast route in 1970 that has evolved into the Pacific Northwest Trail. With the help of friends, he spent his summers hiking sections of the proposed route, and studying maps during the winters. In 1980, the idea was deemed “not feasible” after the initial feasibility study, mostly due to high cost of land acquisition and large amounts of private land (Knechtel 2008). Trail advocates were undaunted. Over time, more land was acquired, concurrent with new wilderness designations, and the trail gradually became more viable and in 2008, advocates again went before Senate to make an appeal to finally designate the PNT as the newest inductee into the NST System. In 1976, Strickland founded the Pacific Northwest Trail Association (PNTA n.d.(c)). The Federal Advisory Committee was formed and met for the first time in October 2015, and the writing of the Comprehensive Management Plan was underway during the winter of 2015-2016. The PNTA’s mission statement is, “to protect and promote the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, and to enhance recreation and educational opportunities for the enjoyment of present and future generations” (PNTA n.d.(d)).

Discussion

In this way, by comparing mission statements and management objectives, one can see how, over time, the focus moves away from the user group to the trail itself as an interpretation of how best to administer a trail. Through a critical understanding of what trails do for people and what people do for trails, one can critically evaluate which

method will prove to be more sustainable. People come and go, and user groups will be in flux amid a rapidly changing society. The corridor itself becomes the focus of protection.

NSTs such as the PCT and PNT create veritable pilgrimage routes and corridors of connectivity throughout the nation. Their growing popularity is thus reflective of economic, political, and cultural changes happening outside of the trail space. Such connectivity creates a potent cultural seedbed and opportunities for highly immersive experiences in wild places that has been little studied. With this understanding of the sociopolitical and sociocultural context of trails, which has shown how trails were culturally reframed and institutionalized, I will now introduce the theoretical framework upon which I built my research.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There is limited scholarly work available that is specific to NSTs; however, by using literature on recreation and trails, pilgrimage, work and leisure, some cohesive deductions might be appropriately applied to the NST landscape. Thomas (2015) and Siudinski (2007) provide some exploratory ethnographic literature on NSTs. Thomas (2015) is specific to the PCT, with a focus on trail towns, and community interaction with thru hikers, while Siudinski (2007) focuses on adaptation through situational learning processes that are unique to thru hiking experiences on the Appalachian Trail (AT). Generally, theory widely exists that implies relevancy to trails; however, I will restate that many assumptions surround trails. I will attempt to disentangle those assumptions, and not create new assumptions.

Constructing the Social Space

For the purposes of this research, trails will be contextualized as a social space. Before a place is imbued with a story, the Eurocolonial supposition is that it is neutral, vacant, and devoid of culture, emotion, and history. It lacks social meaning. It is the shared narratives of a place that give it meaning (Greider and Garkovich 1994; Casey 1996; Basso 1996), and reinforce trail culture. Whose narratives get heard is one complex issue with this reproduction of social meaning. Herein lies the “pristine myth” (Cronon 1996) wherein space and place become pluralized into a dichotomy of nature and society. The former is the romantic idea of an untouched and pristine landscape, while the latter is

the experienced landscape. These types of well-intended mythologies of conservation have been called nothing short of “dangerous” (Leopold 1966: 263; Toupal, Zedeño, Stoffle, and Barabe 2001: 171). For my purposes, I will define an experienced landscape as one that has been appended with a trail. Given the cultural, political, and economic context of NSTs, and this idea of a constructed infrastructure built upon a “pristine” wilderness stage, it is possible to deconstruct the emergent social space of NSTs and subsequent management of the social space using Erving Goffman’s (1959) stages of authenticity furthered by Dean MacCannell’s (1999) frontstage/backstage framework. This framework provides guidance for understanding trail use in terms of performance, visibility, contestation, and values.

The stages of authenticity can be used to demarcate backstage and frontstage regions within the social space of trails. MacCannell (1999) applied Goffman’s ideas to an analysis of touristic spaces, identifying frontstage stakeholders as tourists and backstage stakeholders as laborers or service workers. Socioeconomic and political conditions have a way of bleeding into the trail space. This is revealed by a multi-billion dollar outdoor gear and tourism industry that is largely reliant on trails, a multi-million dollar trail maintenance deficit, declining federal budgets and staffing, loss of federal authority and increasing partnership control that are well-intended but should be, and will be, viewed with some skepticism in the pages that follow. The result is a museum-like experience on trails exhibited by a shift from high quality professional trail work to the questionable fruit of volunteer labor.

According to MacCannell, the objective is to gain increasing access to the backstage experience, where elusive authenticity is thought to reside. Positionality in any one stage is rarely static, and individuals move freely amongst them. There are some that are highly radicalized, to the point of being almost exclusive. It is those at the top of this pyramid, the most deeply immersed and fewest in number, the self-described hiker trash and trail dogs, in which this study is most interested.

Constructed infrastructure and forms of social control, such as trails, serve as disappointing reminders that romantic conceptions of pristine wilderness are largely false (Cronon 1996). When hikers experience the backstage work done to maintain trails, through encounters with trail workers, the consequences can be emotionally difficult. Even so, some hikers who get a glimpse of the backstage spaces of NSTs and are intrigued by the work that trail crews do and may become compelled to join a volunteer trail crew. In this way, volunteers bridge thru hikers and professional trail builders as a stakeholder and in terms of gaining increasing access to the backstage. This movement through the front stage to back stage experiences will provide the structural and theoretical framework.

Once a social space is constructed, it must be controlled. In the context of trails, a paradigm for social control is comprised of three criteria: engineering, education, and enforcement (Rice and Atkin 2001). Engineering alone banks on the assumption that the infrastructure will be self-sustaining, but once use levels reach a point where the resource becomes degraded, education and enforcement are necessary. In trail space, engineering applies to constructing and maintaining a sustainable trail with the proper corridor and

tread widths, slope, water drainage and soil retention infrastructure. Education can come in the form of bulletin boards, field rangers, trail signage, and interpretive programs.

Enforcement shows seriousness and sincerity on the part of the agency by backing up the regulations in place. Without effective engineering, education, and enforcement, there is a risk of effective total loss of control as the trail culture is cultivated and moves toward self-management, not to mention degradation of the trail infrastructure.

Self-management is a symptom of deeply immersed trail culture. Because managers are not physically present and participating in the trail space and generally outside of the community, they are less trusted than, say, trail angels, when thru hikers are seeking updates on fire closures and trail conditions. Signs that have been written on, directional arrows, and laying sticks across junctions, communication methods, message boards, and notes on the trail might all be considered symptoms of self-management. Trail angels will leave food and water caches, use social media to provide trail condition and closure updates, provide rides or a place to stay. Trail angels are responsible for increasing the likelihood of a successful and safe journey, and they are within the trail community. Another way to frame it would be managers are perceived as a “voice of doubt,” while trail angels are perceived as “enablers.” More on this will be discussed in Chapter VI in terms of the mental state of pilgrims who must differentiate rational doubt from irrational doubt, largely due to a tightly knit community that is suspicious of outsiders.

Pilgrimage

Tendencies for self-management are especially true for NSTs as stakeholders are intensely invested in the perpetuity of the trail, arguably more so than other trails. This is largely due to the deconstruction and reconstruction of identity along the length of the trail. NSTs can be considered pilgrimage routes that give rise to a form of pilgrimage culture. As such, rites of passage and pilgrimage theory can effectively be applied to the NST trail space. For the purposes of my study, NSTs may be considered a sort of space between space, or a “third space.” Van Gennep (1966) separated rites of passage into three stages: separation, liminality, and reaggregation. In transition, thru hikers pass through a “social limbo” or “third space,” which enables transformation (Turner 1979: 16). In this liminal space, participants submit to being physically separated from society, stripped of their ordinary social status; and cross into a threshold of anonymity, an absence of names, labels, and titles; eating specified foods. There is a disregard for personal appearance, more gender-neutral clothing and, very generally speaking, fairly uniform clothing and gear. Thru hikers also enjoy special privileges of freedom, and an absence of social structure, all characterized by ritual acts of pilgrimage (Turner 1979). It should be noted that all of these qualities could likewise be applied to certain backcountry trail crews. This understanding of trails as a third space is important for NSTs, in terms of pilgrimage behavior because by association, there is a degree of lawlessness and untouchability (Van Gennep 1966, Turner 1979) that is specific to thru hikers, making this user group challenging to manage under the best of circumstances. For this reason, anthropological literature on pilgrimage can be useful for management of NSTs.

The act of walking, as embodied ritual movement, has been discussed in depth in pilgrimage literature, but there has also been a plethora of philosophical discourse on the meaning and implications of walking. Walking, or more literally, foot-powered, forward movement, imbues an otherwise neutral landscape with meaning, emotion, and narration. Thus, my goal in this research is to tie some of the fundamental anthropological literature on pilgrimage and ritual, sacred and profane space, to the act of and behaviors associated with thru hiking, for the purposes of managing pilgrimage landscapes and understanding thru hiker values. A logical place to start is with the founder of the PNT, Ron Strickland (1988: xvi):

Walking is beautifully simple. Long-distance walking has the purity and economy of well-lived days. Trekking is both aesthetically pleasing and physically demanding. For many of us, walking is a must, a passion. That type of enthusiasm about walking is much closer to nineteenth-century Romanticism than to today's fitness boom.

De Certeau (1984) likewise discusses the premise of walking, albeit in the city in this case, as an act of space-making, or a way of occupying "defined places" (p. 106), and subsequently redefining the place and also the self. De Certeau calls this "local authority," where "space is a practiced place" (p.117). The act of redefining not only the self, but also the landscape, with personal experience and embodied action is an important component of the thru hike, or pilgrimage process. In this way, linear landscapes become deeply embedded with personal narration. Furthermore, De Certeau shows us how we define trails and trails define us by our experiences.

Pedestrian travel captures a sense of reliving history, and preserving a sense of contact with the past, and has enjoyed a sense of paramount purity and "perceived

authenticity” in terms of methods of movement. However, increasingly popular pursuits for personal challenge and manifestations of contestation for trail use could also be reflective of a “permanent search for means of personal and collective acceleration... that must permeate all of life...and just as there are many ways to move... there are many ways to be modern” (Coleman 2005: 68).

Understanding how work, play, recreation, tourism, and leisure become demarcated on NSTs, what role they play in our society, and the behaviors associated with thru hiking for purposes of transformation and interpersonal growth, might be considered nothing less than symptomatic of a larger cultural unrest. This said, the importance of the growing popularity of NSTs as pilgrimage landscapes, as a “sacred decompression chamber” (Coleman 2005: 68) cannot be emphasized enough. An experience of liminality is the production of what Turner coined *communitas*. *Communitas* will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI, but more deeply immersive experiences explain an important anomaly in recreational values for solitude. The boundaries between sacred or secular travel, recreation, tourism, and transiency all become blurred in thru hiking. Rojek and Urry (1997) propose that such ambiguity is a symptom of a shift from “organized” capitalism to “disorganized” capitalism. Such symptoms manifest in the form of increased alienation, uncertainty about personal life trajectories, and disenfranchisement. As such, the appeal of *communitas*, transformations in values for solitude and trail use in general, could be seen as a form of displaced solidarity among a society deeply impacted by capitalist ideology. Muehlebach (2012) provides further insight on this transformation in terms of volunteerism.

NSTs may thus be valued in the sense that they offer opportunities for accumulation of moral and social capital, or the opportunity to shed accretion of iniquity through embodied movement. Thus, thru hiking is one way to acquire moral and social capital on NSTs. According to Muehlebach (2012), a second way, and the next stage of Goffman’s “revealed stages” of authenticity that I’ll explore, is volunteerism.

Volunteerism

The contributions of volunteer stewardship are not to be taken lightly, and have been a building force alongside the conservation and recreation movement since its inception. The Trails for America Study (DOI 1966: 20) found that volunteers gain “...an appreciation of the ideals, principles, and traditions that have shaped the Nation.” Trails frequently serve as connectors to our history. I suspect that the authors are referring to nostalgia for pioneering, rugged individualism, and romanticized connections to nature. This claim could just as effectively be linked to MacCannell’s “stages of authenticity,” whereas volunteers may be seeking a deeper immersion into what is perceived as an authentic experience. The influx of volunteerism was empowered, in part, by a transformation from perceptions of nature as profane and barren resource that must be tamed and exploited, and converted into a pastoral and fruitful space, into a sacred and pristine space that must be protected (Nash 2014). In so doing, wilderness becomes a moral hunting ground, accessed by trails, the emotional stomping ground. Effectively, reframing “nature” as sacred opened it up to becoming an exploitable resource for tourism. I introduce here a passage from Leopold (1966: 263). He states,

The evolution of a land ethic is an intellectual as well as emotional process. Conservation is paved with good intentions, which prove to be futile, or even

dangerous, because they are devoid of critical understanding either of the land, or of economic land-use. I think it is a truism that as the ethical frontier advances from the individual to the community; its intellectual content increases.

Leopold leaves us to wonder what happens to the emotional content through this process of collectivizing. This passage will become important in my analysis of the trail space, and I will revisit this question throughout the pages that follow, and seek to follow through on a thought that Leopold left ominously unfinished.

Volunteers and thru hikers thus share values for accumulation of moral and social capital. While both volunteers and thru hikers are having front stage touristic experiences, volunteers gain limited access to the backstage, which has the potential to either reinforce or deteriorate their otherwise romantic perceptions of the trail space. In a sense, volunteerism is seen as moral work fit for stewardship of moral space. Volunteering is “pure” and anticapitalistic, as a form of displaced solidarity (Muehlebach 2012).

Congress intentionally wove volunteerism into the legislative criteria for NSTs. The NTSA states, “It is further the purpose of this Act to encourage and assist volunteer citizen involvement in the planning, maintenance, and management, where appropriate, of trails” [P.L. 90-543, Sec. 2(c)]. As funding dwindles and agency staff becomes increasingly stretched, federal agencies rely on partner organizations, volunteers, and contributions from interest groups (Selin and Chevez 1995; Davenport, et al. 2007). This shift towards a participatory framework was further motivated by the passing of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (PL 91-190), and the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) of 1972 (PL 92-463). These key items of legislation gave resounding civic influence to the management of public lands and NSTs, putting the

public at the fore of many decisions. Politically empowered citizens, in conjunction with a growing awareness of environmental degradation, propelled by a leisure class, inspired a wave of enthusiasm for public participation. In 2014, a new bill was introduced that has not yet passed that would “significantly increase the role of volunteers and partners in National Forest System trail maintenance,” with a stated objective to increase trail maintenance volunteers 100 percent in the space of five years (H.R. 4886 2014). The important factor that is often glossed over in legislative criteria is that volunteers are intended to “augment and support” (H.R. 4886 2014) federal employees, not replace them. There is little evidence that volunteer programs are supplementing professional trail crews when all indications suggest an inversely correlated federal staff and budgets for stewardship of public lands in relation to rising volunteerism. Consequently, perhaps coincidentally, labor is passed off to volunteer crews as professional federal trail crews become increasingly phased-out of recreation programs.

Muehlebach (2012) describes the role of volunteerism, what she terms the “moral neoliberal” that has arisen in response to an inherent self-fulfilling need—a quest to combat the isolation and loss of solidarity associated with capitalism, which would be another shared value with thru hikers. Muehlebach asserts that solidarity is not in fact destroyed by capitalism, but replaced with other forms of solidarity, thus offering an explanation for a suggestive rise in volunteerism under the umbrella of NGOs, and perhaps the growing popularity of trail communities. Volunteers are more interested in reconstructing both the public and the private sphere, “as a mediating force in a disarticulated social body and with creating relational wealth ... in a country wracked by

relational poverty” (Muehlebach 2012: 38). Muehlebach here is referring to Italy; however, one need not look far to find that similar conditions exist in the United States. In other words, volunteer labor is associated with accumulating moral and cultural capital, and less interested in actually getting dirt under their fingernails. Similar to hiker-pilgrimage, volunteerism is another way we use trails to pursue community. Wilderness, as sacred space, and trails, being the vehicle to access such sacred space, provides an ideal setting for such displaced relational, moral, and social wealth. Furthermore, trail builders, hikers, and volunteers alike have pursued and found solidarity and community in the pursuit of authenticity and transformation that is increasingly difficult to find in a globalized era. I will put forth some skepticism on acts of philanthropy in the trail space.

First of all, it is interesting that Adam Smith (1976: 351-352) called such non-work labor “perverted” and “parasitical.” He maintained that this type of labor leaves nothing of value in its wake, and fails to conceptualize itself into a saleable commodity. Granted, there is clearly *some* sort of product associated with volunteer trail work, albeit on varying scales of quality and efficiency and risk, to a trained eye. However, Byl (2013: xix) asserts that, “Work marks the spirit.” Here are where differing values for leisure performances and work performances reveal themselves. I will use MacCannell (1999) to conceptualize volunteerism as a work performance, notwithstanding an “inauthentic” one.

In that vein, a second interesting outcome of volunteerism arises when certain user groups are legally prohibited from participating in the social space. Some would-be stakeholders believe that the controversial matter of access is actually a determining

factor in whether a trail is sustainable or not. In other words, some user groups leverage volunteer labor as a means to justify gaining access to otherwise prohibited spaces. Namely, the Sustainable Trails Coalition (STC), a mountain bike advocacy group, is currently aggressively lobbying to gain contingent access to both the NWPS and certain NSTs, such as the PCT.

In this way, user groups may attempt to manipulate perceptions of sustainability, which is wholly defined in terms of neutrally charged landscape engineering, to meet their own self-serving, emotionally charged needs. Thus, volunteerism becomes a way to leverage political power and access, and in this case, results in propositions to open up the Wilderness Act for re-interpretation, which can undermine the integrity of the Act. These tensions between legitimate stewardship and personal and collective entitlement must be mediated as an amalgamation of social, economic, and political conditions.

A third troublesome outcome of volunteerism is an assumed prerogative to legislative exemptions. Recreationally charged special interest groups may come into conflict with organizations that advocate for wilderness in and for itself. For example, the Backcountry Horsemen of America, an advocate for one type of recreational user group, and the Wilderness Society shared differing opinions on how to deal with a severe trail maintenance deficit. The former wants to declare the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness a state of emergency to sanction an exemption to chainsaw prohibition. The Salmon River Backcountry Horsemen believe that primitive tools slow down maintenance and are part of the problem that trails are falling into disrepair. The organization is troubled that they cannot use mechanized equipment of any kind. The

organization's representative states, "We've actually had contracts up there where the use of a wheelbarrow is prohibited" (Kunz 2013: no page number). This volunteer appears to be unaware that the wheelbarrow prohibition is not personal, but is simply the agency adhering to the Wilderness Act, as required by law. In contrast, the relatively neutrally charged, landscape-oriented mission statement of the Wilderness Society is "to protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places" (The Wilderness Society n.d.). While agreeing that the value of trails should not be underestimated and the consequences of a maintenance debt should not be taken lightly, this organization thought such an exemption was an inappropriate response.

In yet another incident, albeit non-wilderness in this case, a snowmobile club caused \$200,000 worth of damage prepping trails and roads for winter use (Peacher 2015). In this case, the USFS accepted partial responsibility for the "miscommunication" and lack of guidance, and viewed it as a learning experience that volunteer groups need oversight. The agency has asked for \$35,000 from the snowmobile club to contribute to rehabilitation. Otherwise, the USFS will foot the bill with dollars allotted to trail and road maintenance, further taxing an already sorely inadequate budget.

These examples are intended to represent just a few of the high costs associated with volunteers, and show that volunteers are far from free labor. Volunteers and recreationists usually come with emotional attachments, which come with a price. Such attachments do not necessarily align with the purpose and intent of the conservation agenda. It is more indicative of increasing tension between values for land protection for the sake of land protection, and not even values for unconfined types of recreational

pursuits, but collective entitlement. That said, volunteers are here to stay and are invaluable as a supplement to professional trail crews. The most important lessons learned are that volunteers need oversight, management, and guidance; and an appropriate volunteer program is not conducted in a haphazard or accidental manner. These are the lessons the Forest Service is still learning as it incorporates volunteerism into its work schemata.

Trail Dogs

There is another narrative to add to this social space that may be contextualized by the profane-sacred transformation. Professional trail builders—trail dogs and trail grunts (Byl 2013, Tobias 2014)—like the trail itself, are equally invisible to the trail space. Unlike tourists in the front stage, trail dogs do not generally broadcast themselves. Christine Byl, who did write about her experiences as a career trail builder and self-declared trail dog in *Dirt Work: An Education in the Woods* (2013: xx) states: “I know I’m spurning an unwritten rule, a cherished code of laborers. Our work speaks for us. We don’t draw attention to ourselves, and most of all, we don’t draw attention to each other... I hope they’ll forgive me.” She defends herself by stating, “I want to honor this world, show you its value.” The “cherished code of laborers” is evidently to not reveal their world to tourists, for the reasons articulated by MacCannell (1999). The “authentic” backstage experience, such as becoming a professional trail builder, is a stomping ground of social solidarity. For some, becoming a “real” trail dog is the ultimate achievement in perceived authenticity, for did not they all begin as tourists before they became builders?

On the other hand, similar to thru hikers, trail work offers opportunity as a rite of passage. Governor Jerry Brown conceptualized the California Conservation Corps in 1976 “to provide an experience, a rite of passage, for young men and women in this state that would be based upon fundamental values—values such as reverence and respect for the natural systems and also for the growth from adolescent self-preoccupation, the transition to adult recognition of the need for responsibility, shared vision, and working for the entire community.”¹ Similar to the thru hiking community whereupon seasoned hikers are looked to for advice and mentorship for newly initiated thru-hiker hopefuls, the trail building community also initiates novice trail workers who work under the guidance and mentorship of long-time trail dogs. Novice trail builders are uniformly dressed, and hierarchy is often represented by the color of one’s hardhat, if not age alone.

Volunteers bridge the social space between trail dogs and thru hikers, while social solidarity and reliving history seems to be the common theme. Volunteers are still engaged in a touristic experience, but their deepening level of engagement is due to a prior experience and attachment with the trail that inspired them to become a steward. The volunteer receives a glamorous staged version of trailwork, one that is but another show, carefully constructed to meet the expectations and reinforce the values of the volunteer. If too much of the backstage is revealed, the volunteer may become repulsed or horrified. The back region is a reminder of a foregone time that predates sacred wilderness space. Trailworkers laboring for money is evidence of lingering profanity.

¹ Brown, Jerry. “CCC, A Day in the Life of a Corpsmember.” Caconservationcorps (YouTube), uploaded November 2, 2011. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHJ6AdZIpII> on May 27, 2016.

Volunteering can be seen as a way to add depth to one's trail experience, without going so far as to desecrate it with a living wage.

Sustainable Trails

The destination-infrastructure, protected area-trails, relationship has been examined in carrying capacity research as a tool for defining sustainability (Boers and Cottrell 2007; Reigner, Kiser, Lawson, and Manning 2012). In other words, often in protected areas, we created destinations first with an assumption infrastructure will follow. A sustainable tourism model would do the opposite. Indeed, NSTs reverse this trend. The trail itself becomes the destination rather than the wilderness. NSTs could thus effectively alleviate wilderness pressure by dispersing use over great linear distances, and bring use to areas that otherwise are less desirable and certainly less contested. It is only by traveling through "pristine" wilderness landscapes, clearcut scars, crossing buzzing powerlines, and crossing roads that NSTs are thus capable of reflecting changing landscapes. NSTs create value and an unlikely destination for these otherwise perceived substandard landscapes.

For reference, according to Dundas (2007), a good working definition of a sustainable trail may be defined as "a trail that, as the result of good design or rehabilitation, is able to endure its designed usage and is resistant to the degradation of normal environmental factors, with only minimal effort required to maintain it." Boers and Cottrell (2007: 3) state that a sustainable trail should:

1. "...Contribute to the protected area development objectives;
2. ...Enable visitors to realize their desired and expected experiences;

3. ...Safeguard resource-carrying capacity standards
4. ...Limit resource impacts.”

Discussion

This chapter has sought to show how trails serve as self-investing means of accumulating moral, social, and cultural capital in otherwise disintegrating neoliberal conditions off the trail through means of either deeply immersed pilgrimage experiences or volunteerism, which by way of MacCannell’s framework, is simply a way of adding depth and authenticity to one’s trail experience. The rise of, and increasing reliance upon volunteerism further reinforces the premise that socioeconomic and sociopolitical conditions have a way of introducing themselves to the trail space, and thus injecting themselves into the wilderness. There is absolutely a need to innovate new ways to counter the failing federal budgets and dwindling staff, however, private and special interest groups, including volunteers, should be greeted with caution. Nonprofit organizations have much to offer that federal agencies are lacking, such as marketing and public mediation, and volunteers are useful at some trail maintenance tasks, however they are not resource managers, and volunteers are a tool to supplement, but never replace, professional trail crews. Volunteers should always be managed and fully coordinated by technical expertise. I also introduced a discussion of trails in terms of sustainable tourism to begin to frame trails as, not only an opportunity for a rite of passage, but as a touristic infrastructure. Trail construction also thus extinguishes the pristine myth, and creates such symbolic landscapes as NSTs.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Bochner (2000: 266-267) states that:

...[T]here is no paradigm-free way of looking ... in our hearts, if not in our minds, we know that the phenomena we study are messy, complicated, uncertain, and soft ... We get preoccupied with rigor, but are neglectful of imagination ... criteria are the very means we ourselves created to contain our desire for freedom and experience, a way of limiting our own possibilities and stifling our creative energy. I wonder, what is it we are not talking about when we are talking about criteria? Instead of asking, how can this be true? we could ask, what if this were true? What then?

This “desire for freedom and experience” and self-limiting “stifling of creative energy” provides the basis for my decision to use qualitative ethnographic methods for my study. These character traits, this pursuit for freedom and cultivation of creativity, resonates with the reasons people, including myself, take to the trails. I wanted to create a manuscript that captured and fostered that spirit, rather than subdued it. It is a method, I learned, that is sometimes uncomfortable, emotional, vulnerable and exposing, but so is being on the trail. When I accepted a job in which I would find myself immersed in a remote wilderness in northern California for six months, an experience I will reference throughout this document, my interviewer warned me, “You can’t hide in the woods.” By that he meant you could not “fake it” in that environment for that length of time. Your baggage would be exposed, hung out on the line for everyone to see, and you would have to face it, and if you are lucky, absolve it. I understood, and I embraced it. In much the same way, to write about trail culture immersion, it must be raw, emotional, and brutally honest.

In order to best observe a temporal development of trail culture, I studied a 300-mile Washington section of the PCT and a 200-mile Washington section of the PNT in July and August 2016. Both sections were more relative to terminus culture than inauguration or novitiate, as Washington hosts the terminus points for both the PCT and the PNT. Thus my study area site was host to deeply immersed and conditioned thru hikers. My study seeks to understand how and if NSTs reflect human connections with and relationships to the land. Management objectives between NSTs vary and examining these variations, in concert with trail culture on the ground, may likewise reflect such changing relationships, connections, and sought-after experiences, by way of linear landscapes in transformation.

Phase one of this research occurred from May through July 2015, and employed pre-fieldwork methods such as literature review of relevant case studies and initial communications with community members, stakeholders, trail managers, and thru hikers. Phase one helped accomplish my first research objective, which is to compare and contrast thru hiker “community connectivity” experiences on the PNT versus the “wilderness experience” offered by the PCT.

Institutional Review Board approval was sought and received through the Human Subjects Review Council application process at Central Washington University. Identities were protected by coding informant’s names, upon request by the participant, or by my own discretion. Many participants have already changed their given names when they embark on a thru hike. With their approval, I retained their adopted trail name to preserve

the integrity and character of the narrative. Otherwise, I have simply inserted “anonymous” in place of a participant’s name.

Thru hikers are generally public people. Many blog and publicize their hike widely through social media forums. Just hiking with someone for a couple hours, might earn you a reference in their blog, which is what happened to me during my study on a section of the PNT. Nonetheless, it was important not to become complacent about protecting the identities of my participants. As I will discuss throughout this document, a thru hike is a deeply personal, emotional, and transformative experience. While the nature of this study is not to probe into highly sensitive subject matter, participants may be recovering from, or escaping, an addiction, or healing from war trauma, to name just a few examples. Participants may be going through a time of personal upheaval, and their identity is temporarily suspended while on the trail. Despite that I was generally studying an outgoing and public group of people who were active in social media forums, it remained important to me to respect the personal space needed during this time, and to adhere to ethical guidance outlined in the American Anthropological Association (AAA) Code of Ethics.

Phase two was composed of fieldwork, occurring in July and August 2015 (Appendix A). During this phase, I employed participant observation, unstructured interviews and conversations with thru hikers and community members. Upon returning from the field, I used social media forums to distribute a qualitative survey adapted from Spartz and Shaw (2011) (Appendix B). Due to the mobile nature of this phase of the study, I carried all data on my person for the entirety of my fieldwork. I also attended a

PCT Days event in Cascade Locks, Oregon, and a PNT Advisory Council meeting in Sandpoint, Idaho. I used a tablet and voice recorder for all documentation of fieldwork.

The population under study includes both male and female hikers. Thru hikers were approached along the trail or were contacted based upon pertinent social media activity, such as blogging, or business enterprise. I supplemented with personal contacts to identify active members of the thru hiker community. Through community immersion, attending advisory council meetings and events, and participating in thru hiking and social media forums, I was exposed to a wide range of candidates.

Phase three was conducted primarily in Ellensburg, Washington, from September 2015 through April 2016. It included data analysis and follow-up on surveys collected, ongoing literature review, and the writing process. Data analysis tied themes and patterns to existing theory. Using this information, I conclude with final recommendations to relevant agencies and stakeholders for management implications discovered. This combination of methods will best reconstruct a narrative of pertinent values, place-meanings, nature-culture relations, and connections to NSTs and the various landscapes they travel through, in order to best and most fully satisfy my research objectives, which are to better define and understand the role of values, connection, stewardship, and identity attachments to linear landscapes such as NSTs.

In Ellensburg, I conducted analysis of fieldwork data gathered, further literature review, and writing of the thesis. This combination of methods will best reconstruct a narrative of pertinent values, place-meanings, nature-culture relations, and connections to National Scenic Trails, in order to best and most fully satisfy my research objectives.

Positionality

The format of this thesis is intended to construct the trail space, as a stage for touristic experiences, from the ground up, in order to answer my research questions. I use MacCannell's (1999) interpretation of Goffman's (1959) stages of authenticity to accomplish this, in terms of levels of immersion. I will draw upon my experience as a wilderness ranger and interpretive guide to start with a baseline foundation of notions about pristine, neutral, and enduring wilderness. Then I will draw upon many years as a "backstage" trail crewmember and foreman to symbolically and intellectually "construct" a tourist stage, the trail. Finally, I will set down the tools of my trade, and pick up my trekking poles and embark on a 500-mile journey, as a tourist, a recreationist, a pilgrim, and a transient. From this perspective, much can be learned about trails: what they do for us, and what we have to offer in return.

My prior experience working for the Forest Service and various nonprofit organizations as a trail crewmember, a trail boss, a wilderness ranger, interpretive field guide, firefighter, and agency liaison, provides me with an extensive working knowledge of the language and customs of backcountry scenarios such as this, and supplies me with a good foundation to draw upon many of the levels of immersion in the trail space. I have worked on wilderness sections of the PCT from northern California to central Oregon, and frequently made contact with thru hikers and other wilderness visitors as a regular part of my job duties. I will draw upon prior experiences that deeply immersed me in the wilderness space, where we worked weekdays, camped in low use sites away from the trail; wore neutral-toned clothes, shirts that were stained with backpack straps; smoked,

and swore at uncooperative rocks and logs, and soul-sucking mosquitos and ticks—trail crew language would make a sailor blush—awkwardly adjusting our behavior and language when the public would occasionally encounter us. And I will draw upon experience where I was then put on the same plane as hiker-tourists. Here I worked weekends, wore a cleanish uniform, frequented the most popular destinations, always smiled and tried to relate, chewed sunflower seeds, which were mindfully spit into a receptacle and packed out, and certainly never swore.

The only performance I was lacking, in a deeply immersed sense, was that of the hiker-tourist, thus the fieldwork portion of my research. As a hiker-participant observer, I took to the trail naturally, but my conscience weighed on me. I climbed over, and left, trees down across the trail, broken trail structures, clogged waterbars, and trash that had been left behind. My conversations with people were not interventionist or educational. Worst of all, I was not even getting paid. I started to feel guilty until eventually it, in part, unraveled my purpose. Inevitably, my prior personal and professional background deeply affected my interpretation of experiences, perceptions, and results.

Discussion

My professional background, in conjunction with an attempt at participating in the tourist space provides the foundation for my results and experiences. I used my technical expertise to, in a sense, survey the trail as I had done many times for work in years prior to inductively assess what it is we do for trails. Rounding that out by talking to and administering surveys, and also my experience as a tourist, I could also glean an understanding of what, in turn, trails do for us. In part it was my experiences that helped

me construct the theoretical framework. It was my own experiences that helped me understand others experiences.

I could then take my assessments of what we do for trails and what trails do for us to answer my first and second research questions to inductively assess the relationship between recreation and preservation.

CHAPTER V

INFRASTRUCTURAL ARCHITECTS: TRAIL DOGS

Introduction

In this chapter, I will introduce the context that provides me with my understanding of the performance of trail building. The intent of this chapter is to introduce the backstage trail crew by which the wilderness is paved with meaning through construction of trails. In so doing, I will introduce a layer of authenticity, but yet still a temporary fixture in the wilderness. I will be departing from Goffman's perception that the backstage performer is the highest level of authenticity. I argue that even the backstage crews, the infrastructural architects of trails, are tourists in themselves. This departure from Goffman's framework may represent, not necessarily a weakness, but rather simply an architectural difference between his "relatively indoor" (1959: 106) society and my "relatively outdoor" society that I am studying.

The term trail dog is one I was not familiar with during my seven-year tenure as a trail worker. I did used to call novice trail builders I supervised, "grunts," affectionately of course. I was skeptical of the term "trail dog" for some time when I first encountered it because it seemed volunteers were picking up on it, and I wanted to be clear that I was not describing a volunteer trail crew experience. Urban Dictionary helped clear up the matter for me. It defines a trail dog as "a person who has worked on a trails maintenance crew, usually in the backcountry in a National Forest or Park, for at least seven seasons." To this I would add that they are paid, and also, like hiker trash as defined in Erin Miller's (2014: cover page) book on thru hikers: "shabby and homeless in appearance,

rarely bathed and rank in odor, more at home outdoors than in society with some level of reverence for wildness.” Either way, the reader can gather some level of desensitized loss of romantic nostalgia about their life on the trail. I will provide some context in a reflection upon my own experience in a deeply immersed wilderness experience with the California Conservation Corps in 2003:

There is a degree of romantic denial that one must possess when committing to live in the wilderness. For the first three weeks, it rained. My clothes molded, hygiene was neglected, and I lived and slept in puddles in my tent. Shin splints and blisters had me in tears and hobbling the several mile hike home from work every day. I went through two pairs of expensive organization-issued Redwing boots, each of which lasted precisely eleven days before the left toe was flapping. I persuaded my supervisor to let me wear my own sixty dollar Hi-Tec boots which went proud and strong the remainder of the season, while everyone else around me was gluing, screwing, and taping their boots back together.

We moved camp twenty miles into the heart of the wilderness about a month into the season. Here we spent six weeks ridden by mosquitoes, ticks, and poison oak, testing our commitment. But we also swam daily in deep green pools of Woolley Creek among moss-covered rocks and giant Douglas fir, oak, incense cedar, maple, and dogwood.

We did laundry in a bucket using a manual Maytag, which looks like a large toilet plunger, but made of metal instead of rubber. We heated dishwater over a fire and washed dishes communally in a four-bucket system: splooge, soap, rinse, bleach rinse. We argued over the spelling of splooge, which was our gray water depository. Needless to say, the splooge pit was a seedbed of nightmares. We hiked. We hiked with everything we possessed for those five and a half months and we hiked with the tools we would need that day: a double bit, a cross-cut saw, a pick mattock, a Pulaski, single jacks and double jacks, or a rock bar—sometimes a grip hoist if we had to yank a root wad out of the ground or boulders out of the side of the mountain, or to lever a particularly large tree we had just bucked out, and could not move it with rock bars alone. Sometimes two or three of us would leave the crew and hike with the saw and a couple rock bars and a double bit, clearing the trail of fallen trees. We might hike up to twenty-five miles in a day, logging out only a half dozen trees, and come back to camp at eight o’clock at night, weary and worn out, and the crew would be waiting for us with rolled cigarettes and dinner on a plate. Other days we might log out a couple hundred trees in two twelve-hour days, and only travel a couple miles. We got paid for a forty-hour week but it was days like this that we worked until we

punched out the clock and then kept on, partially for the love of it, partially because we were scared of the wrath of the trail bosses and being called a backslider, but ultimately, we did not have a choice. There was work to be done. It was the log-out that got me hooked on trail work. I find bucking out trees to be a bit of a Zen activity—sizing it up, looking for spring-loaded limbs, tension and compression; deciding how many cuts, where to cut, reading the kerf, when to put in a wedge, when to pull out and underbuck, when to single buck, and whether I liked the tree or not.

Later, when the blisters and shin splints passed, as we gained our strength and settled into our habitat, a scant few of us who were perhaps slightly more compulsive than the rest, and by that I mean only one taker was crazy enough to accompany me. I only needed one. We weren't allowed to hike or do much of anything on our own. We hiked up to fifty miles on the weekends just to scale some peak or check out the headwaters of some creek or swim in a lake that had not been swum in yet. We ran home from work at the end of the day on Friday, grabbed our weekend gear that we'd packed that morning, stuffed leftover pancakes in our pockets and set off at a half-jog, hiking well into the dark. We would hike another twenty or thirty miles the next day to our destination, and then hustle back to camp on Sunday to try to meet our five p.m. curfew. Our supervisor came to accept that we would always be late.

When my knees started to fall apart midway through the season and it impacted my work performance, my supervisor patronizingly suggested that I might consider not destroying my body every weekend. I put my head down, kept my mouth shut, and worked harder. By the end of the summer, almost every trail in that wilderness had been hiked, every notable peak had been climbed, and most lakes and creeks had been swum in. It was a measure of success, and a source of obsession.

It was the simplest of pleasures that we lived for: a weekend hike that took us high enough to provide a momentary respite from the ticks, oak, and mosquitoes; perhaps even for a brief vacation from our supervisor or a crewmember that was irking us. The plunge into a pristine wilderness lake or creek after a grueling day of digging in the dirt, wearing Ziploc bags over my socks to glissade down an alpine slope in June in my sandals, the after dinner cigarette, borrowing someone's CD player and listening to music for the first time in months, climbing peaks, celebrating a crew mate's birthday, staying up all night drinking coffee; helping a crewmate practice his English, who in turn helped me practice my Spanish, and learning a little Mayan to boot; seeing a mama bear with her cub; munching salmon berries, blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, or gooseberries that were snatched up while out hiking; the sweat lodge that we built at each camp that our supervisor did not know about, and the plunge in the creek in the middle of the night afterward. Our bodies became strong and healthy and

we grew mechanically numb to any pain that did plague us. When I found myself in a mid-season slump, I attached myself to the hardest working, fastest hiking guy on the crew, and I dug deep. A sort of a normalcy developed; an unspoken resolution. The strength of commitment overwhelmed all else. It was a way of life.

The six weeks we lived in this particular spot, we never saw anyone except the Forest Service packers who supplied us every two weeks. The packers were two old cowboys, ghosts of a time that most people probably think is no more. They had giant handlebar mustaches, old worn cowboy hats and boots, weathered faces, and leathery hands. One never said a peep but the other never stopped talking and, in fact, entertained us around the fire at night with poetry, songs, and the occasional cowboy rap. Besides the packers there was the district foreman, the foreman's daughter, and her two-year old daughter. This family is something of a legend in the trail building community. The foreman's daughter lived with her parents at a wilderness cabin where her father was employed as fire lookout and learned how to operate a crosscut when she was eight. She was the first woman packer to work in Yellowstone. Her two-year-old rode into camp at the front of a mule string, clinging to the back of a mule, riding bareback by herself.

We would be sitting peacefully around camp eating our lunches when the foreman's silver hard hat would suddenly go whizzing across camp, accompanied by his slow drawling hollering at his brindle-coated dog, Sneaker: "YOU don't eat other people's lunches, do you? DO YOU?" Sneak cowered, quivering in fear, coiling herself into a little ball. You do not piss off the packers, neither human nor dog, and you certainly do not eat the trail boss' sandwich.

There was an array of Forest Service employees who worked alongside us from time to time: One of them had the Forest Service shield tattooed on his upper arm that said, "Property of U.S. Forest Service." He called it his uniform. All of these people filtered in and out of camp, in addition to eight or ten mules and a couple dogs, the occasional visitor, but it was mostly just us: our crew of seventeen, a supervisor, and a cook (Chinchen 2007, unpublished manuscript).

Thirteen years later, I returned to this organization as a Forest Service liaison to co-supervise a novice crew, and became one of the "array of Forest Service employees who worked alongside" the crew. Solar panels for recharging electronics had been introduced. The crew did not use CD players anymore, but had iPods. Camera technology had improved, and the selfie had been introduced. Corpsmembers had to turn in their cell

phones and disconnect from various social media platforms when they enlisted. There were no cell phones or social media to disconnect from during my tenure. Mules came and went. People came and went. Otherwise, the culture, the daily patterns, the cotton brown pants and cotton tan uniform shirt, the tools, the food, the birthday parties, the weekend excursions—remained perfectly intact and preserved. It had already been preserved before for many years before I joined. Crews dating back to the 1980s and the 1990s would say the same.

This helps me understand that wilderness does not preserve only the landscape, but it preserves a way of life too, despite being a place where humans are only temporary visitors. Goffman's framework helps me understand, too, how this way of life has been driven underground and hidden from view. Despite this, trails, and the experiences we have on them are transformative.

Landscapes in Transformation

I have just departed what would be the most solitary experience of my time on the PCT. I had walked through the least pristine, and the most transformed, landscape thus far. I traveled through an old burn and numerous clearcuts. I saw a bear—the only bear I saw all summer. I had a gloriously peaceful walk in a misty rain that morning. It was a rare nonwilderness stretch of trail, and I encountered only one person that whole day until I neared the bustle of Snoqualmie Pass. I wonder about the questionable relationship between designating wilderness, protecting land, and in so doing, creating high traffic tourist destinations while impacted landscapes such as this are forgotten. In so doing, we create an irony whereupon solitude might be better sought in nonwilderness. I am

reminded of the destination-infrastructure relationship discussed in Chapter III. By making the trail the destination, we construct values for even degraded landscapes—landscapes which are in need of love and restoration as much as, or more than “pristine” wilderness landscapes.

A landscape can transform itself either by natural topography or manmade contrivances, both of which are noticed by trail users. When asked about landscape changes along the trail, I let my participants interpret whether I was asking about natural or manmade transformations. Manmade changes such as wind farms, clear cuts, “weird random huts,” mining, cattle, and horses, even the trail itself in one case, were described as “disrupting” and “sad.” Natural landscape changes were described as “amazing,” “wonderful,” “dramatic,” “interesting,” “exciting,” “uplifting,” “fascinating,” and “beautiful.” Thru hiking provides a pathway and a means for discovery at a deliberate and undistracted pace. Popsicle (personal communication, October 2015) states laconically: “I noticed a new plant every day.” Bright Eyes (personal communication, October 2015) shares this sentiment: “I love the idea of witnessing landscape changes at a gradual, ‘human’ pace.”

As a trail builder and former wilderness ranger, I was trained to have a critical eye for human modifications. I do not think much of the natural landscape. A good trail builder is well trained to mimic natural landscapes within the scope of a project. Retaining walls have vegetation transplanted into them to make it look as if it has been there for a long time, and to help them blend with the natural character of the landscape.

All major trail projects end with rehabilitation to naturalize the impacts we produced.

These trails tell stories.

The Museum Out There

To most, trails provide access to natural places and “pristine” wilderness, but to a trained eye, trails maintain a sort of museum-like quality—a record of human tinkering and, to a very critical eye, one can even detect transformational cultural values and the descent into neoliberal socioeconomic and sociopolitical conditions. This museum quality is, according to Alpers (1991), a “way of seeing.” I draw upon Alpers’ (1991: 27) “museum effect,” which is defined as a “tendency to isolate something from its world, to offer it up for attentive looking and thus transform it into art.” This definition does not intuitively work for trails and their manmade contrivances, however, not all museums draw out and highlight their exhibits, and not all museums remove its artifacts from the environment to put them on display. The trail provides this experience of a subdued historic art form. Another way of seeing is to look analytically, reading the symptoms produced by the condition of the trail. Trail structures and the tools used to build them are in themselves material culture. In some cases, as in the trail space, they may be unnoticeable and subdued to the visitor, the difference being a lack of “visual evidence” of “change over time” (Alpers 1991: 27). As such, trails and their structures are intentionally woven into the landscape to retain an illusion of constancy and preservation. The pristine myth is further protected. I draw upon my experience as a wilderness ranger and a trail builder as a way of seeing the diminishing quality of trail work as professional skilled trail workers are eliminated or, at best, replaced by volunteer labor. There are old

dilapidated bridges and trail structures from the glory days of trail building that no one has the funds or skills to upkeep anymore. Signs themselves transform through the years. Old signs that perhaps some old trail worker refused to take down because that is the “way things have always been.” One sign stubbornly rejects the newly assigned Pacific Crest Trail identity and still calls itself the Cascade Crest Trail. Old burns, old clear cuts, old cabins, and old mining pits—trails tell stories, stories about human action, even in the depths of the vastest wilderness (Figure 4). If I were to revisit a trail that I built or maintained, I would not see pristine wilderness. I would see stories. That is where one trail worker broke off his fingernail placing a rock – a rock that is meant to hold the soil as thousands of feet pass through, wearing away at the soil, and protecting the roots beneath from becoming exposed. Here is the switchback where we lost a boulder that struck and killed a marmot. The boulder was meant to retain the delicate eroding alpine ecosystem from being trampled, and to discourage people from cutting switchbacks. Leverage magnifies our capacity for destruction. A grip hoist can uproot giant root wads and break apart the side of a mountain sending car-sized boulders tumbling down the slope, parting the forest like Moses parted the Red Sea. At another switchback we illicitly cut down an old oak tree with a chainsaw in the wilderness to provide safe passage for stock. We blinked in the sudden heat and bright sunlight once the tree came down, realizing we had been laboring in its cool shade during its last hours. We grip hoisted the enormous stump out and rehabilitated the entire area. No one would know the difference. Switchbacks are difficult for a string of mules, but I am quite certain my supervisors had not obtained an exemption for prohibited chainsaw use.



Figure 4: The museum out there—sites along the PCT and the PNT.

These special unauthorized self-granted permissions happen frequently in the wilderness, if not by federal employees themselves, then by volunteers or members of the public. It is a highly contentious and highly divisive matter, but largely undiscussed. The wilderness is host to many such “public secrets,” that which is “generally known but

cannot generally be spoken” (Taussig 1999: 50). Due to its remote nature and a high likelihood of being able to get away with something—what happens in the wilderness stays in the wilderness—acting upon forbidden conduct becomes a problem of human nature in the trail space.

Over a decade later, when I knew better, on a new forest with new colleagues, I was devastated to hear a fellow trail crew supervisor bantering about our packers using chainsaw in the wilderness, snickering at his own ingenuity when he came up with the code words: “the world’s fastest misery whip, if you know what I mean.” I have been authorized to use chainsaw in the wilderness, but even when authorized, it comes with a caveat to limit its use, use minimal impact techniques, and only use it if necessary. I am of the school of thought that, with a little ingenuity, skill, and resourcefulness, the use of chainsaw is never necessary. “Impossible” is taboo in the vocabulary of a wilderness staffer. “Challenging” is preferred. It is a mantra that accompanies a trail builder through her life.

You become desensitized after working season after season in the wilderness. Your humor, language, manners, and dress become crude. Gender barriers dissolve. Women carry as much weight, wear the same clothes, and work as hard as their male counterparts. Leverage is her best friend, such that it does not matter if she weighs less or has less muscle per pound of body weight compared to her male colleagues. This is where intellect and ingenuity magnifies, or often replaces, sheer brute strength. A male coworker affectionately called me Man Hands because of my rejection for gloves. I liked building up my calluses all summer and the sure grip on my double bit when I was

swinging at a log that had fallen across the trail, especially if it was slick and raining. Losing your tool mid-swing is substandard, and rather sketchy. I learned to laugh at things that would have offended me at another time in another place. I could hold my own. Keeping company with firefighters later became child's play compared to a backcountry trail crew. Firefighters are exposed to the public eye and are more liable to be held accountable for their behavior, while a backcountry trail crew may go weeks or, in some cases, even months without seeing a member of the public, taking a shower, flushing a toilet, doing laundry, and so on. They are invisible to the public, and like ghosts even to the ranger district for whom they work, if they are a good crew. They are respected for their huge packs and high standard for fitness.

On the occasion they are exposed to the public eye, trail crew cleans up their language, yell profanities at one another more quietly, and try not to leave their dirty laundry soaking in the creek in places where a hiker might stumble upon it. The public often confuses a trail crew for a prison crew forced to do community service. "Yes, they're paid," I often found myself explaining on behalf of the crew I supervised. A good trail crew avoids the office like a scourge. They are notably absent during as many of the district-wide meetings, trainings, and orientations as they can get away with. The only time they might be seen in the office is at the end of the pay period to submit their timesheet, and most likely, they are awkward and uncomfortable in the swiveling office chairs and there's a pile of dirt scattered around their chair. The really clever ones find an underling to do this task for them so they can do tool repair at the warehouse, tend to the mules at the barn, or find some reason to remain in the field. They probably smell like a

campfire. According to Goffman, these might be seen as qualities of impression management in the trail space to protect trail users from being exposed to a more authentic, but profane and offensive, region of the trail space.

But unauthorized chainsaw use in the wilderness is not funny. These were colleagues that I had respected, but there is nothing respectable about succumbing to convenience and, in my opinion, laziness. I did not laugh about it alongside my colleagues. Instead I fell into a stupor of conflict, my trust shattered. My reflex was to report the incident to my supervisor, because that is standard procedure when there has been a wilderness violation, but I wondered if he too was in cahoots with the packers. My supervisor was a man of contradictions. He chewed and swore like the cowboy he was, and he was about as backwoods as they come, but we had co-taught the Wilderness Act to a crew of novice backcountry trail builders. I knew him to be a wilderness advocate, but now I wondered. Maybe I was naïve. For weeks, I carried this secret like a heavy burden. I never was able to get my respect back for those packers. I worked alongside them and bantered with them, but my relationship with them was changed.

Prior to this incident, within the scope of my former duties as a wilderness ranger, I often stopped to talk to thru hikers on the trail. One hiker revealed to me that she had encountered a trail crew that was “massacring baby trees” (Anonymous, personal conversation, Summer 2013). She had been walking through a forest of lodgepole pine. Lodgepole grows dense and spindly in the volcanic pumice dirt typical to the area I was working at that time, in “dog-hair” stands, a perfect carrier for wildfire. In fact, lodgepole is dependent on fire to reproduce. The little saplings also have a knack for quickly

encroaching onto a trail. To my knowledge, no trail builder feels sentimental toward lodgepole pine, hemlock, and any hardwood. I nod in sympathy nonetheless. I could have explained the situation to her—that without massacre, there is no trail—but it was evident that the damage was done.

Trails are unnatural. The building of trail sometimes requires acts of violence against “nature.” There is nothing romantic about it. Trails are the infrastructure that provides access to natural places, but ultimately trails exist for the purpose of social control and to socially construct a value system for wild places. Trails were the vehicle that transported wilderness from profane space to sacred place, but trails themselves are profane, which is why they must be obscured. John Muir (2013) perhaps more famously and fervently than any other, upheld that humans would only value wild places if they were provided access to wild places. In 1901, when he made this claim, perhaps it was instrumental and timely. However, Muir’s philosophy is perhaps over simplistic, unquantifiable, and its time has perhaps come and gone.

Trails, even sections of the red carpet PCT, are in a state of disrepair. Maintenance budgets and staff continue to plummet, even as use levels and a multi-billion dollar outdoor tourism industry thrives, and trails become more valued than ever. Trails are an infrastructure that may be consumed and exhausted just like any other facility that is not properly maintained. It is the museum-like quality of the trail that makes me wonder if it is sustainable, and if it is not, who is guilty of using trails irresponsibly? Is it the multibillion dollar outdoor gear industry? Is it the hordes of wilderness visitors? Is it the government, or lack of government? Is it the morally driven

NGOs, or the commercially motivated outfitter guide operations? Trails are the infrastructural corridors that inject the wilderness with narratives, history, and emotion; and transform wilderness into reflections of the self and society. Trails transform through the years. Some become forgotten while others suffer being loved to death. Those that are forgotten are subtly removed from the maintenance rotation. They will go from a one-year to a two-year to a five-year rotation. Then the trailhead and junction signs will be removed. Then they will be removed from the map when the time comes for the forest map to be updated. No restoration is necessary usually. Nature reclaims place and returns it to space. This is the fate of many trails that once supported traditional uses and historic routes, such as hunting and gathering, or pioneering and exploration. Meanwhile, other trails, such as NSTs, become increasingly popular due to being more conducive to a transformative touristic experience. Loops, connectors, and long distance routes are currently *en vogue*. A transforming trail system is thus reflective of this nation's transforming value system, and its socioeconomic conditions.

Constructing the Trail Stage

The social space of NSTs, or any long trail, is especially well developed. I use Goffman's (1959) framework for constructing backstage and frontstage regions in the social establishment of trails to help understand the emergent trail culture, performance and contestation of NST space. Even though Goffman (1959: 106) refers to our society as a "relatively indoor one," I find his framework can be applicable to the "relatively outdoor" trail space, with a few modifications. Demarcating the trail into regions based upon gradations of immersion is a helpful tool to define stakeholders and their roles and

levels of engagement, especially in terms of values and what is revealed to them. According to Goffman, frontstage stakeholders are tourists while backstage stakeholders are laborers or service workers who, in this case, quite literally construct the trail space. In this context, we see how space becomes place as it is constructed for the purposes of building a touristic experience, performance, or even consciousness (MacCannell 1999). Trails become, in essence a social establishment, as described by Goffman. It also reveals a tendency to undermine, devalue, or not take seriously, backstage “performers,” particularly if the sociopolitical conditions aren’t supportive. Wilderness, as a neutrally charged space, and trails as an emotionally charged place, becomes two ironically contradictory ideologies, despite being sociopolitical cousins.

MacCannell expands on Goffman’s framework. He states, “The quest for authenticity is marked off in stages in the passage from front to back” (1999: 105). This is problematic as perceptions of true authenticity are largely up for interpretation, and there is no clear delineation from front to back. In the context of trails, time spent on the trail is one way to mark passage from front to back, as a measure of authenticity. Byl (2013: xviii) has her own ideas about authenticity. She states, “Through questions and tasks and endless figuring authenticity sneaks up on you, and perhaps by unnoticed accrual is the only way it can, because authenticity comes not from trying, but from being ... I longed to be a ‘real traildog,’ but mostly, I felt like a poser. Once I had become a real traildog, I didn’t think about it anymore.”

Like Byl, I felt somewhat star-struck when I first encountered one such phantom trail crew in the wilderness. I was still a novice builder, deeply immersed in the

wilderness and arrogantly thinking I, and the small community of which I was a part, were the only ones who had figured out how to get paid to live in the woods, when I stumbled upon two older guys in the wilderness, a Forest Service wilderness trail crew, looking very comfortable sitting on the ground as they crosscut a log that had fallen across the trail. I had done very little log-out at that point but I knew immediately that was what I wanted to be when I grew up. I admired the platonic intimacy of the crew, their efficient dynamic, and the comfortable expertise that was written all over their performance. It took exactly three years, but I did eventually get hired on to be one of these small two to three-person, wilderness log-out Forest Service crews. In another year, I went on to become a supervisor, but I was still very young and inexperienced. Unlike Byl, I never stopped thinking about it. I worked seven full seasons as a trail builder, from “corpie” to foreman, and many more in support of trail work crews and projects, but for every skill I mastered, I knew there were a dozen more I had yet to learn. To reframe the phenomena of authenticity in the backstage, I propose that it is not the work you are doing or the activity you are engaged in, but the absolute loss of self in the process of turning inward that is mobilized by going “out there” into the trail:

Once, on a weekend hike, my hiking partner and I happened on a couple weekend hikers and I nearly turned and ran as only a wild animal would. One loses a sense of him or herself as a physical body and as an individual when the crew amalgamates itself into a single living breathing functioning interdependent organism. Anyway, how long can we make it without looking at ourselves in this society? How many times every day do we glance at, peer into, and examine ourselves in a mirror? And even if it was not what I looked like as a corporal individual that concerned me when I saw these weekend warriors, one certainly forgets in this circumstance of isolated self-absorption that there exists a world outside of this one small speck of wilderness and in that world there exists a general public that showers daily and goes to their own version of a daily grind of a job. The smear of a jet contrail across the sky is usually the only reminder that

there is something bigger unfolding out there (Chinchen 2007, unpublished manuscript).

Thus, the more one broadcasts and markets oneself, the more advertising you do, the more invested you are in promoting your self-awareness, at the expense of authenticity. In this sense, it is not the work itself that makes a trail builder's experience more or less authentic, but the subdued, almost secret, nature of their existence. It may well be that social media has destroyed, or is destroying, authenticity.

Further reinforcing this need to protect the back region is a reminder of a foregone time that predates sacred wilderness space. Trail workers laboring for money and massacring baby trees is evidence of lingering profanity. MacCannell (1999: 93) explains, "Just having a back region generates the belief that there is something more than meets the eye... back regions are still the places where it is popularly believed the secrets are." These serve as disappointing reminders that hikers, even the esteemed thru hikers, are mere tourists. Laborers such as Byl are the ghosts of a time that pre-dates the disorganization of capitalism, struggling to keep our skills, tools, and customs alive.

Needless to say these two value systems may come into ideological conflict even though there are now ambassadors and professional sponsored athletes participating in this trail space. With broadcasting comes sponsorship, and we can expect to see an interesting, and likely increasing, contentious phenomenon of the human body being transformed into a billboard, and corporate advertising thus permeating the wilderness space by way of the trail conduit. The glaring difference is that the trail dog is lingering evidence of a sullied and extensive history of marring a pristine wilderness landscape that needs to be camouflaged in the landscape. On the other hand, adventure athletes,

professional leisurers, are expected to be very public about their trail feats, and are highly esteemed in the trail using community. It is a trail enthusiast's dream to get paid to go adventuring, and sponsorship and fame is seen as redemption for their "hard work." In this sense, the dualistic performances of work and leisure are being remarried, under new socioeconomic conditions. The leisure performance better reinforces the pristine myth, by focusing on gear and emphasizing material values. Our gaze is further distracted from the trail infrastructure, and reflective of societies changing values.

Furthermore, romantic perceptions of the sacred space of wilderness can thus be maintained and even reinforced through a carefully constructed volunteer experience, by submerging the infrastructure itself. This reinforces the invisibility of both the trail and the trailworker. However, if this social function is eliminated entirely, backstage authenticity is eliminated along with crucial connections with the past. Wilderness, and the entire conservation movement, is left at the whim of touristic fads.

I wonder what this means for my heavy disappointment at the use of unauthorized chainsaw in wilderness. Is it my own relative inexperience to these old timers for thinking that the wilderness space should be free of motorized use, as mandated by law? Is it I that am the tourist for my repulsion, or is it the old timers, the packers, the very image of frontiersman authenticity who predate the constraints enacted by the Wilderness Act, and are, by my account the most likely violators of motorized use in wilderness?

Goffman (1959: 106) describes the regions in a social establishment as being "bounded ... by barriers to perception." These observations reveal, perhaps not a question of authenticity, but performance. It is not the trail workers, but the thru hikers who strike

me as performers. Trail workers are more like the stage crew, dressed in black, and invisible in the dark theater space working hard in between sets and vanishing into the background when it comes time for a performance.

Varying degrees of immersion in the trail space reveal greater intensities of experience, and thus perceived authenticity. While trail builders and thru hikers share equal time and immersion on the trail, one stark contrast is the amount of advertising they do. Professional trail builders provide a foundational, if subdued, narrative to this social space. Smith (1976) may have considered non-work labor parasitical, but Roman philosophers called wage labor unfit for a “free man ... craft labor is sordid, and so is the business of retailing” (Csikszentmihalyi 1997: 50). Values for freedom certainly have a place in wilderness where an “unconstrained” type of leisure is sought. Thus, trail dogs and trail grunts (Byl 2013; Tobias 2014) like the trail itself, are equally muted in the trail space. Trail dogs do not broadcast themselves as recreationists do, as Byl (2013), a professional trail builder clarified for her readers when she uncharacteristically did broadcast her work as a trail dog, as discussed in Chapter III, though not without guilt. Contrarily, thru hikers, and many passionate trail users, do broadcast their exploits through blogs, vlogs, books, numerous social media outlets, and in one case, a popular Hollywood movie and bestselling novel. Notably, many hiker-tourists never question the fact that they can and should publicize their outdoor feats. Byl’s reflection and remorse is remarkably fitting for Goffman’s framework.

Most trail users, and certainly the outdoor gear and tourism behemoth, scarcely notices the blood, sweat, and tears that were infused into the nations trail system. Trail

dogs are invisible to the glut of the outdoor tourism industry. They don't get gear marketed specifically at them and, to the best of my knowledge there are no sponsors, no hashtags, no blogs, and no Instagram. Trail builders do their work midweek and wear neutral-toned clothing. They usually camp away from the most popular campsites, and out of view of the trail. Consequently, many visitors think trails just build themselves and the best way to maintain a trail is to use it, which coincides nicely with Muir's philosophy for use value. Historically this might be true, but as trails reach record levels of use, proper engineering, regular maintenance, and sustainable infrastructure, not to mention education and enforcement, will be necessary to sustain trails.

A trail builder's choice for manual labor as professional work over other forms of soft labor, or Smith's parasitical non-labor is not an accident. Byl (2013: xvi), a career trail builder, describes her first job as a traildog:

My effort was worth money. For the first time in my life, my salary was connected to palpable, not intangible, work ... The skills I was learning were old ones that had served working people for a long time, and in that sense, I was apprenticed not just to mastery, but to history.

Similar to volunteerism and transformative pilgrimage-type experiences on the trail, professional trail work provides rare and cherished, if primitive, opportunities for social cohesion and solidarity and authenticity.

The inconspicuous nature of trail dogs reinforces the invisible nature of trails, as a constructed infrastructure for social control, without which wilderness environments would either be hopelessly degraded, or no one would bother to visit them. The paradigm for social control can be conceptualized through a hierarchical structure of engineering, education, and enforcement (Rice and Atkin 2001). Engineering alone banks on the

assumption that the infrastructure will be self-sustaining, but once use levels reach a point where the resource becomes degraded, education and enforcement are necessary reinforcements. In trail space, engineering applies to constructing and maintaining a sustainable trail with the proper corridor and tread widths, slope, water drainage and soil retention infrastructure. Education can come in the form of bulletin boards, field rangers, trail signage, interpretive programs, and so on. NGOs are very effective at marketing and public relations, which is why they could be very useful for education programs. Enforcement requires additional staffing and funding, and another level of expertise, but shows seriousness and sincerity on the part of the agency by backing up the regulations in place. Without enforcement, managers are required to trust trail users to abide by either a personal or peer driven ethic. There is one important point missing from Goffman's framework. All the participants in this social space are temporary fixtures, a place where "man himself is a visitor who does not remain" and where the "imprint of man's work [is] substantially unnoticeable" [PL 88-577 1964, Section 2(c)]. This struggle for immersion and authenticity is perhaps a source of conflict, for are we not all tourists then, in the wilderness space?

I am reminded of a little basement corner space of the museum in Cascade Locks, Oregon where they have dedicated a small space to the PCT. Inside that museum, I found this poem telling the story of how Bridge of the Gods came to be formed 800 years ago (Figure 5). It references the story of two quarreling brothers, Wyeast and Klickitat, what are known today as Mount Hood and Mount Adams who were quarreling over the beautiful Loowit, or Mount Saint Helens. Their father, the Supreme Being, Tye-e Sahalee, built a bridge across the Columbia in hopes to unite the brothers and end their quarreling. This bridge was, in actuality, the result of a landslide event that is thought to have occurred 800 years ago creating a 200 foot high natural dam that disassembled itself within a couple years (Oregon State Marine Board 2012). Bridge of the Gods today is, of course, a

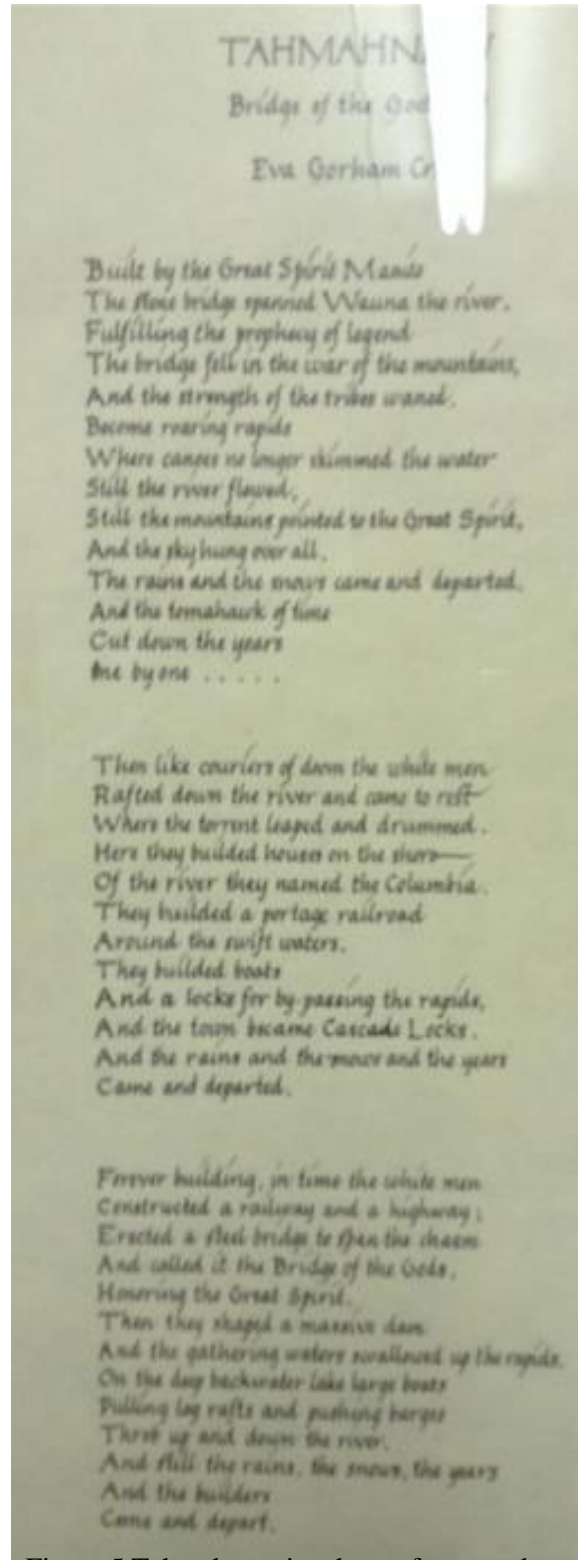


Figure 5 Tahmah-nawis: photo of poem taken in Cascade Locks Museum in August 2016.

steel masterpiece of historic engineering spanning the Columbia that is now a part of the PCT, representing an almost symbolic rite of passage from Oregon to Washington for thru hikers. This poem is symbolic in many ways, not so much because this is where Cheryl Strayed ended her thru hike on the Pacific Crest Trail, but because of its pertinence to both natural and built landscapes-in-transformation, and in relation to convoluting my understanding of Goffman's framework for authenticity: "... and the builders come and depart." I am reminded that trail workers, builders of wilderness infrastructure and touristic experiences, are but an extension of Eurocolonial values for developing and improving upon desolate and barren land (Nash 2014), a continuation of our knack for tinkering, and a need to create new needs once old needs have been satisfied. For the outdoors experience, the social establishment of trails, Goffman's framework is thus static, and shows a rather one-sided snapshot in time. In terms of trails, I find Goffman's theory inadequate to explain what trails do for us, and does not answer questions concerning why we seek the trail space. What is it about the backstage of the trail space that is so compelling? It is dirty, smelly, crude, uncomfortable, inconvenient, and arguably, not always that safe. Yet the more immersed we become in the trail space, whether by thru hiking or trail building, the more opportunity arises in pursuit of community, solidarity, and cohesion. More aptly, we seek the trail in search of a brush with the primitive—egalitarianism, communalism, nomadism, even some limited gathering of food make up the daily life of an immersed trail user. Yet we have eliminated the ability to achieve absolute authenticity by eliminating the true backstage—the indigenous experience—by removing humans as permanent fixtures from the

wilderness space, except as that which befits tourists only, in accordance with the Wilderness Act.

Discussion

This chapter outlines how a stage, the wilderness, is transformed into a performative experience by way of trails, the infrastructure. It also provides insight to part of my first research question: How are trails built and paved with meaning through performance of work; and begins to provide an understanding of the third research question: What is the relationship between wilderness as an idea, and trails as its practice?

I have shown that trail crews are subdued and made invisible as the trail itself, but may still be viewed as a performance in itself, albeit backstage. In terms of work performances, experiences, particularly those that occur among and within a community of people, such as a trail crew, can similarly profoundly impact memories of places, and place attachments. I also introduced the idea of wilderness as museum, where a historic legacy of human tinkering rests intact, preserved in the trail space as its material culture. I differentiated between two ways of seeing: one in which the objects are hung on display and removed from their environment, and another where objects are subdued and left in a subdued manner in their manner. In the latter scenario, it is easy to overlook and devalue trails and their many innovations. If the material culture of trails was exhibited and brought to the forefront, hung up on the wall of the metaphorical wilderness museum rather than subdued and made invisible, perhaps it would begin to create an awareness and a counter effort against the trend of degradation, and declining maintenance. Perhaps

reframing wilderness, or “nature,” as a far from pristine and untouched space, but as a highly manipulated museum space, built for tourist experiences, would incentivize visitors and managers alike to better care take, fund, and steward these integral pockets of wildness.

I expect that a similar result will occur in the hiker experiences. In light of a comparison of the ancient and naturally constructed Bridge of the Gods, and the modern day steel contraption built by humans, I question the authentic nature of even this backstage performance, as even a deeply immersed trail crew is only a temporary fixture. It becomes glaringly apparent that Goffman’s framework does not venture to delve into the most authentic indigenous experience.

CHAPTER VI

THE TOURISTIC EXPERIENCE: HIKER TRASH

Introduction

This chapter will continue to deconstruct the trail space via Goffman's framework. This framework provides guidance for understanding trail use in terms of performance, functionality, contestation, and values, and can be useful to demarcate backstage and frontstage regions within the social space of trails. MacCannell (1999) applied Goffman's ideas to an analysis of touristic spaces, identifying frontstage stakeholders as tourists and backstage stakeholders as laborers or service workers. If we apply this concept to NSTs, back stage laborers are those who construct the trail space for the purposes of building a touristic experience, performance, or "consciousness" (MacCannell 1999: 102). In the trail space, MacCannell's passage from front to back discussed in the prior chapter may look something like this:

- *Stage One:* Cyber blazers and armchair enthusiasts
- *Stage Two:* Day hikers and weekend warriors
- *Stage Three:* Section hikers
- *Stage Four:* Hiker trash
- *Stage Five:* Volunteers
- *Stage Six:* Trail dogs

The complication is that the foundation of Goffman's stage is represented by built physical structures whereupon we created a duality of indoor and outdoor, which he himself states that his stages of authenticity are intended for a society that spends most of

its time indoors. The wilderness can be considered a built space insofar as it is a socially constructed, however, even if you are in your tent, you are still of the mindset that you are outdoors. This creates an interesting paradox. Day hikers, section hikers, thru hikers, and volunteers exemplify the subsequent front stages, gaining increasing access to the backstage experience. In trails, the job of the backstage is to protect authentic front stage experiences (Goffman 1959). This chapter will focus on hiker trash, also like trail dogs in that they are deeply immersed in wilderness spaces and a relatively few and far between user group, but now representing the leisure performance of trails. I will attempt to further delineate between the work performance and the leisure performance.

Because people value places even if they have not yet had, or ever will have, an opportunity to participate in the performance of a place (Gunderson and Watson 2007), they, and their respective value systems, should still be considered a part of the social space. Social media has extended the depth and influence of this particular user group. Social media is widely used to gather advice from veteran hikers, and to pass on wisdom and mentorship to novice hikers. Such social media interactions may inadvertently positively or negatively impact potential thru hikers' anticipation of venturing onto the trail as a social space, but suggests that social media may create a dimension of interaction, and potential user conflict, that didn't previously exist. A hiker states:

At first I was nervous about meeting people on trail because, honestly, the Facebook group was so dramatic. Once you get out there though it's much more pleasant. I definitely think [community and wilderness] can coexist as long as people respect each other and the surroundings (Anonymous, personal communication, September 2015).

The Hiker Identity

As briefly mentioned in the prior chapter, hiker trash are similar to trail dogs in many ways. Miller (2014: cover page) defines hiker trash as a “long distance hiker, shabby and homeless in appearance, rarely bathed and rank in odor, more at home outdoors than in society, with a deep reverence and respect for all things wild.” Of course, the major difference is this chapter will pursue the touristic journey in the trail space, rather than the builder’s journey. Becoming hiker trash means sharing qualities with that of pilgrimage, recreation and tourism, and transiency. The purposes for a thru hike are as many as there are thru hikers but, in terms of pilgrimage, some form of crisis is usually a driving factor (Bunyan 1896, Turner and Turner 1978, Strayed 2013, Di Giovine and Picard 2015). Novice trail builders and novice thru hikers are both initiated into a rites of passage experience, often compelled by personal crisis but a far from a spontaneous undertaking for most. There are seasoned mentors to guide these processes in either case.

Thru hikers aspire to apply lessons learned on the trail to life post-trail. As such, the goal of a thru hiker might be to apply experiences of the extraordinary to the ordinary. Such experiences provide opportunities for an experimental period of “dissolution of normative social structure [whereupon] seed beds of cultural creativity” (Turner 1979: 19) are sown. What transformation occurs on the trail then becomes entwined into individual lives, and eventually collective society. This is reinforced in trail culture as well.

I’ve been working on a PhD for many years and I continue to struggle with that. What has changed is my devotion to trying to “make it” in the “regular world.” I’m now thinking along the lines of building a tiny house, living in a van... more of a counter-cultural lifestyle. The PhD has become about personal growth and

my intellectual interests rather than pursuing a specific career (Bright Eyes, personal communication, October 2015).

My life was not exciting, in a daily grind of work, not inspiring at all. A regular, standard eight to five type job with a house and a commute... Ultimately, my job was toxic... I am so glad to have the PCT to take away lessons and experiences from. It changed the way I think and what I hope for. Materialism, job status, and other cultural standards are now gone (Sycamore, personal communication, September 2015).

Another participant reinforces the spillover of trail culture into society and further implies that spending time on the trail implants a conservation ethic, if not action:

I really liked my life before I left ... I thought I would miss it but I didn't. Now that I'm back I can barely stand it. I want to be moving on again and I can't because I'm broke and have responsibilities to deal with before I can leave ... Also, the PCT has to be there. It has to exist because it is such a unique and rare opportunity at this point in history, and attracts and binds the sort of people the earth needs (Popsicle, personal communication, October 2015).

Not only does this statement reflect a budding conservation ethic; but the symbolic, material, and social nature of the trail landscape as articulated by Greider and Garkovich (1994: 2): "Our understanding of nature and of human relationships with the environment are really cultural expressions used to define who *we* were, who *we* are, and who *we* hope to be at this place and in this space." These "cultural identities" reflect a connection with self and society, rather than with the natural world. Another implication is that incorporated thru hikers are sought out to guide the uninitiated in planning stages, building upon a developing trail culture through time and space, for better or worse, solidifying and reinforcing or dissolving social cues and peer pressure. This planning stage, because of its heavy reliance on social media, can also be considered to be part of Stage One. Thus behavior is learned and established during pre-liminal and planning stages.

Pilgrimage can become a vehicle of penance through physical suffering. Performative and embodied action enables habitus (Bourdieu 1977, Coleman and Eade 2005) as the hiker's body becomes accustomed to the daily ritual of waking and walking; all day every day for a somewhat predetermined timeframe. The body is thus "taught" how to achieve goals that are segmented day-to-day, week-to-week, and month-to-month until the final goal, the terminus, is achieved. Performative and embodied action is a test of mental endurance as much as, or more than, physical. Experiences in sacred spaces become translated into "embodied knowledge." Trail spaces are thus transformed into a sacred moral space, activated by mobility, which coincides with the well-documented larger societal transformation of wilderness space from profane to sacred space (Stoll 1997, Nash 2014, Lodge and Hamlin 2006, Lewis 2007). Whether for secular or sacrosanct purposes, travel in sacred space can function as a vehicle for accumulating moral capital, sometimes by shedding accretion of "sin" through the simple embodied action of putting one foot in front of the other (Bunyan 1896, Eickelman and Piscatori 1990, Coleman and Eade 2005).

Balancing Authenticity with Community

The implications of this study demonstrate that thru hikers do not necessarily share values for solitude akin to traditional overnight wilderness users. In fact, solitude would be a contradiction to the spirit of pilgrimage, meaning that values for pilgrimage and its incumbent *communitas*, and the wilderness landscape, would diametrically oppose each other as pilgrimage routes inherently degrade conditions of solitude. I expect this to

be quite controversial between both the wilderness managing and wilderness using communities and warrants further exploration.

Pilgrimage is neither a solitary, nor fiercely independent activity, once the route and culture are well established. In the early years of long trails and thru hiking, there was certainly a degree of independence and pioneering; however, most thru hikers concur that it is the trail community that makes a successful thru hike *more* possible (Friedman 2015). Though the process and reasons for embarking on pilgrimage are largely personal, within the third space arises a community, even in a condition of perpetual movement. Participants share similar mental and physical duress, logistical challenges, and the highs and lows of the pilgrimage experience. This sharing of experience creates a condition of solidarity and cohesion. As thru hiker use increases, the intensity and complexity of the *communitas* increases, and trail culture becomes well developed.

Communitas counters traditional backpacking, where solitude is preferred. The act of “hiking through” subjects the participant to a unique set of logistical challenges, namely in the form of reliance on a receptive cultural and physical corridor throughout the duration of the event. The participant is at the whim of arising challenges, such as fire, drought, adverse trail conditions, closures, detours, and weather. Unlike a traditional backpacking trip, there is only one way to navigate a thru hike and that is by determined forward movement.

My most pleasant memory is the culture of thru-hiking. It is beautiful, the fellow hikers, the trail angels, the random people who don't know you but are so excited with what you are doing. I loved how you would see someone on the trail, give a brief hello. Later you would see them again at a water spot, get to talking, and by the time you were in town you have made a friend for life. It is a special

community to be a part of (Smiles & Miles, personal communication, September 2015).

There are also a couple places I consider special because of the people I was with, or the community I felt. My [most pleasant memory of the PCT was my] first morning in ..., the owner of ... picked up a huge group of thru hikers in his little pickup. As we were packed into the truck bed like sardines I felt this calm sense of safety and belonging. The sun was shining. My [most unpleasant memory of the PCT was when] I lost my shit camping at the campground in ... I'd been a week without my trail family, I was lonely as hell, not connecting with any of the hikers staying at the grocery store, and the idiots in the campsite next to me kept talking and drinking by their campfire. I finally gave up on the campground around one a.m., walked to the church and cowboy camped in the yard. I got up the next morning at five a.m., caught a hitch back to the trail and was hiking by six. It was the only time I cried during my entire hike (Popsicle, personal communication, October 2015).

Popsicle shows that not any hiker or camper suffices to fulfill the role of *communitas*.

She specifically needed companionship of fellow thru hikers who understood and shared her situational context as a pilgrim. Her feeling of displacement is similar to what I felt after departing the PCT to walk the PNT, with its far less developed trail culture. I appreciated the self-sufficiency and independent autonomy, and the opportunity to make the journey unique for my purposes, but I felt cut off. There was an abrupt wave of loneliness, as if no one would understand what I was doing anymore, which was actually fairly adequate for about two hours until I met a man who I was amazed to find out was a PNT hiker. I could not believe my good fortune, considering the sparse numbers of PNT thru hikers, and he was equally delighted. He had not seen a fellow PNT hiker in weeks.

We were tackling switchbacks in the smoke, and he had been feeling unwell and fallen behind his partner up ahead, but we could occasionally glimpse her several switchbacks ahead of us. He hollered her name repeatedly at the top of his lungs. She yelled something back, and he yelled exuberantly, punctuating after each word to wait for

the echo to fade so as not to bleed his words into one another: “ANOTHER. THRU. HIKER.” I corrected him and clarified that I wasn’t a thru hiker, but he didn’t seem to mind that I’d only started my walk 300 miles south and not in Montana. The couple continued to yell at each other in that manner up and down the mountain for another minute, and I uncharacteristically reveled in their boisterousness. Even though I’d only departed the PCT two hours prior, I was grateful for the companionship as I got my bearings on this new trail that was largely unmarked and unsigned, and to know that I was not alone in my venture. I stayed with this couple all day, chatting until our voices became hoarse at the strange exercise, and eventually falling silent back into the depths of our wandering thoughts. I hiked on late into the night, bolstered by a newfound confidence.

Thru hikers repeatedly stated that the community is what made the trail space special, or comprised their most favorite memories. Even when they seemed reluctant to admit as much, such as one hiker who states:

Hiking the PCT gets you out but hardly ever in a wilderness situation. It was challenging to even find a place to camp without sometimes many other hikers... community? Not sure ... however, meeting other PCT hikers did create that sense to a degree. Meeting others was one of the best things about the trail (anonymous, personal communication, September 2015).

In another case, a thru hiker laments that she wished she had:

Embrace[d] the social aspect more – or at least resist[ed] it less. I found myself working hard to resist the “lemming” aspect of the PCT experience – the intense pressure to conform – but I did so at the expense of the social experience (Bright Eyes, personal communication, October 2015).

In this case, there appears to be an interesting contradiction wherein thru hikers must choose between, and managers must attempt to balance, this new value that lies somewhere between authenticity and *communitas*, solitude and solidarity.

Transformation

Pilgrimage is a rite of passage by which participants pass through a third space, or social limbo. While neither Van Gennep, nor Turner mentions the foremost infrastructure of this third space, I will propose that trails are often the backdrop for this social limbo today, and in western society. If trails are analyzed as a third space, they can be better understood in terms of what they *do* for people, and *how*.

Transformative experiences are highly valued among thru hikers, reinforcing “special places” by attaching place meaning to particular places whereby some transformative experience was had.

I found that my camp that was about four miles after ... in the ... was very special. It was on a ledge overlooking the valley. I watched the sunset as I ate dinner, and the stars were thick that night. I think this spot was so special because I felt that I had finally found a great internal balance that day. The night was so still (Smiles & Miles, personal communication, September 2015).

I just loved [the desert] so much. Everything about it was new to me, and absolutely beautiful. Also, the numerous little tucked-away spots where I camped or had lunch in secret places that I got to stop and relish for what they were and who I was at the time (Popsicle, personal communication, October 2015).

Pedestrian travel captures a sense of reliving history, values for primitive communalism and preserving a sense of contact with the past, and has enjoyed a sense of paramount purity and “perceived authenticity” in terms of methods of movement. However, pursuits for personal challenge and manifestations of contestation for trail use could also be reflective of a “permanent search for means of personal and collective

acceleration... that must permeate all of life...and just as there are many ways to move... there are many ways to be modern” (Coleman 2005: 68).

It is simple. It’s not easy. Purifying... To stress about the need for water, not a boss’ expectation or random other artificial stresses of the other world. It is a gratifying day full of exercise, filled with interesting and wonderful nature, and incredible sights! ... There is something that connects to our ancient nomadic selves that is surprisingly very comfortable! Wilderness means a chance for me to get into touch with our real environment. It provides me therapy, reflection, and a better understanding of myself and the world we live in. I get to enjoy and experience little aspects of our natural world, things that most are too busy to notice (Sycamore, September 2015).

Wilderness is a place where we can connect with our true nature, and that true nature is to be in community with nature and each other. A lovely community of people exists around the trail that is driven by the ethos of give-and-take that seems to emerge naturally when one spends time on the trail (Bright Eyes, personal communication, October 2015).

Here we find evidence of some very strong values associated with NSTs that are not so much about connecting with nature, but connecting with the self and with the community. Nature provides the landscape, the environment, around which these experiences unfold, and is a necessary feature for such experiences, however trails are largely about self-exploration.

Understanding and Managing Hiker-Pilgrims

Hussman¹ aptly states,

The PCT may be big news right now but it is still a hiking trail and those that attempt it are still just hikers, not celebrities who can behave like they are entitled to special treatment. The PCT is not an amusement park, nor is it Burning Man. It is a path to growth and enlightenment and humility. Remember that your actions affect those that come behind you.

¹ Hussman, Peter. PCT Class of 2015 [Facebook page], accessed September 28, 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/608334832544246/>.

The PCT, like any pilgrimage route, has become to some extent “self-managed.” Water and food caches, trail magic, notes and arrows on the trail are just a few examples. Trail magic is any type of enabling behavior to thru hikers along the length of the trail corridor, usually locals, and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter VII. There are administrative signs written on in sharpie and user built signs, all intent on clarifying the route. Such action has the effect of devaluing the intersecting trails that are not a part of the pilgrimage route. Many thru hikers effectively adopt their own, technically subpar, version of a Leave No Trace ethic, just as trail builders might. For most trail users, there is no confusion about their identity as a recreationalist. Because thru hikers have literally and semi-permanently emplaced themselves onto the trail, they may not see the harm that a little arrow drawn in sticks on the trail, or an unnecessary article of clothing left on the trail might do. More importantly, their values for the thru hiker community take precedence over acts perceived to be harmless, but those which strengthen their community ties. For example, communicating a dangerous situation, such as water scarcity or fire closure, by any means available, are likely to be more important than leaving no trace.

Furthermore, it is important to note that Turner (1979: 13) defines pilgrimage as an event “in relation to other events”... as a “social” and “psychological” *process*. This will become important as managers seek to limit and define thru hiking in terms of other uses of the trail. Managing thru hiking as a processual event versus a “thing” would have implications to management of thru hikers as a user group. Of further consideration, Van Genep (1966: 114) describes a sort of mayhem associated with pilgrimage:

The usual economic and legal ties are modified, sometimes broken altogether. The novices are outside society, and society has no power over them, especially since they are actually sacred and holy, and therefore untouchable and dangerous, just as gods would be. Thus, although taboos, as negative rites, erect a barrier between the novices and society, the society is defenseless against the novices' undertakings... During the novitiate, the young people can steal and pillage at will or feed and adorn themselves at the expense of the community.

Turner (1979: 19) goes on to explain that the initiates are “temporarily undefined, beyond the normative social structure. This weakens them, since they have no rights over others. But it also liberates them from structural obligations... they are dead to the social world but alive to the asocial world.” Applying literature such as this to behavior on the trail can help managers better understand the mindset and behavior of thru hikers. That is, understanding the values and actions of a user group is critical to helping manage their experience in an optimal way, if only “because we have something to learn through being disorderly” (Sutton-Smith 1973: 17).

Turner (1979: 19) called this phenomenon “anti-structure” and explains that anti-structure provides opportunities for an experimental period of “dissolution of normative social structure [whereupon] seed beds of cultural creativity” are sown. What transformation occurs on the trail then becomes entwined into society. In terms of distinguishing tourism from pilgrimage, there is an expected compliance to specific patterns and speed of movement, or more general behavior along the route (Coleman 2005). Tourists may disobey or disregard certain expectations for appropriate use of the trail while on NSTs, but thru hikers are subject to critique for hiking too fast or too slow, carrying too big a pack, sporting heavy boots, or wearing cotton; but in the end, each

hiker is advised to Hike Your Own Hike (HYOH).² Or more to the point: “As most of you know, hikers do what they wanna. After all, we have PCT permits.”³ The PCT long-distance permit is issued to any hiker planning to hike more than 500 miles, and is perceived, if only by a select few, as a release of responsibility and expected conformation. In social media forums, it is difficult at this point to tell when this quote is used in satire and when it is used in seriousness.

Turner’s explanation of structure and anti-structure is helpful in understanding these civil guidelines on NSTs that define the appropriate behavior on the trail. Structure thus becomes more of a guideline and a personal ethic, and also a source of enormous conflict. Ethics surrounding pilgrimage mobility provide abundant tension surrounding ideas for “authenticity of purpose and mode of transport” (Coleman 2005: 66). This tension seeks to hierarchize mode of travel, usually with pedestrian travel at the top, car travel at the bottom. These are tensions that must be mediated as a “complex of economic, social, and political relations” (Nikolaisen 2005: 95). Two types of structure that are considered sins of the trail are “slack packing” and “yellow blazing.” Slack packing is a form of supported thru hiking whereupon gear is shuttled around. Yellow blazing is when a thru hiker is guilty of hitchhiking by car or bus to skip sections of the trail where they are following the yellow “blazes” on the road surface rather than trail

² Flaky Guy. “Pacific Crest Trail Hiker’s Glossary.” Flaky Guy (blog), April 8, 2008. <http://scottbryce.com/pct/glossary.html>.

³ Anonymous. PCT Class of 2015 [Facebook group], September 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/608334832544246/>.

blazes. Snow in the Sierras or navigating a fire closure are a couple common reasons to compel a thru hiker to commit yellow blazing sins.

The most heavily impacted areas on the trail are concentrated in southern California, where the greatest numbers attempt a thru hike. By attrition alone, many of the most serious behavior problems and congestion issues dissipate the farther one travels north. One thru hiker describes her most unpleasant experience on the trail as when “the herd passed us. There were a lot of really young hikers who were loud, lighting fires, leaving trash, and not being respectful in towns. It was a really depressing feeling seeing that” (Anonymous, personal communication, September 2015). Hikers affected by “the herd” were those who started earlier than the masses, but didn’t cover enough miles to keep the masses behind them, and were eventually overtaken.

Self-management becomes especially apparent in emergencies, such as trail closures due to fire, slides, or water scarcity due to a low snowpack year. There is a belief that those not on the trail don’t understand the trail experience, and even those on the trail but who are not thru hiking or at least section hiking, may also not understand the trail experience. There are challenges associated with hiking through that most user groups, including management, cannot be trusted to understand.

For example, during my section thru hike in northern Washington, a weekend backpacker stopped asked if I knew about the fire closure up ahead. I did not. He told me what he knew and parted saying, “Don’t be afraid to turn back.” The words circulated in my head, as words do when you’re hiking alone for days and weeks and months. What does that even mean, “turning back?” I wondered. Turning back would certainly put me

in a far worse situation than some unknown, possibly ill-perceived situation ahead of me. I only had enough food to go forward, not backward, and my resupply was expecting me. How would I communicate that I had gone back?

In another incident, I explained my itinerary to a thru hiker. When he learned I planned to leave the comforts of the PCT, he warned me of the hazards on the PNT, saying “Be careful. I have friends who got off the PNT because it was brushy to the point of not being able to find the trail.” Even the guidebook warned of dangerous water crossings that caused me doubt for days beforehand. I set up camp as close as I could to it because glacial runoff is lower in the morning and wrapped everything I own in plastic, but because it was a low water year, I did not even get my shoes wet. The doubt was for naught.

I am reminded again of *Pilgrim's Progress* (Bunyan 1896) when Christian met “Doubt.” In pilgrimage, and thru hiking, there are forces at play that cast apprehension on your journey. Only the pilgrim can ultimately decide whether the voice of doubt and fear is rational, informed, and correct. In both cases, I walked on. In all cases, the voices of doubt were in error. Overcoming doubt is cause for small victories to a thru hiker. It increases his or her confidence and sense of indestructability. They learn to quiet the chatter both inside and outside their heads that is telling them daily to quit. All they need is a reason. A brushy trail full of spider webs on a dismal rainy day, a fire closure, a dangerous river crossing, an infected blister, a gear malfunction – these are challenges thru hikers must learn to overcome. Those that have made it as far as Washington are indomitable.

Thus, understandably, when there is a legitimate trail closure, thru hikers will not always heed the “official” updates and closures. They will seek out updates from those ahead of them, and those within the thru hiking community. If the word that comes back is that the closure is “no big deal,” some may choose to hike through, during the night if necessary.

Some closures, imminent or actual, put the hikers at further risk than if they had been ignored. One PCT closure in 2013 concerned 3/8 of a mile of actual trail for a fire on the northern end of a wilderness, that was effectively out. In order to route thru hikers around the fire, they had to take a 25-mile detour. This detour offered no water, and in this case, took them to a trail, which didn’t actually exist, as it turns out. Thru hikers don’t carry area maps, and generally have only a very narrow strip of trail information. This leaves them ill-prepared for emergencies that require that they take detours and must rely on agency information. In this case, even the agency doesn’t have the correct information about its own trail system, putting thru hikers at risk in a situation that was otherwise relatively safe for passage in this case, if thru hikers could have been escorted through.

If thru hikers learn that information is erroneous or ill-perceived, they will seek out information from those within the community, and may ultimately override the closure, for the simple fact that “turning back” is not an option, as it is for weekend “out and back” or “loop route” backpackers. This is, of course, contentious within the thru hiking community. Some are less prone to agree with decisions to break the rules, while

others express that “hikers do what [we] wanna.” For this reason, special consideration must be taken to manage trail closures on NSTs.

Besides being a legitimate safety concern, the idea of turning back or taking a detour is also a mental battle. The point of pilgrimage and transformation is to move forward. Turning back is failure. It’s revisiting all the self-work you did to get to where you stand now. For some, skipping a section of trail is unfathomable. For others, the destination matters more. Many return later that season or the next year to complete sections they were forced to skip due to snow or fire, or other circumstance. One thru hiker nearing the terminus stated, “I would probably feel more emotional about it if I were actually done, but I know I still have that section in the Sierras to go back to” (Feather, personal conversation, August 2015).

Trail culture builds upon itself, for better or worse, meaning management must be at the forefront of ensuring only desired behavior is being passed on, and actively participating in this passing on of knowledge, if possible. While it may seem appealing to focus management on the liminal stage, all three stages of rites of passage are important for acting on educational opportunities, and in fact, the pre and post liminal stages may be even more ideal times to put forth educational material. It’s already been established that NSTs are not ideal or practical places to manage for “outstanding opportunities for solitude” due to the contradiction of *communitas*; however an “unconfined type of recreation” [PL 88-577 1964, Section 2(c)] is still possible if education takes place off the trail, in the interest of protecting thru hiker values, while still complying with legislative criteria.

Discussion

This chapter addresses part of my first, second, and third question: How are trails paved with meaning through performance of leisure? How do trails foster social landscapes? And what is the relationship between wilderness as an idea, and trails as its practice? Trails are social, symbolic, and material landscapes that create inherent meaning in an otherwise “natural” world that has no meaning to us. The construction of meaning through symbology and iconography and other material forms will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter on identity construction. It seems rather predictable that as trail culture matures and develops, management will effectively lose control of the trail. Some ill-behaved thru hikers may either fall in the category of what I will call “unskilled tourists;” or they may simply be enjoying their hiatus from a rules-bound society as travelers in the third space of trails. The former can be combatted with education, while the latter is more complicated, as education is most likely to be received from within the community.

Efforts to curb water caches have erupted into conflict and basically failed. Efforts to enforce trail closures are contingent upon the community’s agreement. Meanwhile the PNT shows no such evidence of self-management at this time because it lacks continuity and hasn’t yet developed a trail culture. Ultimately, NSTs are valued as opportunities for a greater cultural unrest, mobility and purpose; but most importantly trails, unlike wilderness in itself, are highly emotional cultural infrastructure, and symbolic of the self.

There are some likely roadblocks to successful management of NSTs. Given that NSTs offer opportunities for pilgrimage, it takes on a layer of complexity that could prove difficult to negotiate with stakeholders involved in that component of the trail's use. Thru hikers shed their given names and adopt trail names, adopt a vocabulary and language unique to thru hiking, and some ultimately tattoo the trail's emblem into their legs, arms, or back, and find novel ways to take the trail home with them.

The purpose of these thru hikes is usually with the intent of undergoing some kind of transformation, a very personal journey, or rite of passage. This level of devotion and attachment to one particular user group, albeit a far minority of the total trail use, is unique in the gamut of recreational pursuits, and does not bode well in the wake of burgeoning use, and need to "share the trail." On trails that do not offer such opportunities for long-distance trekking, user groups tend to be on relatively equal terms. In this case, thru hiking is more apt to define the character of the trail, even though thru hikers are a minority user group. These are intensely embedded identities associated with the trail, and may prove challenging to mediate in the interest of other user groups.

CHAPTER VII

HIKE YOUR OWN HIKE: CONSTRUCTING A TRAIL IDENTITY

Introduction

The roar of the interstate crescendos as I near Snoqualmie Pass. My pace may have slowed, but it could just be the relative pace of sacred pedestrian travel situated against the accelerated pace of the “profane” ... my identity begins its shift, as it does on every resupply day, from pilgrim traveler to recreational tourist to homeless transient, a literal switchbacking descent from the sacred to the profane as the interstate gains depth and form, a well-greased cog, a wheel set in motion, a specimen of size, shape, and form that is cohesive and irrepressible. Again, I am struck by the girth of the wilderness. Wilderness is expanded by the fact that nothing moves faster than a mule’s trot, or a startled bear. The wilderness makes me feel small, but this... this makes me anxious. Semi-trucks moving stuff, cars moving cars, and cars moving people, motorhomes full of stuff and things made of stuff—all of which is unfolding at an unfathomable pace. I think about all that I can live without; all that I am living without at that moment. I make promises I will not keep.

This chapter will address the many morphing identities incumbent to any deeply immersed trail user. Thru hikers often experience transcendence from hiker-pilgrims to hiker-tourists to hiker-transients as they move from deep within the wilderness towards a resupply day. There are also many material processes that assist in the deconstruction and subsequent reconstruction of one’s trail identity as the hiker moves through the trail space that will be identified throughout this chapter.

Immaterial Values

At long last he was unencumbered, emancipated from the stifling world of his parents and peers, a world of abstraction and security and material excess, a world in which he felt grievously cut off from the raw throb of existence” (Krakauer 1996: 22).

Indeed, nothing entices thru hikers to the trail more than simplistic asceticism and the ritual of walking. This becomes even more pronounced in a thru hike, where the promise of an extended divorce from society beckons. Within the scope of this study, it is suggested that NSTs provide opportunities and satisfy values for mobility and self-sufficiency empowered by the few integral, but meager nonetheless, material items on your back. Unlike trail dogs, where monstrous packs garnered respect and symbolized superhuman strength, one fundamental objective of a thru hike is to “pare down” your possessions to the bare minimum. The size of your pack is almost symbolic of your proficiency and merit—the lighter your pack, the greater the duration of your journey, the deeper your immersion into the trail space. One learns over time what you truly absolutely cannot live without. Material culture on NSTs may be symbolic of the shedding of “sin,” in accordance with Christian’s journey in *Pilgrim’s Progress*:

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a den; and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and as I slept I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back (Bunyan 1896: 1-2).

NSTs, as pilgrimage routes, function as moral spaces, activated by mobility. In Bunyan, accustomed ideas of home and stability, even family, became a sort of a trap to Christian. Seemingly reckless acts—quitting your job, selling your car and other worldly possessions, and leaving behind your family—seem to be the only way to alleviate and

shed the burdens of stagnation that accumulate, as if an otherwise inertia-bound lifestyle is responsible for an accretion of “sin,” in Christian’s case. In a non-secular sense, such sin may be symbolic of all the things that inspired someone to take to the trail in the first place. An unhappy job, unformulated identity, escape from addiction, failed marriage, and other sources of suspended identity or healing.

In terms of trail space, thru hikers may sever identities, status, and extensive material, relational, and emotional baggage in pursuit of a thru-hike. Hiker boxes along the trail are well known to be a gold mine of expensive discarded gear, particularly farther south. Yet even with this laborious “paring down” of the pack, material values are heavily weighted on the trail. In thru hiking culture, material culture is based upon values for *immaterial* culture. In other words, the less you carry and the lighter the load, the more value you emplace on what little you have, which is in direct contradiction to an off-trail tendency to value accumulation of material wealth. This is, of course, a matter of practicality and necessity, due to the mobile nature of this group. Material values shape many of the conversations that unfold along the trail: What shoes are you wearing? How much do they weigh? How many miles have you gotten out of them? How many liters is your pack? Where did you get your hiking skirt? Gear may make or break a thru hike, following closely behind the mental fortitude that is discussed in greater detail in Chapter IX. Some degree of improvisation and ingenuity will help guarantee success; however, despite that the brands and types of gear used on the trail are actually quite narrow in scope, there are a number of companies marketing thru hiker specific gear.

The Cost of a Thru Hike

Despite this laborious value for immaterialism and simplicity, NSTs have been accused of being an experience reserved for the independently wealthy, a so-called “rich man’s trail.” Popsicle (personal communication, October 2015) states, “I didn’t think adventures like that were for regular people ... I also didn’t think I could ever afford to not work for five months straight.” According to one blog site,¹ the average thru hiker spends \$1,000 to \$2,000 to gear up with the latest ultralight hiking equipment. Resupply expenses may cost \$2,000 total, about \$1,500 of which is spent purchasing along the way in trail towns to replenish your food supply. Another \$500 may be spent shipping resupply boxes to the next trail town. Hikers find that trail towns can become the largest expense, as they offer opportunities to indulge: sleep in a bed, shower, drink beer, do laundry, and most importantly, finally satiate their gnawing appetites. Hikers may spend somewhere between \$25 to well over \$100 during any one town stop, depending on their preferences and taste for luxury. In total, hikers may spend from as little as \$1,000 to as much as \$7,000 to complete a thru hike, while average estimates tend to fall between \$3,500 to \$6,000 or somewhere around \$2 to \$3 per mile. I have included my own gear list, including cost and the bulk of my weight, in Appendix C. In addition there is, in most cases, a willingness to accept up to six months of lost income or more if reaggregation isn’t a smooth or thought-out process. Some thru hikers plan their sojourn at least a year to several years in advance. No doubt for some it’s a lifelong pipe dream that is put to the side while they wait for retirement, better financial times, or for the kids

¹ Mac. “How Much Does it Cost to Hike the Pacific Crest Trail?” Halfway Anywhere (blog), February 2014. <http://www.halfwayanywhere.com/trails/pacific-crest-trail/much-cost-hike-pacific-crest-trail/>.

to move out.

Calories: “The Most Important Piece of Gear”²

I usually set an alarm and woke just before it went off, depending on the mileage goal for the day. If it was a big day, I had to get up extra early. I would typically prep my stove and fill my pot with water the night before so all I had to do was unzip my tent and half roll out to click the starter on my stove to get the water heating up. I fumble around in my tent to get dressed, clean and wrap my blisters (in the latter stages), and finally put on my shoes to venture out into the frosty morning to unstring my food sack from the tree. I revel in the sight of my undisturbed food sack. By the time I got back, the water was boiling. I dissolve protein powder into the water in the lid, dump in the oatmeal, sprinkle it with granola and chia seeds, and pour the water over the medley. The remaining water goes over my coffee.

The remainder of my morning unfolds in between bites of cold oatmeal. I stuff my sleeping bag in its sack and stack everything tidily outside the tent. Stakes come out first. Pick up the tent and shake it out. Poles come out of their grommets, and then out of the clips holding them in place. I put the carefully folded tent in the stuff sack and start filling my pack: I pull out my portioned lunch Ziploc for the day and keep it separate. The rest of the food goes in the bottom of my pack, followed by my tent, the sleeping bag and pad. Everything else gets stuffed into vacant air pockets. The sun usually starts to

² Lawton “Disco” Grinter. “Trail Food: The Most Important Piece of Gear in Your Pack.” Section Hiker: Hiking and Backpacking for Beginners and Experts (blog), August 2012. <http://sectionhiker.com/trail-food-the-most-important-piece-of-gear-in-your-pack-by-lawton-disco-grinter/>.

warm me by now so my puffy gets packed, maybe the gloves and hat. I wash my lid, and mix my Aquamira drops, fill my hydration bladder and add the Aquamira, as directed. Everything goes into my pack. I start out with my trekking poles strapped onto my pack so I can carry my coffee with me for the first hour. I start out at a leisurely pace, picking huckleberries and blueberries, sipping coffee, and waiting out the morning chill. But once the coffee is gone, it is time to get serious. I pack away the Nalgene, and extend my trekking poles: shorter for climbing, longer for descending. As the day goes on, my mileage goal starts to take hold of me. I pick up my pace. I take fewer pictures. I start to worry I will not make my destination.

I positively thrive in this sort of ordered environment. It is one of many reasons I have always loved being in the wilderness. Everything, even the coffee, is meticulously weighed, measured, and rationed into exactly the quantity I get to have that morning. It is a technique I learned on trail crew. There is no risk of overeating, and no risk of short changing myself. I know exactly how many calories I need, and exactly how many calories are in each carefully packaged Ziploc baggie. Any more would be welcome, but sadly, wasted weight. Any less would be suicide. I started out carrying around a pound and a half of food per day, but realized I was carrying extra so I was able to whittle it back to closer to one pound. Averaging twenty-five miles per day at three miles per hour over the course of about a nine plus hour day, I am burning about 4,000 to 6,000 calories per day. I take in calories throughout the day while on the move, about 100 to 200 calories, every one or two hours. I rarely stop except to refill my water or look at the map, take a picture, or talk to a hiker. Everything is predetermined. Success is guaranteed

so long as I keep moving. If there is one item of gear that is symbolic of the trail experience, it is the food we carry. The ratio of ounces to calories, and how it is packaged, define an item's worth as trail food.

The Resupply

I walk vast stretches of wilderness from one town to the next. If order, routine, mindlessness and mindfulness, discipline, abstinence, and asceticism make up the daily routine in the trail space, resupply days are in absolute contrast. Resupply day is the hardest. Even though it is usually the shortest mileage day, I am pushing harder than ever. I let myself get a little hungrier as the day wears on in anticipation of the overindulgences to come.

We come out of the woods, bug-eyed, clumsy in the confined space of the indoors, and above all, ravenous. We marvel over flushing toilets, running water, paved sidewalks, yellow fluorescent lights, reflections of ourselves, and the excess of *stuff*. We are faced with forgotten choices, and sudden self-consciousness. A recovering alcoholic must decide whether to go to the bar with his companions, and risk succumbing to weakness, while famished vegetarians and vegans are confronted by greasy cheeseburgers. No matter how long we're in it, it is inevitable that we must exit the constrained trail space and find our demons there waiting for us when we come out, whatever they may be. We keep devising ways to test the limits of the Wilderness Act: "where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." It begs the question. If we could live like this forever, would we?

“Are you NOBO or SOBO?” I am startled out of my daze by the question. I had just completed my longest stretch through northern Washington, having squeaked through a new fire closure, what was to be the first of many, and was picked up hitchhiking by a French guy in a Porsche Carrera. I panicked slightly when he put my pack in the tiny trunk and slammed the door. I had forgotten to pull my knife out of my hip belt and put it in my pocket, and I suddenly felt like I needed to keep my pack close by. I worried about dirtying his car, and wondered aloud how badly I smelled. He just smiled, amused, and told me not to worry about it. We zipped down from Rainy Pass. He apologized for driving so fast. My all-consuming life at three miles per hour became a distant memory, as I once again had to adjust to the speed of life off the trail. He interrogated me, and worried over it, saying he would never let his wife do something like that. “For me, no, I would worry too much. I would not let her go by herself.” Amused, I thought to myself, “Getting in your car is the most dangerous thing I’ve done in a very long time, sir.” He dropped me off in Winthrop, a little Western-themed town, and a backpacker’s dream. I was starving but I had to see all my options so I had just completed my first lap of the main downtown area.

“Are you NOBO or SOBO?” A street performer with a guitar was smiling at me and I realized a response was in order. NOBO is a northbound thru hiker, while SOBO is southbound. Such trail lingo is one way hikers connect off trail. The trail was already a million miles away as I was surrounded by more food and people than I thought possible. “NOBO, but I’m just a section hiker.” Even far from the PCT, it was evidently painfully obvious that I was a thru hiker, yet I felt like a homeless person. He tells me about a

hostel in town where I can camp, but he's talking too fast and I can't keep up. I smile and thank him and decide to start with a colossal brownie ice cream sundae.

Trail Magic

Materialism is also very important, and often controversial, in terms of reciprocating "trail magic." Trail magic comes on behalf of trail angels, who provide services to thru hikers. They may provide rides, food, drinks, shelter... in some cases, they have opened up their home or quit their "day job" to become full time trail angels. Thru hikers are expected to budget for tipping and reciprocating trail angels, and failing to do so is frowned upon. Trail angels vary in their requests, or sometimes demands, for reciprocation; or in some cases by outright refusing to be reciprocated. Yet by and large, trail angeling often inevitably matures into a full time enterprise as the demand increases.

NSTs provide corridors that host a budding outdoor tourism industry. Along other well-established NSTs, trail angeling has morphed from acts of semi-organized goodwill to capital venture. Reciprocating is a source of anxiety to some hikers: How much to tip? When to tip? But the trail angels who are too demanding, certainly those that are trying to make a profit off their services, are slandered. One hiker laments, "Trail angels are no longer angels, they are mercenaries" (Anonymous, personal communication, October 2015). Toeing the line of give and take on the trail and learning the social cues is fundamental to thru hiker etiquette. Angels who ask for too much are outcast. Hikers who compensate too little are frowned upon.

Trail angels should be considered an integral part of the social space of trails because they are necessary enablers of a successful thru hike. Trail angels have come into

conflict with managers, and as use increases, their intolerance for poor behavior has caused some to back out of the community (Friedman 2015). One observation is that trail angels contribute greatly to the self-management of the trail. They are capable of reinforcing poor behavior, such as water and food caches, and some may backlash if asked to stop. In a drought year such as 2015, when water is scarce, some trail angels consider it their duty to help hikers achieve safe passage by maintaining illegal water caches. Requests that they abstain are considered “heartless³” (Facebook PCTA group page). In 2015, trail angels became one source for “official” updates on fire closures, behavior which was not always well met by the PCTA. One PCTA staff member felt compelled to curtly remind a trail angel that there was nothing “official” about his update regarding a 2015 fire closure.

“Seeing” the Trail: Signage, Iconography, and Insignia

MacCannell (1999) would argue that a hiker-tourist doesn’t see the trail, but the elements that make up the trail as a series of meaningful experiences. Sociopolitical boundaries: entering a wilderness, exiting a national park, and crossing a state or international boundary are a few such ways to see the trail. Without continuity of experience, the trail effectively doesn’t exist, and the meaning of the experience is lost. Something must mark the way and reinforce the uniformity of the trail. In this case, it is through logos. Without uniformity of signage and logos, the tourist culture therein

³ Anonymous. PCT Class of 2015, [Facebook group], accessed September 24, 2015. https://www.facebook.com/groups/608334832544246/1019115084799550/?notif_t=group_comment_reply.

becomes undermined. What is a thru hike without this uniformity and continuity of experience? It is the PNT today, which is largely still being pieced together. The experience of the early pioneer thru hikers on the PCT is nothing like the modern PCT experience. The PNT pioneers of today will little resemble future PNT hikers.

MacCannell postulates on the worth of a single element of a tourist attraction, divorced from the entire constructed stage. The trail has thus “lost its markers and is incomplete as an attraction” (MacCannell 1999: 112). One can then deduce the importance of continuity and synchronicity of signage along an NST in order to complete and fulfill a hiker’s expectations for meaningful experience. An NST without iconography is just another trail. Yet MacCannell goes on to explain the difference between sight involvement and marker involvement—a potentially critical difference in meaning-making in the trail space. The marker becomes the sight of familiarity, reassurance, and a source of cultural reproduction. The question inevitably becomes: Are you here to see the wilderness, are you here to see the trail contained therein, or are you here to see the signs that symbolize the trail?

When one embarks on a PCT thru hike, their first glimpse of the trail is usually a trailhead marker of some kind: a bulletin board, perhaps containing the PCT logo, or a monument if they’re starting in Mexico or Canada. The first glimpse of the trail is uncertain and unspoken for, yet familiar and intimate. It is just as Twain (1966: 83), as cited in MacCannell, describes: “Like meeting an old friend.” Months, if not years, of preparation went into planning such a hike, so when the participant finally sets eyes on the real trail, which has been exhaustively replicated through photographs by prior hikers

and social media sharing, the fine line between perception and recognition becomes muddied. The story has been told and retold thousands of times, but not by the novice. MacCannell (1999: 121) calls this “sight-marker-sight transformation.” This transformative experience is made possible by iconography, which constructs a process of recognition. The trail thus becomes symbolized in a meaningful, but materialistic way, by use of markers, logos, and signs. Marker involvement then manifests in evidence of signs that have been written on that help reinforces the thru hiker’s expectations for “constructed recognition” (MacCannell 1999: 123), more so than as route finding or practical navigational purposes. Non-adherence to uniformity subjects nonconforming signage to being written on in permanent marker, and other graffiti. Signs, markers, and junctions along the trail that are not a part of the NST trail corridor may then be seen as, not necessarily navigationally confusing, but disruptive to the hiker-tourist’s single-minded destination.

Along the length of the PCT, aptly named aluminum “reassurance markers” are abundant. Reassurance markers are not wilderness compliant, neither made of native materials, nor meeting guidelines for minimal signage. They are, in fact, reassuring, but serve no navigational purpose. This is typical of a tourist route, which has become dominated by its markers. At the other extreme, along the course of the PNT I walked about 100 miles, or four or five days, before encountering my first PNT insignia.

Separating the symbolic and material experience with a marker or sign from the symbolic and material trail experience becomes for the hiker to demarcate. Markers, logos, and signs also may become an intensely embedded symbolic way to both preserve

and displace the trail. For example, thru hikers popularly tattoo the trail's logo, or some meaningful symbol that represents their experience. The trail is thus displaced and symbolically replaced, as a way to take the experience with them. Tattoos are a rather extreme example because most touristic souvenirs come in the form of trinkets and other material objects. Tattoos might be regarded as a beyond average degree of immersion in the trail space, as more than a souvenir trinket. Tattoos of trail logos are likely reflective of a deep desire to retain not only the identity the individual constructed in the trail space, but perhaps even to displace the trail itself, as asserted by MacCannell, as a means of overtaking the ordinary with the extraordinary, the profane by the sacred. It is, in other words, one way to symbolically sow seeds of social change by way of material icons and totems, as asserted in pilgrimage literature (Van Gennep 1966).

Shrine Construction and Other Interpretations of Leave No Trace

Another way that materialism manifests on the trail is by semblances of shrine construction and other symbolic edifices, such as rock stacking. This is another highly controversial topic because it challenges otherwise fairly universal standards to "leave no trace."

Leave No Trace (LNT) is defined as an ethical guideline for accepted and appropriate behavior in the outdoors. There are seven principles: 1) plan ahead and prepare, 2) travel and camp on durable surfaces, 3) dispose of waste properly, 4) leave what you find, 5) minimize campfire impacts, 6) respect wildlife, and 7) be considerate of other visitors (LNT n.d.). While many of these guidelines are universally accepted, there are several that are subject to situational context and interpreted accordingly. For

example, it is generally unacceptable to burn trash, yet many trail crews who are immersed in the wilderness must burn trash to maintain camp sanitation until the next pack string comes in to take out their garbage. Otherwise their garbage would attract wildlife, and thus pose not only a safety hazard, but would subject wildlife to undue habituation and exposure to humans. In this situational context, food-scented plastic is usually washed in the dish line, while food waste and cardboard are burned. Many trail crews will burn plastic but this practice is not widely accepted, and certainly has never been sanctioned on any crew I supervised. Trail crews thus also necessarily rely heavily on campfires, and will request exemption, or devise techniques to fly under the radar, when forest-wide fire bans are emplaced. There is, of course, the inherent contradiction of a trail crew leaving no trace. Byl (2013: xix) explains, “Despite the common wilderness maxim, passage on land cannot possibly *leave no trace*, because just as we mark the world when we live in it, so the world marks us.”

Another example, in this case more social than situational, is a thru hiker’s methods of communication to his or her fellow thru hikers. Hikers will leave notes and treats for one another along the trail, in some cases to communicate water situations or fire closure information. In one case, I found a note directly instructing against removal of the note under any circumstances except by the intended recipient. I felt effectively prohibited from packing out trash that had been left on the trail. Thru hikers also like to blockade non-PCT routes with sticks and limbs to reinforce absolute linearity and continuity along the trail. Junctions are distractions to such focused mobility, but more importantly, a challenge for thru hikers who have been staring at their feet for three or

four months. Even now, with the relative ease of passage, thru hikers “in the zone” are liable to sail past what should be a fairly obvious junction. Mindlessness, as much as mindfulness, play an integral role in a hiker’s coping with days and months of general tedium. Furthermore, thru hikers keep mile markers on the trail in sticks, pinecones, or pebbles every 100 miles to document hiker progression. In Washington, I encountered the 2,300 and 2,400-mile markers.

Problematically, blocking non-PCT trails and marking miles that are irrelevant to the majority of trail users would be a violation of the last LNT rule: be considerate of other visitors. Arrows and sticks make many assumptions about other visitors to the trail. Arrows usually assume a northbound traveler. Junction blockades assume a PCT thru hiker and no other. Even the PNT was not exempt from being blocked off at the section where the PNT briefly followed the PCT and then departed westward. Presumably, PCT hikers did not realize they were blocking off a fellow newly designated up-and-coming NST.

Trail Names

To reinforce the pilgrimage quality of the trail, thru hikers and section hikers alike are likely to leave behind their given names, and adopt a new name along the trail. This is conducive to aid in deconstruction of prior identity, and reconstruction of their new trail-assigned identity. These names may be self-assigned or given by other hikers, but in the latter case, given names may be accepted or denied. Trail names may tell a story of an event, or may be attached to a unique descriptive trait embodied by the thru hiker. Some

trail names are adaptive as the thru hiker matures into his or her hiker identity. Smiles and Miles (personal communication, September 2015) relates:

When I first arrived in ... it was during a pretty nasty storm. We had been hiking in freezing 60 mph winds and pelting rain bullets. I was pumped! I mean, we were hiking the PCT!!!! Apparently when I walked up to the ... I was the only hiker [he] had seen that day with a huge grin on my face, so the guy doing the pack shake downs at the store called me Smiles. Later we had a chat regarding the fact that I was a bit bummed about my mileage, and how it was ok to be slow and enjoy the terrain. Since it was my first thru-hike I was doing only twelve miles a day. So he changed it to Smiles Not Miles. Another trail angel instantly started calling me SNM. Later on during the hike, I became rather voracious about miles and found a love of large elevation climbs. So my hiking partner at the time renamed me Smiles and Miles, or S&M. It stuck.

Trail names stick long after the trail experience, into re-aggregation, but primarily only within the trail community. This, like tattoos, is indicative of a lasting mark of the individual's experience on the trail, and the desire to preserve their transformative experiences even upon return to life off the trail.

In terms of distinguishing tourism from pilgrimage, there is an expected compliance to specific patterns and speed of movement, or more general behavior along the route (Coleman 2005). Tourists may disobey or disregard certain expectations for appropriate use of the trail while on NSTs, but thru hikers are subject to critique for hiking too fast or too slow, carrying too big a pack, sporting heavy boots, or wearing cotton; but in the end, each hiker is advised to Hike Your Own Hike (HYOH).⁴

Discussion

⁴ Flaky Guy. "Pacific Crest Trail Hiker's Glossary. Flaky Guy (blog), 2008. <http://scottbryce.com/pct/glossary.html>.

This chapter offers a response primarily to my second question: How do trails foster and sustain social, symbolic, and material landscapes; but also certainly addresses some conflicting concepts between wilderness as an idea, and trails as its practice.

This chapter discussed the concept of immaterial values and their associated values in terms of identity construction. Gear and food were introduced as important factors in thru hike success, and at enormous cost. I introduced my own gear list and costs in Appendix C. I discussed the role of structure in a thru hiker's day, in keeping with pilgrimage literature, and the significance of markers and shrine construction to the continuous experience along the length of the trail. I also introduced the particularly complex wavering identity on resupply day as hikers descend, usually literally and figuratively, from the trail into town. In so doing, they transform from hiker-pilgrim to hiker-tourist and hiker-transient. Two challenges were presented in this chapter. The first was associated with trail angel behavior, and their contribution to the trail becoming self-managed. The second was the interpretation of LNT based upon situational and environmental context.

CHAPTER VIII

“GETTING TO LIVE”

Introduction

Segmenting a large goal (completing the trail) into small goals makes up the daily life of a thru hiker. Getting to the next watering hole, the next campsite, to the next resupply... these small goals are where many thru hikers find themselves describing Csikszentmihalyi's flow state. In these moments, “what we feel, what we wish, and what we think are in harmony (1997: 29). Flow is succinctly described as an experience that falls between anxiety and boredom.

Every evening, as light fades, my confidence begins to falter. The day's triumphs suddenly seem very easy, my festering blisters suddenly seem miniscule, as I fall into my usual routine of mounting anxiety. I feel apprehensive as a growing sense of lack of control descends upon me, as darkness descends upon my tent. I worry about wildlife and trees falling on me as I sleep. If I am camped by a road, I worry about people – things that I am supposedly immune to during the day.

I have never slept with ease in the woods, and am generally exhausted when I am on the trail. That is, when I am soloing. I miss the comradeship of my trail crew and the security of my trail tools close by as I busy myself with planning for the next day. I always figured if I was carrying a Pulaski or a chainsaw, I was invulnerable. Now, I've substituted my axe and my rock bar for silly trekking poles.

As a woman alone in the wilderness, I get many incredulous responses that I never understand: “All alone?!” “By yourself?!” “Do you carry a gun?” These questions

inevitably come on the highest use trails when I am passing and being passed by hundreds of people.

This happened in the Mount Baker Wilderness as I headed away from the visitor center amid a cold windy rain. I was mind-boggled by the string of hikers on the trail, despite the unpleasant weather. Dozens of people stopped to chat about the merits of the destination, Lake Anne, assuming I would be going there too. I had never heard of Lake Anne, but apparently it is the place to go. Two elderly ladies expressed concern for my wellbeing, and kindly pointed out, “There’s a couple of young men up ahead who look very nice and capable” (Paraphrased, personal conversation, August 2015). Never mind that within another couple miles I would be departing this high-traffic area and following the arm of Mount Baker in a southbound trajectory. I thanked them awkwardly, and hustled by them to cowboy camp in solitude that night. Cowboy camping is a popular method for thru hikers to camp away from high use areas to minimize their chances of an animal encounter. It is not Leave No Trace savvy, but I cowboy camped this night because I wanted to tackle a glacial stream crossing in the morning so I went as far as I could to put myself in closer position to do so.

I am not afraid to be in the woods alone, and I do not carry a gun or even pepper spray. I am, however, somewhat afraid of the dark. Whenever I choose my campsite and set up my tent, I feel like I am choosing my grave. I find the darkness suffocating. This is not limited to my time on the trail. A recent article on the topic echoes my sentiments and the ongoing battle with rationality:

“OH SHIT,” I wrote in my journal. “All the light was just sucked out of the sky. The woods are VERY DARK.” ... Lately, I’ve realized these fears aren’t normal.

They're not "part of being a woman." They're BULLSHIT. People admonish me not to go into the wilderness alone because I might get eaten by a bear or lost in a tangle of trees. But I know how to use bear spray. I can read a map. I can hike or paddle as far and as fast as any guy, and I can wait out a lightning storm in the safest possible place. These are things I can control. The fear I feel in the frontcountry is the fear of losing that control (Langlois 2016).

Wilderness immersion is a gender-neutral skill. I just happen to be a worrier by nature. Sitting alone in my tent in the fading light, I scour Halfmile's PCT maps or my PNT guidebook to memorize water sources, campsites, creek crossings, and trail descriptions, and prepare for the next day. I clean my blisters. I engage my worry-prone mind until I am too exhausted to go on feeding my irrationality. I turn off my headlamp and listen attentively to the night noises until I fall asleep, waking frequently throughout the night. When I finally wake in the morning, it is nothing short of a miracle. My first thought is always, "I survived!" I smile at the opportunity to tackle another day on the trail. I start my morning ritual.

To be clear, on the trail is the only place I routinely start the first minutes of my day with a smile. I find security and a sense of control in my self-contained mobility. I believe this is what drives many of my travels, runs, and walks. I find sedentism stifling, as do many of the people I meet on the trail. Sedentism fosters, indeed mandates, material accumulation. Many seek the trail as opportunities to find a simpler way to live, shed that material accumulation, and experience life without excessive material distractions. It provides an opportunity to turn inward, but also to turn outward, to both connect and disconnect, and to pursue values for individualism and collectivism, self-discovery and communalism. Long trails seem to attract individuals who are drawn to, not only nomadism, but crave a primitive type of communalism that accompanies such a lifestyle.

In further pursuit of the question, what do trails do for us; it is helpful to consider trail use as an intrinsically motivated, goal-directed activity, and trail users as autotelic individuals, as outlined in Csikszentmihalyi's work. This chapter will explore the important topic of why we leave the comforts of society and civilization, a stable job, loved ones, pursuits for wealth and materialism, safety; wheeled, mechanized, motorized mobility; flushing toilets, running water, showers, and other conveniences, for the relative hardships, vulnerability, and instability of life on the trail. Within this discussion, come several points. Inspired by Csikszentmihalyi (2000a), I will discuss the trail space as an unlikely destination to pursue and satisfy Maslow's (1968, 1971) hierarchy. I will show how we seek and satisfy prerequisites for safety on the trail, love and belonging, and perhaps most enticing, a desire for self-actualization.

Turner (1979: 58) states, "To flow is to be as happy as a human can be." Bright Eyes (personal communication, October 2015) relates her flow-like experience:

When I'm in the woods for a long time—say more than ten days—I get overwhelmed by a feeling that is like freedom and joy mixed together. It feels like a radical openness. I've craved a long walk for as long as I can remember, because I feel happiest when I'm in that feeling. ... When I'm thru hiking, every single day I have at least one moment when I can't believe how lucky I am *to get to live my life* (emphasis added).

The Paradox of Seeking Safety in Wilderness

We have spent hundreds of years diligently taming wilderness to make it safe. First of all, we have tamed wilderness by shrinking it. The majority of wilderness areas in the lower forty-eight are on average 10,000 to 50,000 acres, which is not even ecologically viable, particularly for large predators (Dawson and Hendee 2009). Secondly, we have significantly moderated and modified natural predator behavior, all

but eliminated predators, and psychologically if not physically removed ourselves from the food chain. Third, we have developed technology to increase perceptions of safety. We have SPOT locators, Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs), satellite and cellular service increasingly penetrating into the depths of the wilderness. Technology does not increase our wilderness skills. In fact, it may diminish values for skills and challenge. Whether or not to carry a gun or other weapon on the trail is another contentious topic. In social media forums this can become a politically motivated conversation piece, but for the most part, it is simply not aligned with the larger priority of paring down unnecessary ounces. A gun would be, and is, considered frivolous, and taking that level of paranoia onto the trail is generally frowned upon, if not ridiculed.

Within the bottom tier of Maslow's hierarchy, one may also consider our need to seek space. Given space, we can meet many of our most basic needs. Some seek the wilderness space because it offers a level of safety that is more satisfactory than their non-trail life, which is encumbered by urban constraints. One hiker states:

I was living in an area where we had a lot of drive-by shootings and a woman was shot and killed shielding her children the week before we left, so when people asked me if I was going to be scared hiking the PCT I kind of had to laugh (Anonymous, personal communication, September 2015).

The relative safety of the trail only increases as the trail culture becomes very strongly developed. Support networks increase the likelihood of safe passage, and predictably, numbers of attempts increase. I became insecure when I left the comforts of the PCT autobahn for the relative isolation of the PNT, even though I still saw people every day. The PNT has not stood the test of time, with

thousands of hikers safely performing a thru hike every year. I had no statistics to comfort my worrying self.

In Search of Belonging: Disconnecting to Connect

In Maslow's second tier, love and belonging, I reference back to Turner's concept of *communitas*. Lee (1990: 245) states:

Despite our seeming adaptation to life in hierarchical societies, there are signs that humankind retains a deep-rooted egalitarianism, a deep-rooted commitment to the norm of reciprocity, a deep-rooted desire for... *communitas*, the sense of community.

One blogger uses the idea of "skinship," or physical contact to describe his experiences with thru hiking as a somewhat frustrating attempt to connect, not with one another, but with nature, because of the inherent materialism of backpacking.

Even as we are hiking these beautiful scenes unperturbed by society, we have countless number of barriers that are protecting us from the true nakedness of wildness. Wool socks that wicks away foot moisture and soaks up all of the funky smells, synthetic gloves provide barrier from the UV rays, plastic sun glasses for more UV protection, boots that allow for your feet to move freely around unknown untouched virgin surfaces of the earth, an umbrella to keep the sun away and the rain away, a map to understand our location, hiking poles to find balance, plastic water bottles to keep the body hydrated, plastic bags to keep the food safe, separate, and dry. The list never ends; we are constantly relying on man made, synthetic, unnatural, materials and taught knowledge to be with nature unpredictability. As much as I want to, I can't just be naked in the middle of the desert, to be "one with nature." In fact, to sustain life out in the wilderness, takes tremendous amounts of practice, perseverance, planning, and knowledge... We exist in nature, and are bound to it in ways that we have yet to uncover. We cannot bottleneck our knowledge and relationship to nature by suppressing it, with a term like skinship. We cannot be blind-sighted by corporate propaganda or the fault of our own ignorance and disinterest in nature; we have to dig deeper and try to understand and care for it.¹

¹ eedahahm. "Cactus Needles in my Skinship Butthole." Eedahahm (blog), 2016. <http://www.eedahahm.com/eedahahm-stupid-pct-catus-needles-butthole/>.

Conformity through gear, food, and clothes are just a few material ways that hikers connect with one another, but interfere with this hiker's effort to connect with nature. Gifts, trail magic, and reciprocity are other ways that *communitas* is bolstered, fostering a sense of belonging. One apt way to describe the sense of community through life on the trail is through the sharing of food. One hiker describes his experience coming off trail and sharing a loaf of bread with a group of strangers. Everyone's hands were filthy because there had been a wildfire recently so they had been hiking through ash, and it was an "ordinary" loaf of bread, but no one cared. He describes feeling as though he had known these strangers for a very long time.

In Search of Excellence: Esteem and Self-Actualization

In Chapter VI, I discussed the focused mobility, and opportunities for transformation, offered within the confines of the trail space. Trails contain qualities of Turner's third space, and participants in this space have shed their former identities and statuses, even changing their names. Thus, it is safe to deduce that trails are places where one can go to "lose oneself" (Csikszentmihalyi 2000b). Csikszentmihalyi's flow state is closely related to opportunities for transformation in Turner's rites of passage, and Maslow's top tier pursuit for self-actualization. One key difference is the degree of structure inherent to flow state, and lack of structure characterizing *communitas*. *Communitas* arises out of circumstances of spontaneity while flow does not (St John 2008). In terms of *communitas* on the trail, the spontaneous nature of *communitas* is subject to a variety of factors. Pace and compatibility are probably the two most

important factors that determine if and for how long a group of hikers will share their time on the trail. Emergent social connections on the trail are largely unplanned and unpredictable. The flow state is something, which must be actively sought to avoid apathy and boredom. Flow does not come to all hikers innately or without diligent mental conditioning.

Some people tend to think that a thru hike is an extended vacation in the mountains. Certainly these stunning moments exist on a long hike, but they are just a small part. The road is filled with long dusty miles and truly the greatest gifts to be found out on a long walk are not the landscapes but the lessons learned while oscillating between barren joy and a shifting sense of what's normal, the complete reorganization of one's priorities, the schooling that comes from the terrain, the suffering that makes you more compassionate and the hours given to thought and meditation and the people that offer help and inspiration along the way.²

Being able to go on trail is a privilege in itself. Those that have taken the plunge, quit their jobs, sold their possessions, divorced their loved ones, made enormous sacrifices, or otherwise “got free” to embark on a thru hike have already earned a high level of esteem in the trail community. What is driving the outdoor gear industry is this pursuit for transcendence, self-actualization, and transformation even though hikers such as eedahahm³ find such materialism distracting and disconnecting. Csikszentmihalyi (2000a: 269) states “a person driven to achieve personal growth is more likely to lead a frugal life ... than to invest heavily in goods. In fact ... it seems that many consumer decisions may be driven by the need for self-actualization.”

² Rainbow Bright. “Wandering Thru: The Pacific Northwest Trail.” *Vimeo*, February 24, 2015. <https://vimeo.com/155931598>.

³ eedahahm. “Cactus Needles in my Skinship Butthole.” Eedahahm (blog), 2016. <http://www.eedahahm.com/eedahahm-stupid-pct-catus-needles-butthole/>.

I too have postulated on feelings of alienation from “nature” when I spent six months in the wilderness on a backcountry trail crew in 2003. Instead of being able to connect with my environment, it was a period of self-discovery and growth. I wrote:

How is it when I am most deeply connected with the natural order of things, that I let all my causes, all my compassions and all my most selfless tendencies slip away so that I became completely self-absorbed, playing with my existence with such naïveté, as does a child? I unburdened myself of all the problems of the world and was forced for the first time to face myself, materially naked and without distraction. The wilderness is a harsh place, and in it there is no natural place for humans. We’re not built for it. We think we’re getting in touch with nature by spending half a day or half of a year in the elements, but we carry our materialism on our backs, like the burden it is, because without it we’re defenseless. I live and work in the wilderness, not because I feel a sense of belonging out here, nor because I am trying to escape from a rat race society. I do it for love of the work, for the intensity of the labor, for the thrill of dropping my tools at the end of the day to climb a nearby peak, or to plunge into a frigid swimming hole on my lunch break. I do it because testing my comfort boundary and pushing it further year after year makes me feel strong and indomitable. I connected with my environment so much that I lost all flowery notions of my place, my role, in nature. I connected so profoundly that I became disconnected (Chinchen 2007, unpublished manuscript).

The trail, in essence, becomes a place to develop skills, and toy with the lines between boredom and anxiety. As our most basic fundamental needs have been met, one by one, our demands for meaning, purpose, and significance have begun to take precedence, such that we’ve become willing to descend Maslow’s pyramid, compromising and re-examining perceptions of safety, love and belonging.

Trails, in essence, theoretically turn Maslow’s pyramid upside down, if not in practice, or suggest that the top tier of Maslow’s hierarchy is unattainable off-trail, within the constraints of society. Or, more aptly, capitalism may be more inherently responsible for the havoc wreaked on Maslow’s fundamental hierarchy of needs. Marx and Engels (1960) explain, “As soon as a need is satisfied ... new needs are made; and this

production of new needs is the first historical act.” Trails are perhaps no better milieu to reinforce this ideology. The fact that trails exist to begin with is a production of a new need, but they also exist as a destination to create and fulfill needs for self-actualization, purpose, and significance. A significant number of people have become motivated to depart from the safety and comforts of society, and instead seek the trail for love and belonging, and self-actualization.

The Significance of Flow

A thru hike is jumping into something that scares you shitless, and finding that it’s really not scary at all, but an enlightening albeit sometimes difficult learning experience ... How do you explain those days where the trail was pure energy beneath your feet, the delight at seeing miles of trail contouring ahead of you, the thrill of tackling fifty switchbacks, that the grueling climb to the top in pouring rain was actually pure misery ... There are so many miraculous, shitty, boring, incredible, pure, and stunning moments... it is a magical place that always provides (Smiles & Miles, personal communication, September 2015).

Smiles and Miles captured the emotional roller coaster ride of the thru hike.

Achieving and maintaining a flow state can make or break a hiker’s success. There are reports that the greatest number of dropouts along the PCT occurs north of the burly Sierras, as hikers enter an area of moderate grade and relative ease in northern California (Davis and Moree 2016). The lower skill level required and moderate degree of challenge seems boring compared to the magnificent Sierras. It is not physical endurance that pushes hikers through this section. It is dissatisfaction related to their non-trail lives that lead them to persevere through the length of the PCT, the sense of purpose, and a “radical centering of attention” (Turner 1982: 56) facilitated and reinforced by the physical infrastructure, a 24-inch wide corridor, of the trail space. Choices are limited by the

linearity of the trail so hikers are both physically and mentally focused on the task at hand, which is forward movement. Anything else but forward is failure.

“You will think back to your former life—a time when the most exciting part of your day was measured in ‘likes,’ inside a 12-ounce can, or was preceded by ‘http://’” (Davis and Moree 2016: 50).

How are you generating income? How do you value money? These things can change for the better hiking the trail. I worked construction and hated life. Time and labor spent making good money wasn't working for me. Now I'm pursuing a dream job as a photographer. Gotta make that cheese but don't kill yourself slowly in the process.⁴

In this vein, it is common to see people take to the trail to cultivate their creative energy, to turn hobbies and passions into careers. Photography, jewelry design, and writing novels are just a few examples, and may in part explain the tendency for thru hikers to blog, as a form of creative expression and individuality. This reframes and revisits Turner's observations that such experiences provide opportunities for an experimental period of “dissolution of normative social structure [whereupon] seed beds of cultural creativity” (Turner 1979: 19) are sown. Smiles and Miles (Anonymous, personal communication, September, 2015) states her purpose and intent for taking to the trail:

I was working as a nursing assistant and running a jewelry design business. I wasn't sure which one to pick as a career. So I took to the trail to decide if I should go into medicine or fashion. I found that I missed my studio horribly on the trail. There were so many views that inspired a million ideas, with no tools to make them. I actually got off the trail for four weeks just to spend time working on some art projects.

⁴ Anonymous. PCT Class of 2015 [Facebook group], accessed March, 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/608334832544246/?fref=nf>.

A thru-hike is a battle of mental endurance more than physical. Apathy and boredom, as much as anxiety and worry, can spell terrible defeat to a thru hiker, “[b]ecause when it comes to backpacking 2,650 miles, the greatest determining factor of success is clarity of purpose” (Davis and Moree 2016: 23). In order to retain your clarity of purpose, however, you cannot completely lose yourself. Davis and Moree (2016) even suggest that there is an occasional consultation between your former self and your trail self during times of hardship: “Zach needed to convince *Badger* why he was doing what he was doing” (Davis and Moree 2016: 23). Smiles and Miles (personal communication, September 2015) describes her most unpleasant memory on the trail:

Well it was unpleasant but I also learned a lot. I had an accident... I was caught in a white out blizzard ... every article of gear I had was soaked, and I face planted off the side of the mountain. I was hypothermic and wasn't sure I would make it out alive. But I did, and there is a magic to that struggle I am still experiencing. For about an hour I thought I was going to be the idiot who died on the PCT this year.

Thru hiking is problem solving, all day, every day. It's not just about putting one foot in front of the other. I find myself challenged to jimmy rig an equipment malfunction, improvising blister care after I run out of duct tape and Band-Aids, or throwing a rock tied to a rope over a limb to hang my food. The bear bag hang was my greatest daily battle even after the blisters set in, and is a topic of personal contention. On trail crew, I used my food bag for a pillow, and slept with ease, but being on trail crew imparts a feeling of invulnerability that a solo backpack does not. Maybe it was the tools. Maybe it was my colleagues nearby. Maybe it was the sense of purpose, and having a niche in the wilderness that backpacking does not fulfill.

On my section hike, I hung my food out of spite, determined to overcome my apparent ineptitude at throwing things. To make a bear bag hang, you have to find a rock and either tie it to a rope, or put it in a stuff sack tied to a rope, and then throw the rock over a limb that is high enough to be out of a bear's reach, but not impossibly high, and far away enough from the trunk that a bear cannot climb the tree and grab it. I would hang onto the rock too long shooting it straight up into the air, or I would not hang on long enough, sending it off like a bowling ball. Sometimes I would find myself stepping on the rope so the rock flew upward for about two feet before plummeting abruptly back down at an accelerated pace, like a paddleball minus the elasticity.

Each time, I drag the rock back, reeling it in like a defeated fisherman. Being forced to take cover under my two hands, protecting myself from bashing my own head in with my own imprudent rock and a litany of F bombs became an evening ritual. I wondered briefly and occasionally whether someone was humored by the show, but carried on nonetheless. I was focused. Sometimes the rock would inevitably slip out of the little rope basket I had built for it and I would have to go hunt for it in the blueberry bushes. Sometimes I got the throw right but then the rope spun around itself like a tetherball, knotting itself up, so that my rock would refuse to be coaxed down. So many times, I thought I was going to be the jerk who left the rope tangled up in the tree, but each time, somehow it came back down, even if (on one occasion) it meant cutting my rope and knotting it back together. I spent upwards of an hour perfecting my food hang each evening, focused, fuming, determined. The feeling of success when I finally got the throw right, the rock swinging dejectedly from its limb, in perfect position, might have

been my greatest triumph. When I got to North Cascades National Park, the bear vaults were a welcome sight. I was freed up to potentially schedule another hour of hiking into my day! Popsicle (personal communication, October 2015) similarly discusses this problem-solving phenomenon:

Everyday on the trail I felt so right, like I was following my gut and right where I was supposed to be. I'd wake up in snow for instance, not be able to feel my feet for part of the day and think, "It's a great day to be a thru hiker!" It was so much easier to stay solution-oriented on trail when something would go wrong. It all ends up being a funny story later, or makes the adventure that much more adventurous.

Discussion

Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory on the trail explains how and why hikers pursue immersion in the trail space, how creativity is cultivated on the trail, and further explains Turner's postulation that it is through rites of passage that enable a process of transformation. Further, what happens on the trail is brought off the trail, and applied to the hiker's newly formed identity.

Csikszentmihalyi (2000b) argues that the trick to finding flow is by integrating individualism and collectivism. With the integration of *communitas* and loss of "not the 'I' but the 'me,'" (Csikszentmihalyi 2000b: 1163) trails prove to be an ideal space to achieve such a balance. Individualism and collectivism can provide both pros and cons to the preservation of the trail space, depending on the culture that is cultivated. Collectivism satisfies Maslow's second tier hierarchical need for love and belonging, while opportunities for individualism foster opportunities for transformation and self-actualization. Csikszentmihalyi (1997: 132) further states that, "individualism and materialism have almost completely prevailed over allegiance to the community and to

spiritual values.” We go, not to nature, but to the trail space, to attempt to counter this trend. These sentiments remind me of Leopold’s (1966) discussion on the balance of emotion and intellect, as referenced in Chapter III.

This chapter expresses the emotional nature of thru hiking, and trail use in general. It offers deeper insight into my first research question: How are trails built and paved with meaning through performance of work and leisure? Learning to control the mental chatter of the mind as you pound out mile after dusty mile, learning to foster the excuses to keep going, and dismissing the negative ones telling you to quit make up the daily battles of thru hiking as well as staying committed to work. I’ve shown that trails are places where perceptions of safety are willingly compromised, in pursuit of community and self-actualization. Trails are, in essence, the place where people seek out and satisfy pursuits for significance and purpose that are not otherwise being satisfied. It shows that Maslow’s hierarchy is somewhat convoluted in the trail space, and suggests that trails are useful in the production of new needs.

Off the trail, I interpreted Maslow’s hierarchy as a static progression. On the trail, I see it being a more dynamic and fluid process—you give up a little security and stability in pursuit of self-actualization, for example. It is that top tier pursuit for self-actualization that compels people to take to the trail at all. Most importantly this chapter shows, not so much us taking to the trail to connect with nature, but to connect with ourselves, in pursuit of excellence and self-actualization, which in turn plants seeds of stewardship and a land ethic. John Muir was correct in believing that bringing people to wild places to create value for them, but there were some steps in between that he glossed over.

CHAPTER IX

ACCEPTING DEFEAT: THE DESCENT TO SELF DESTRUCTION

Introduction

I had been trucking along, averaging 25 miles a day on my section hike. Some little voice in my head had tried warning me that my method was not sustainable. As a novice runner, I used to make the same mistake. You have to vary your miles. It's fine to average twenty-five miles, but you better be making forty-mile days as well as "neros"—a nearly zero mileage day on the trail. My mileage was wavering between eighteen and thirty-five. I was driving my body into the ground, and too stubborn to fix it. My error was at Harts Pass where I switched insoles. My feet had been holding up like champs. It was disconcerting. Feet are not supposed to hold up under these circumstances. I began to worry about my heels. I decided they needed more support, or I was bound to have an Achilles tendonitis issue. I switched insoles and then proceeded to knock out my biggest mileage day yet. I had tried to cut it off at a thirty-mile day but I was entering Ross Lake National Recreation Area, and could not get a reservation at the campsite I wanted so I bumped it up to thirty-five miles to get to the next best one. I made it the 30 miles feeling pretty good, but in those last few miles in the gathering darkness, my feet blew up on me. I was in too much of a hurry to stop and wrap them, and I was feeling invincible. I did not expect it to amount to much. I never get blisters.

I walked from Harts Pass to Ross Lake that day. I hobbled into my reserved campsite at Anderson Point after nine that night. I set up camp, made dinner, put my food in the bear vault, and finally, reluctantly endeavored to remove my shoes and peel off my

socks to examine my feet. My blisters were nothing to sneeze at, but I had seen worse. I made dinner, and let my feet breathe that night. In the morning I wrapped them and set off. What happened over the next 170 miles or so comprise my brush with the more self-destructive side of thru hiking. Admittedly, had I been an actual thru hiker I would have stepped off the trail and let my feet heal for a couple days. I did not for a couple reasons: one, I am slightly obsessive. I have an itinerary and a schedule. I stick to it, in part, for safety reasons, but also because I seem to lack the sense to listen to my body. This is integral to a successful thru hike. I had not scheduled time to listen to my body, or to get off the trail to heal if need be. Another dilemma was my proximity to home. I knew that I could call for a rescue at any time. The more I descended from a contented flow state, the more I revisited, and doubted, my purpose. I traveled around Ross Lake, into and across North Cascades National Park, to Mount Baker and south to Baker Lake. All the while, my blisters festered. I ran out of duct tape and Band-Aids, and stretched out my last piece of duct tape for two days but it lost its adhesiveness and kept migrating around in my sock, my blisters left exposed. It never occurred to me to reduce my mileage, or adjust my itinerary. I had to get to Concrete. In Concrete, I would buy blister supplies and carry on.

At Baker Lake, before heading down the East Bank trail, I accepted some duct tape and a half an apple from a couple at the trailhead. That night I peeled off my sock to enact my evening ritual of foot bathing, but this time my feet produced an alarming and unmistakable smell like death. Still, I figured if I could just get to Concrete, I could slap a Band-Aid on them and push through. I was starting to contemplate packing it in, and

revisiting my purpose. My purpose didn't seem that important anymore. I felt like I was wasting my time, and I missed working. It seemed extravagant to be out here on the trail, eating out, paying for a hotel (once), and greedily pursuing miles day after day. I was leaving trees across the trail, and trash that hikers had left behind. Broken trail structures, clogged drainage structures, and brush that was overdue to be cut back haunted me. I started to feel guilty.

After Concrete, came the rail-trail walk to Sedro-Woolley, and PNNTA headquarters. This was going to mark the transition from wilderness to urban walking. The twenty-three miles to Sedro-Woolley were sheer misery. I wasn't walking normally because I was trying, and failing, to coddle my blisters, so other parts of my body were giving out, and the monotony of the rail-trail only seemed to aggravate things further. My ankles were rolling outwards and my knees were not responding well to the modified technique. By Sedro-Woolley, I had enough. I hobbled around town and found a place to post up and wait for my rescue. I had walked 500 miles in twenty days, and I was disappointed. One thru hiker writes:

There's no real way to explain what the PCT is. What it's been to me. For months I slept under the stars. I cried. I laughed. I let so many people in to release them in the same breath. I found my independence. I found my weakness. I will miss these trees like my bones were made of cedar. At times I felt like a fierce guardian of my independence and the next moment I was suffocating under the weight of my own need for someone. Both are okay. I'll miss the sunsets and the simplicity of having nothing to do each day except pass the earth beneath my feet. A girl in Kennedy Meadows told me that 'Everyone out here is a little bit broken.' I think she was right. I think it made us all stronger. I love those beautiful broken people. Love, vulnerability, is not weakness. Goodbye my dirty, dust-covered friends. Goodbye to my own dirty, dusty knees. I am so grateful for this experience. It's the realest adventure I've ever had. I'll be back for this feeling. Maybe not to these mountains, but to these feelings. This life

is mine. Thank you, Pacific Crest Trail. You'll have my heart forever.¹

Carpentered Culture

The carpentered room hypothesis is an anthropological term used to describe culturally constructed perceptions of lines. Those who dwell in “carpentered” spaces, as in among ninety degree angles, perceive lines differently than those who live in and among round structures, or otherwise in absence of angles. I first heard of this idea in the context of a study conducted in West Africa where children were shown a picture of a road fading into the distance, the parallel lines melding on the horizon and a lone tree whose shadow fell across the road. The children, who lived in round huts in a rural village, and were otherwise unexposed to angular structures in their daily livelihoods, perceived the image as a picture of the letter ‘A’. They were essentially incapable of conceptualizing the lines of the road for what it was. Segall, Campbell and Herskovits (1966) first proposed the carpentered culture theory. I reflected upon a personal encounter with this theory in an essay, which is my brush with culture shock coming out of a deeply immersed wilderness experience. I draw upon this experience because I do not feel my level of immersion in the course of my fieldwork in 2015 best represents a satisfying reflection of a deeply immersed wilderness experience such as that which I had in 2003. I reflected upon this culture shock:

I find that, oddly, it was the coming out at the season’s end that was truly most shocking. There is nothing so extraordinary about living in the wilderness for five and a half months. There is nothing odd about doing laundry in a bucket, crossing paths with bears and rattlesnakes, plucking swollen ticks off my own or another

¹ Hummingbird. PCT Class of 2015 [Facebook group], accessed October 2, 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/608334832544246/?fref=nf>.

crewmate's body, banking hideous mileage on wrecked knees, and finding base camp a luxury to come home to compared to the spike camp or the weekend outing where we had only the barest of necessities and food was never quite so gourmet.

It was not the first time I had crossed the bridge that joins Oakland and San Francisco on a bus. I had bounced around the bay area at other times in my life under other circumstances. I was no stranger to the bridge, and it had not struck me as particularly extraordinary until now. It was only when I was on a bus from Stockton, and before that, Yosemite, and before that I came from what I had been told is the most remote wilderness on the west coast, the Klamath National Forest. I was in Yosemite for only a couple days and thought it was a zoo, but still was in familiar territory: among trails, trees, and mountains. There were a few buildings but they were engineered to mimic the natural landscape. It was relatively tolerable. The San Francisco cityscape awed me in such a way that I doubted my own eyes, suspecting that concrete was not as solid as it was touted to be. This time around I was trying to juxtapose two places by imposing upon myself an experience with the urban-wilderness dichotomy.

Every year, the California Conservation Corps unites all of its backcountry corpsmembers in Yosemite for a season-ending debriefing, to quantify and compare productivity among the crews around the state, to shed tears and exchange addresses and bid farewell to all that is and all that we have known for the past six months.

Every tendril of my body and my mind fought tooth and nail when it came time to leave the wilderness. I eagerly volunteered at an opportunity to hike out the long way with one other crewmate to do one final log-out en route to the trailhead where a Forest Service truck would be waiting. We were silent and sullen, dragging our feet, hiking ever more slowly, dreading the complicated world waiting for us out there. From the first moment the Forest Service truck started rolling, my head immediately started pounding in protest and my jaw clenched tight. When we first went indoors under peculiar yellow fluorescent lights and in a space that was so cluttered and confined that we all became clumsy and knocked things over at a small-town grocery store. I stared with big eyes at the shelves upon shelves of food items and gross representations of gluttony and appetite that I walked out without buying anything, tripping over an imaginary root or rock in the smoothly paved sidewalk.

For the first couple weeks, I completely lost my appetite. I had forgotten how to hanker and crave, and now suddenly given bottomless options, I did not know how to decide what to eat, or when to eat. I had not spent, or even seen money for nearly six months. I marveled at flushing toilets and water flowing out of a tap at a simple turn of a knob, and that first shower; and when I finally really saw

myself in a mirror: healthy, bug-eyed, strong, flushed, and rosy-cheeked; and the attack of claustrophobia when I rode with my crew in our van, my arms cradling my head between my knees. One of my crewmates put his arm around me.

But what really got me was how small the world ‘out there’ really was. In my mind, wilderness was unbounded and it was concrete. I could grasp it in my mind and make logic of it. My wilderness was expanded by the fact that nothing moved faster than a mule’s trot, or a startled bear. What I saw crossing the bridge into San Francisco at sixty-five miles per hour was small and dimensionless. It looked surreal and as though it were a mural hanging on some wall of empty space, jutting ninety degree angle high-rises that looked impossibly unnatural projecting upward seemingly straight out of the bay, the buildings following the contours of the bay. These high-rise structures were tall but not as tall as the four hundred year old Douglas firs, in my mind, but I realize now it was the space between playing tricks on me. Shades of gray overwhelmed me: gray water, gray concrete buildings, gray concrete streets, and gray skies. As I moved deeper into the city, the grayness and the flatness did not necessarily take on dimension, but I rode into it nonetheless. A degree of form rose up and in that Goth-like painting, detail began to take form: trash blowing in the gutters, trees imprisoned by metal and concrete and their lost leaves fluttering in stale air, cigarette butts, men in fancy suits, carrying briefcases full of important things, homeless strangers asleep in doorways, waddling pigeons, beleaguered strangers yelling incoherently to themselves or no one or an imagined someone, windows of stores selling meaningless objects, selling sex and brainwashing, materialism, corruption and injustice. I was surrounded by an impossible number of strangers. It was so *dirty*, yet all the dirt had been paved over. I missed my crew. I saw no luxury in being out.

Is this reality? Was I naïve to believe that the past five and a half months of my life, the characters involved in it, and the wilderness I was so intimately connected with were some key to something larger, something tangible and meaningful?

That summer was our foreman’s last of more than forty years working in the wilderness. He died in May the next summer in the wilderness, in the Shasta-Trinities at sixty years old. I knew that my season in the Klamath was transitory, and so were my relationships with the people who impacted me daily, but it ultimately impressed on me that the greatest impermanence with regard to that summer was myself.

What we have constructed in the evolution of *Homo sapien* has been diminutive and temporary. It is built on a perception that it is solid and stable, with enormous faith in mankind to school and train engineers and architects to build such brawny, faithful, and angular structures. But those towering structures tumble

easily as we have seen, the roots of trees break through the pavement without qualm, and nature builds defenses that are beyond our capacity to overpower. I was humbled (Chinchen 2007, unpublished manuscript).

PTD: Post Trail Depression

Nothing happens at the end of a trail. There is no reception, no grand prize, not even a decent Popsicle. The trail just ends. And you stand there at the artificial boundary that is the terminus and wonder why you raced towards it beyond human capabilities with the conviction of a mother in the throes of delivering a baby.²

Inevitably, what follows living in a controlled flow state for an extended period of time, is a well-documented post trail depression that afflicts many, if not most, thru hikers. A combination of place withdrawal, culture shock, and physiological conditions are offered as likely causes of this condition (Turley 2011). When a hiker comes off the trail, whether because they have finished, or they are injured, their heart is still on the trail. Their former purpose-filled life is still unfolding on the trail even though they're back home. In one blog, the author describes the situation aptly:

You will have just completed a gigantic goal for which you are proud, but few others understand. You will likely be homeless or penniless or both. You will likely have no job, and no sense of purpose. You will need to redefine yourself. You will go from exercising 8-12 hours a day to almost nothing. You will go from warm months into the cold depressing winter. You will be expected to adjust to a new lifestyle.³

Similar to my account, thru hikers find adjusting to life in the wilderness comparatively easy to transitioning back to living in society. Adjusting to life in the wilderness is often more intuitive and forgiving, and many thru hikers relate experiences

² N.a. "My Notes on Post Trail Depression." The New Nomads (blog). March 2014. <http://thenewnomads.com/my-notes-on-post-trail-depression/>.

³ Dormouse. "Post Trail Depression." Just Two Hikers: Dormouse and Dirt Stew (blog). January 14, 2015. <https://just2hikers.wordpress.com/2015/01/14/post-trail-depression/>.

that are akin to Pederson's (1995) five stages of culture shock: honeymoon, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy, and interdependence upon entry into the trail space. Upon departure, for those who are very deeply immersed, there is no honeymoon. I argue that those who are immersed in the trail space for shorter lengths of time, a week, or a couple weeks, and perhaps on trail town days, there is a honeymoon—a shower, a beer, a pizza, phone calls home, and getting mail; but at the end, during reaggregation, a hiker goes straight to disintegration and reintegration, as I did upon leaving the wilderness. This degree of place attachment and place dependence is little understood, but exemplifies the importance of support through all stages of trail use, and warrants further study in the post-liminal juncture.

When a journey is done, you don't know what to do. Confusion. Loss. Disappointment. Yearning ... Celebration was in order, for sure. But the excitement dwindled as the people stepped away, one by one, out of the lives we had each built for ourselves over the last six months, the lives we had put years of planning into. Accomplishing something great is enjoyed in the moment and in the memory of it. Finishing it is not so much fun. The journey had ended. The wandering had begun. The city was overwhelming with its noise and congestion. Home was just as bad with all of the bills and responsibilities and societal expectations dumped on top of you like a heaping pile of wet laundry. Congratulations were more uncomfortable than appreciated. People don't know what to say because they don't understand. They're happy that you finished your thing, but they don't get that you're sad because your thing is over. It was your thing. Now what do you have? You have to start again. Start new projects. Work on a thing. Accomplish a new thing. Being done is the worst part of the journey. People don't like it when you're not working on a thing. You don't like it when you're not working on a thing. Working to improve yourself, working on a career, working to help others, working to make a new thing.⁴

⁴ Anonymous. PCT Class of 2015 [Facebook group], accessed October 31, 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/608334832544246/?fref=nf>.

I thought I would take a couple days off and get back on the trail somehow. Instead I uncharacteristically sat on the couch for two weeks. I was physically and mentally exhausted. I slept a lot. For about a week, I could not wear shoes of any kind, not even flip-flops. My heart was still on the trail, stubbornly attached to an abandoned itinerary. The passage of time and my measure of productivity would no longer be marked in miles and calories; but words, pages, and chapters. It was time to work on a new thing.

Taking the Trail Home

Thru hikers find it challenging to find adequate substitutions for the experience, but seem to actively search for crossover, ways to replicate the experience in their everyday lives:

I usually try to close off that part of myself and immerse into the city life. To get just a taste is too painful, plus walking in a city park just doesn't compare. In the city, the closest I get to the feeling that I get while hiking is through yoga practice, so I use yoga as a substitute (Bright Eyes, personal communication, October 2015).

I also do river trips during the summer. That's pretty similar to thru hiking in that I'm alone, traveling in a line, and only have whatever it is I've brought with me (Popsicle, personal communication, October 2015).

Weekend campouts really lost their luster after such an epic hike. It can compare, but it would stimulate my senses to my trail memories – smells, sights, et cetera, and bring back vivid memories. ... I moved a bit closer to some woods so that I could run and bike in the forest a little bit everyday [but] I really miss my trail friends and community (Sycamore, personal communication, September 2015).

When not thru-hiking I still walk a lot. There are a lot of trails near my house that I hike on ... They are incredibly different than thru-hiking because when you get too cold, wet, hot, or dirty ... you just go back to the house. When thru-hiking you have to just live with those conditions and keep pushing. There is also something about the length of time, an hour walk does not lead your mind to the places a five month long walk does (Smiles & Miles, personal communication, September 2015).

For me, building the trail to walking the trail to writing about the trail made up the chapters of my journey. For others, thru hiking draws many parallels with transiency, and provides opportunities for mobility, even more so than backpacking and camping culture. Thayer (2003: 1-2) states, “We have all become, in certain fundamental ways, homeless... In the process of becoming postmodern, we have abandoned the notion of home.” Coleman and Eade (2005: 21) explain: “Secular space [is transformed] into ritual space, creating a form of temporary home in relation to a ritual habitus.” Trails, particularly NSTs, provide an ideal setting for extended pursuits to satisfy values for focused mobility.

I had always wanted to live in the woods for months, but just sitting there would be boring. Hiking was more purposeful I guess. ... I have also done some hitchhiking and train riding which were more similar to thru hiking than camping is... It felt more like walking until you couldn't walk anymore, then passing out ... Right now I don't have a home. I am between couch surfing and living in a van, so my “home” or lack thereof is pretty similar to being on the PCT (Anonymous, personal communication, September 2015).

Discussion

This chapter discusses the taxing process of coming out of the wilderness. In these deeply immersed scenarios, there is a condition of profound disconnect from societal norms that has been completely detoxified from consciousness. In these scenarios, unfamiliar engineering and architecture, electricity and running water, and sheer numbers of people drive the culture shock that accompanies an experience of exiting the wilderness. Many thru hikers experience depression upon completing the trail.

Participants often seek novel and meaningful ways to take the trail with them, such as tattooing iconography onto their bodies and finding activities that mimic the flow experience of the trail. Those that cannot satisfy the need to mentally recreate that form of joy and emotional, if not physical, immersion may be more subject to this depression, post-trail, than those who recreate that energy. The nomadic nature of trail life that seems to attract certain thru hikers accompanies them back off the trail. Participants were either living in a van, or aspired to live in a van, build a tiny home, and basically continue that process of “paring down,” lightening their load, and maximizing their mobility. Another participant was recently accepted into the Peace Corps.

Being on the trail redefines ideas and assumptions about “home,” which can be explained by pilgrimage literature and habitus, but also is likely a symptom of the inherent mobility of a globalized, and very mobile, society. This chapter shows that trails are really experiences that define us and we, in turn, define trails. There are methods and means of taking the trail home with you, which draws upon the truly symbolic nature of the trail, in response to my second research question: How do trails foster and sustain social, symbolic, and material landscapes? It also verifies Turner’s assertion that we bring the trail home with us as a seedbed of social and cultural change.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This document raises many challenges to both wilderness and trail managers. First, as pilgrimage routes NSTs are prone to a high level of emotion due to intense place attachments and identity deconstruction and reconstruction along the length of the trail. Furthermore, NSTs are subject to lawlessness and self-management and moral enticement. Second, as large-scale conservation units, NSTs are subject to national, regional, state, and local jurisdiction, and conflict, and requires an immense amount of cooperation and collaboration. Finally, the contrasting ideologies of wilderness as a resource and trails as its infrastructure, emotion and intellect, must be mediated and managed in a defensible way. I will attempt to propose some solutions in this final chapter.

Namely, due to their national, regional, and local contexts, NSTs are ideal candidates for an adaptive governance approach. Chapter II compared the mission statements of the PCTA and the PNTA, and discussed the comparatively static nature of the former. This makes it difficult to embrace the inherent dynamism of trail culture and minimize conflict.

In this paper, I sought to both divorce and remarry wilderness and trails by synthesizing a variety of factors contributing to the economic and social qualities of trails, and specifically the growing popularity and importance of long trails as a network of connecting corridors. I showed that the backbone of trail maintainers, professional

laborers, are undervalued, understaffed, underfunded, and even culturally invisible; while tourists using this same space are willing to pay handsomely in the proverbial quest for authenticity in the trail space as evidenced by a multi-billion dollar outdoor gear industry.

Due to its loyalty to pedestrian and equestrian use and its attempt to manage the trail as a *de facto* wilderness corridor, the PCT has alienated both the mountain biking community and the community of participants in organized events, such as that which accompanies trail races. Both are increasingly important, quantifiably in terms of trail work volunteer hours, but also in terms of mere social relevancy. To be clear, mountain biking and organized events are both prohibited in designated wilderness, unless grandfathered in, in the case of organized events. The PCT prohibited bicycle use throughout the length of the trail at the outset, wilderness or not. At no point should it be interpreted that I am advocating change to current wilderness law, or proposing to open the PCT to bicycle use. Those types of propositions are beyond the scope of this study.

Contesting Values

The purpose of this chapter is to look ahead to future management of trails, while maintaining the timeless integrity of the Wilderness Act. Opening up the PCT to mountain bike use would severely impact the current trail culture that I've identified and described in this document. That said, about half of the PCT is designated non-wilderness and is currently prohibited to mountain biking. It is outside the scope of this study to determine whether the PCT can sustain mountain biking use without unhinging the already salient conflict brewing, but rather to look to future management decisions for newly designated NSTs, such as the PNT. The current prerogative is to manage the entire

length of the trail as wilderness, whether *de facto* or *de jure*, but this status quo certainly should be examined for newer NSTs. With the pilgrimage quality of the trail, and the synchronicity of the flow experience that currently exists, it would be, and has been, highly disruptive to individuals who are thru hiking on the PCT. That is the current trail culture. Popsicle (personal communication, October 2015) states her most unpleasant memory on the PCT was when, “In southern Washington a group of about fifteen—I’m not exaggerating—mountain bike riders passed me. They were riding ON THE PCT southbound. I followed their tracks north for more than ten miles. It made me so fucking angry!” Similarly, I came upon bicycle tracks in the Mount Baker Wilderness on the PNT. I took pictures of them as if I were still a wilderness ranger intending to report them to my supervisor upon return to the office. This was difficult for me, not because I was all that surprised by signs of poaching, but mainly because my guidebook had warned me about two dangerous creek crossings I would encounter that day and the general condition of the trail. I was particularly worried about the first because it was a glacial, steeply funneled, v-cut crossing. I had packed everything in plastic that day in anticipation of a swim. Knowing that glacial water flow is lower in the morning rather than later, I adjusted my itinerary to camp as close as possible to the glacial crossing so as to tackle it within an hour or two of setting off that morning. To see mountain bike tracks revealed to me that the crossings would give me no trouble, and a suspicion that I had been filled with seeds of doubt for naught once again. Sure enough, I did not even get my feet wet at either crossing. Granted, 2015 was a drought year. All water crossings were lower than usual and, to be fair, I would rather be over prepared than under prepared.

Along a similar vein, addressing another transformation in recreational pursuits that is threatened by the precedent set by the PCTA and has proven controversial is the rise of organized trail events. The PCTA recently proposed a cap and ban on organized trail events (Bergeron 2015). Existing organized trail events would continue. The moratorium is intended to protect values for solitude, which is flawed on two points: (1) there is no mandate to protect values for solitude in nonwilderness, and (2) this study suggests that values for solitude on NSTs may be moot, or at least in flux, and are in need of reexamination. Furthermore, there is already a stringent permitting process in place that all organized event directors undergo to put on their events. This process should reflect the desired conditions appropriate for the proposed venue. One vocal race director responded by promptly founding the Pacific Crest Trail Running Association, with the intent of representing a user group that the PCTA was failing to satisfactorily do so. This user group frequently holds trail work parties, and some even mandate attendance in order to participate in the event. Some will waive registration fees in exchange for participation in a trail work party, which is another interesting leverage of volunteerism. Of further consideration, many race directors whose events utilize a section of the PCT donate monetarily and in volunteer labor hours to the PCTA, including the above-mentioned race director. Organized trail events are also a boon to trail towns, and any decision made by NST managers prohibiting or limiting organized trail events adversely impacts the towns that would have benefited by the event. If alliances are damaged, untold funding and volunteer hours will be routed elsewhere, and the PCTA will be a standalone organization working to protect a select user group. While there is much to be

concerned about with the transformation of recreational values, increasing use, and impacts to solitude, many of these changes have brought good as well that are worth recognizing and embracing. For the sake of aligning goals and advancing the future of conservation agendas, it may serve NSTs well to define acceptable compromises.

In yet another example, at an event, an elderly volunteer at a Nature Conservancy booth informed me that when you hike on the trail, you get to see the wildflowers and the birds, and if you are on a motorcycle or mountain bike, you can't appreciate the trail as much (Paraphrased, personal conversation, April 2016). I felt uncomfortable with this assertion, as did the staff member who inserted herself, physically, between the volunteer and myself to have a more insightful and progressive discussion about trail use. Flow offers some key insights to trail managers, in terms of understanding a wide variety of trail uses and values. To many, looking at birds and flowers may well be the perfect balance of challenge and skill. To those who are currently setting supported and unsupported Fastest Known Times (FKTs), this may not be the case. It may be boring, even. Toeing the line between stimulation and boredom is why we take to the trail, defines how we ultimately tackle the trail, and determines our success. The line is going to be different for everyone, as will be the method of mobility, whether it be by horse, foot, or wheel, motorized or not.

FKT attempts are not without controversy. Attempts, alongside a rise of professional sponsored adventure athletes toe a line of injecting corporate events and gear advertising inside wilderness, using their bodies as a billboard, and raise legitimate concerns. This came to a head in 2015 with Scott Jurek's FKT-setting feat on the AT,

whereupon he was greeted at terminus with several citations from Baxter State Park, inciting fans and purists to take heated sides.¹ I think it is safe to assume this trend will continue as long as gear technology continues to revolutionize, and the bar for challenge and adventure continues to rise. Baxter State Park raise some important points in justifying their action, and was to my knowledge, the first manager to address these feats similarly to Turner's (1979: 13) definition of pilgrimage as an event "in relation to other events." Technically, it may even have been defined as a corporate-sponsored event.

Mountain biking provides a similar flow experience that comes with its own pace. These values and pursuits for personal flow experiences may, and do, collide and conflict. It is the reason no one can reasonably quantify who values trails the most. It is important to understand that there is usually a story behind why one chooses to participate in one user group or another. Again, not to promote opening the PCT to mountain biking—mountain biking was a nonexistent user group in the 1980s, but today this user group generates powerful alliances and organizes trail work parties, surpassing any other user group.

Work and Leisure Performances

I divided MacCannell's (1999) stages of authenticity into two performances: work and leisure. In the work performance, there is a pursuit for authenticity that travels from volunteer to novice trail builder to trail dog, in terms of immersion and authenticity. In the leisure performance, that same progression can be seen in cyber blazers, weekend

¹ Baxter State Park [Facebook page], accessed July 16, 2015.
<https://www.facebook.com/baxterstatepark/posts/1682502611969384>.

warriors, section hikers, and finally, hiker trash. Trail work and thru hiking share values for social cohesion and solidarity, and retaining and preserving connections with the past that are, in a sense, reliving history. Volunteer versus paid trail worker's motivations are where they differ, but that can be optimized through appropriate management. Volunteer crews cannot be held to the same expectations as professional trail crews because the fundamental roles, needs, and values of volunteers are fundamentally and functionally different. In order to foster satisfaction amongst volunteer crews, understanding their goals and objectives in contrast with those of professional laborers is essential for trail managers; and finally, that volunteers are a tool to supplement, but never replace, professional trail crews.

It is also important to note that there is remarkable diversity in work performances, particularly at the novice level of trail crews. Youth corps crews tend to reflect local populations. In Colorado, I worked with and supervised many youth from the local Navajo tribe, as well as a proportionate number of Hispanic youth. In California, our crew retained a healthy representation of Hispanic and African American youth. Additionally, these crews are largely composed of low-income and/or at-risk youth. I advocate for a reversal of the trend toward eliminating work performances, if only to continue to allow for opportunities for groups from such diverse demographics that are a counterpoint to more standard wilderness user demographics. These work performances are as invaluable as leisure performances, and will prove invaluable during the important and ongoing discussion of how to bring diversity to national parks and national forests. If the work performance is eliminated from the trail space, it will raise issue as to who "gets

to” participate in the trail space, and will reinforce who has the time and resources to become a trail steward and a trail user. If we continue to emphasize and embrace that trails are purely a space for leisure performances and continue to wean trails of paid work performances, diversity in the trail space will only suffer. An over-reliance on volunteerism may effectively, in part, be able to only serve to further stratify the conservation movement, and will reflect socioeconomic and sociopolitical cultural conditions.

Emotional Stomping Grounds, Moral Hunting Grounds

Due to its incredible managerial complexity and deep layers of embedded identities, conflict is a given, but a more balanced representation of user groups and a more transparent and inclusive intent would likely appease the masses. Trail towns have been receptive to more inclusive and transparent planning processes (Thomas 2015), and presumably all user groups would be equally receptive because of the mutual gains. Ultimately, one consequence of intensifying management of the PCT as a *de facto* wilderness corridor is a likely end in litigation. If restrictions on user groups are not defensible, or aren’t based upon informed empirical data and actual impacts, restrictions on one user group but not others might be considered arbitrary and capricious. The cost of this would fall on the Forest Service, as the administering agency. Another consequence will be losses in volunteer hours from the trail running community and alienation from the nonmotorized user group.

Other problems more generally with *de facto* wilderness are that it fuels anti-wilderness sentiments for bona fide *de jure* wilderness. Organized trail events and

bicycles are already prohibited by law from designated wilderness, which is relatively uncontended, but if nonwilderness stretches of the PCT also prohibit or limit these users, bypassing congressional designation, it feeds resentment at having values undermined. Understandably, being implicitly accused of degrading the infrastructure that all user groups love and value in their own way is a tough pill to swallow. User groups that are otherwise satisfied with having access to forty-six percent of the nonwilderness miles of the PCT will likely protest if further restricted without *de jure* designation.

Finally, the largest consequence would be to the ultimate conservation goals that enable best protection of the trail. Conservation alliances are integral to ongoing support of land protection efforts and invoking the support of local communities and aligned in its objectives to best meet management objectives. Looking beyond sheer impacts, perceived or otherwise, one has to consider the organization of the community, its alliances, and volunteer contributions. For example, mountain bikes may be more impactful to the trail if not managed appropriately, but they also have a reputation for doing extensive work to repair the damage wrought. This has no bearing on designated wilderness of course, as bicycles are definitively prohibited. Furthermore, the conservation movement has been paved with compromise. The Wilderness Act itself is riddled with exceptions to prohibitions because of compromise that was essential to get it passed.

Revisiting Leopold (1966), he advocates for a forward-thinking land ethic that is community-driven and principled, but one that also sees the benefit of balancing intellect with emotion. Trails provide a home for displaced solidarity and community experiences. I argue that NGOs and volunteers are motivated, not by altruism, but leverage of social,

cultural, and moral capital, which is then converted into political capital. When special interest groups are relied upon to provide volunteer labor, they may thus gain political leverage. In this way, we see a departure from relatively neutrally charged space where resource managers are tasked with managing resources, to emotionally charged special interest groups managing resources. This tension may come disguised as collaborative management, but is more likely a negotiation of power as a result of a legislatively-enabled increase in public entitlement (Rice and Atkin 2001). This addition of emotion, while valuable if channeled appropriately, contributes to conflict over what user groups should and should not have access to a trail space, and how the space is defined.

Romantic perceptions of the sacred and pristine wilderness space can be maintained and even reinforced through a carefully constructed volunteer experience, by subverting the infrastructure itself. This reinforces the invisibility of both the trail and the trail builder. As such, revisiting Leopold's concept of intellect-emotion equilibrium, I find an imbalance with emotion presiding over intellect as a result of the experiences wrought by trails, and also as a consequence of the collectivizing to which he refers.

Thomas (2015) offers some suggestions as well that would create a less rigid management approach. Namely, look to how other NSTs are managing their trails. More recently designated NSTs are adopting semi-adaptive governance approaches. I have provided a sample of what this model would look like on NSTs in Figure 6. In the case of the PCT, this would inject a mediating organization between the PCTA and the Forest Service. This would require a total overhaul of current management, and is thus impractical, and likely to be met with resistance from special interest groups who have

benefited greatly by the current *modus operandi* thus far. However, it might be feasible for new and as yet undesignated NSTs. Two potential organizations that could serve such a purpose are American Trails or the Partnership for the National Trail System.

Thomas (2015) applauds efforts to engage local communities, such as implementation of Trail Town Ambassador and Trail in Every Classroom Programs. Another effort that has sought to combat the problem of centralization and bring communities back into the loop on trail happenings has involved holding town-level meetings as a regular component that provides opportunities for the public to participate, hear, and be heard. In order to regain control over undesirable trail angel behavior, one possibility is provided by the Tahoe Rim Trail Association (TRTA), which requires an application process to serve as a trail angel to bring angels within the scope and control of management, and to somewhat formalize the process. Structured guidance for trail angels has been borrowed from the TRTA and is included in Appendix D. Ultimately, the goal of an NST, in response to lessons learned throughout this document, should be to minimize the gap between managers off-trail and stakeholders on-trail. Those that are off the trail and out of the trail space and not within the community are greeted with suspicion, not because of a lack of respect per se. More likely because of the alienation that thru hikers feel upon exiting the trail, alongside reports of being surrounded by non-thru hikers who do not understand what they are doing, which is symptomatic of the *communitas* formed on and within the trail space, of which managers are not a part. It is not my belief that offering a resilient and adaptive management approach that embraces the transformative nature of trails, in contrast to the relatively well-preserved “nature of

wilderness,” so to speak, necessarily compromises the sustainability of the trail system. The myth of a pristine wilderness (Cronon 1996; Nash 2014) is making its way into the conservation medium. How can we ever develop a proper land ethic if protected land is forever the land that is the other, out there, where “man himself is a visitor who does not remain” [PL 88-577 1964, Sec. 2(c)]? I tend to agree with Tribe (1973: 10), “It is time we began to take our own myths seriously—not in order to ‘redress the balance,’ or ‘develop our analysis,’ but to reveal them as ideological discourses.” Driving trails into the mythical underground has done little for the preservation of wildness.

In addition to the methods outlined by Thomas (2015) that have been utilized on other trails, one sure way to garner support is through job creation. Given the trend toward greater reliance on volunteer hours to do work, organizations such as the PCTA would better serve local communities if it used and employed locals for trail stewardship projects instead of relying on its mostly urban membership base. This would better engage local communities with a sense of stewardship for the trail. During my time on the trail in 2015, I encountered a volunteer trail crew strung out along the trail. It was midday and most were resting in the shade. I stopped to chat with one of the volunteers, asking her what organization she was with. She blinked at me in confusion and slowly responded, “The Pacific... Coast... Trail?” I thought it would be an easy question, but happened upon a volunteer who did not know what organization she was with, and evidently did not know what trail she was on either. Surely this is an anomaly, or she had just woken from a nap or had mild heat stroke. Nonetheless, much more can be learned from this user group, and further research is recommended to better understand the

implications of volunteer involvement in the trail space. Volunteer management is a new and vastly underutilized field of expertise.

Sustainable Infrastructure, Enduring Resource

Aside from overhauling current management, the best-case scenario is a more effective routing and retention of funding to federal recreation programs, rather than diverting money and staff to fire suppression. The recently proposed Wildfire Disaster Funding Act (H.R. 167 2015) would allow the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Interior to treat wildfire like any other natural disaster, and once allotted funding is exhausted, to seek funding from external sources that would mitigate the current tendency to draw from other department budgets. If passed, this would be a great relief to wilderness and trail program funding, among others.

While the influence of NGOs is substantial, I would conclude that given the current economic conditions, another promising source of political strength that could ultimately reverse the trend toward exhausting our nation's trail system is the mostly silent untapped behemoth of the outdoor gear and tourism industry. Should it choose to organize itself in such a way, the giants of the outdoor gear and tourism industry could ultimately reverse the trend toward exhausting our nation's trail system by bringing, not wild places, but trails to the visible forefront of their marketing strategies, such as Black Diamond did to resoundingly support public lands as previously mentioned in Chapter I.

Another example is REI's "Every Trail Connects" promise to "put our money where our heart is"² by donating \$500,000 dispersed to ten trails in the United States,

² REI. "Every trail connects." Retrieved from <https://www.rei.com/h/trails>.

ranging between \$18,400 and \$75,000 each. Unfortunately, \$500,000 is 0.0002 percent of REI's sales revenues from 2015—revenues, which have more than doubled in a single decade (Recreational Equipment, Inc. 2016). This is one of the better companies, but this is sorely inadequate. In another example, Patagonia's founder Yvon Chouinard started the non-profit, One Percent for the Planet, which is a huge improvement in terms of percentage, and even unites companies to join. However this quantity is disbursed to over 4,000 non-profit organizations. Among those listed are a few youth conservation corps who actually do trail work and produce transparent results, but 1 percent divided by 4,000 non-profits starts to resemble REI's effort. Even the extremely misguided Sustainable Trails Coalition (STC) with its murky use of funding generated \$118,000 in only ten months to lobby for opening up the Wilderness Act for reinterpretation (STC 2016). Not an enormous quantity of money in the grand scheme but fully fueled by a completely erroneous and manipulative interpretation of the Wilderness Act and a firm belief that bicycle prohibitions are nothing short of a human rights violation. Social media venues such as GoFundMe and Kickstarter have propelled a platform wherein people can buy into anything, ever widening the black hole of unfocused funding. The list of examples of highly emotional, self-investing, and often extremist causes that only serve to weaken the power of bona fide trail advocacy and undermine the tenacity of what has been accomplished thus far in the conservation movement is a long one.

If nothing else, STC's argument that volunteerism and access defines trail sustainability and the example of the Backcountry Horsemen who argued for a state of emergency in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness that would lift motorized

and mechanized prohibitions, provides us with a great example as to how understaffed and underfunded recreation programs and a degraded trail system weakens the conservation movement and the integrity of the wilderness system, and underscores the importance of taking trail maintenance seriously. Both these organizations effectively use the trail maintenance deficit to leverage reinterpretations of the Wilderness Act, either permanently or temporarily, for the sake of convenience.

Efforts and funding exist in abundance, but they are divided, and we have become distracted by donating to organizations that fail to produce transparent and hard results, in terms of productivity. One option to help alleviate this would be a 1 percent *for trails* fund, which should be dispersed directly to crews, contracted by federal agencies, which do trail work and provide explicit productive results. Another failure, or distraction, is the emphasis on emotional user group advocacy, rather than purely intellectual trail advocacy; and an over-emphasis on lobbying, over actual dirt work.

There are notable exceptions. One organization that is attempting to focus and unite the trails forum is the World Trails Network. American Trails is the regional hub for the World Trails Network in North America, and an outstanding organization working to support and unify the trail building community in an intellectual and productive way. Its mission statement is to “advance the development of diverse, high quality trails and greenways for the benefit of people and communities. Through collaboration, education, and communication, American Trails raises awareness of the value these trail systems offer” (American Trails n.d.(b)).

Another solution is the leverage of accountability. If we as trail lovers and wilderness users demanded that a small portion of the profits from our avid appetite for gear went back to stewardship, companies would be forced to respond. The companies that are found negligent in keeping a balance should be held accountable, while the “good ones” should be supported. The bi-annual Outdoor Retailer convention is all about bringing people to the woods—for the explicit purpose of creating more customers—but fails to mention stewardship contributions (Outdoor Retailer n.d.). Very few of the nonprofits this convention benefits do actual trail stewardship, but rather are focused on just that—bringing more people to the woods. This is an egregious oversight and brings considerable unsustainable imbalance to the wilderness and trails system. It is a disservice to advocate for, and profit off, trail use, but fail to give back to infrastructure maintenance. If all the companies who participate in the Outdoor Retailer convention, which is reported to generate “tens of millions” for the Utah economy (Hanscom 2012) generated a mere 1 percent for trails that would provide focused support for trail maintenance, which would be routed to the “bridging organization” as outlined in Figure 6. 1 percent of a \$200 billion global outdoor tourism industry would adequately maintain the world’s trails.

This funding could be funneled to a mediating organization, such as American Trails, and disbursed to trail managers down to the local level, who would then contract out the work. This fits an adaptive management model such as that provided in Figure 6. Due to the national, regional, and local significance and context of NSTs, adaptive management offers the most responsive management criterion that suits a gamut of

management scales. Currently the PCT is being managed by a very strapped and understaffed federal agency that is heavily influenced by a special interest group. A third neutral managerial unit could bridge and reconnect the PCT to local communities and better represent all stakeholders, rather than a select minority, and would even bring those who do not align with the PCTA's mission to the table, such as the mountain biking community. It could address many issues at a local level, and dismantle the current centralized infrastructure. Just as building a wilderness tunnel from Mexico to Canada fails to "display throughout its length a changing landscape reflecting a diversity of land and resource management objectives... and afford opportunities to reflect on the history of the development and growth of the Nation and its people" (USFS 1982: no page number), management objectives should not equally reflect such a tunneled vision if they seek to accomplish the greater goal of land protection. Adaptive management can be unattainable altogether if the infrastructure is lacking, but at the very least it would likely take a long time to formulate and create this bridging organization. I think a more egalitarian partnership might be established amongst all stakeholders, and parties can engage in a more mutually beneficial relationship. Initially, the PCTA may see it as losing control of the trail, and thus losing protection for the wilderness qualities sought after; however, in the long-run, I believe the benefit of forming alliances and garnering the support of local communities will become quite apparent to the organization. Certainly issues of insufficient funding and resources on the part of both the Forest Service and the PCTA will pose a serious barricade to forming a successful solution. Once established, however, moving beyond the customary possessiveness the PCTA has

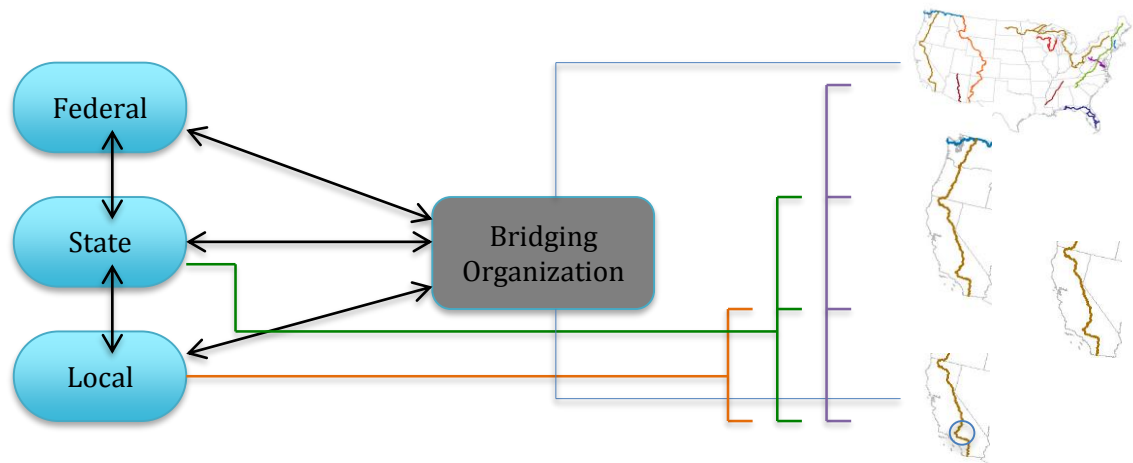


Figure 6 Resilience-based science (adapted from Garmestani and Benson 2013) adjusts the scale to better address funding and other issues. Meanwhile a bridging organization arbitrates the entire process to combat the problem of centralization, improving both communication and efficiency. This would be an example for a section of PCT in Southern California.

for the PCT may be the greatest hurdle, so again, it is more productive to look ahead to future management, and learn from the mistakes of our predecessors rather than undo what has already been built.

Conclusion

I would argue the current management of the nation’s trail system is unsustainable, and even exploitative, and that the heavy reliance on volunteerism may have effectively, in part, stratified the conservation movement, and is reflective of transformational socioeconomic and sociopolitical cultural conditions. Rather than investing in jobs and infrastructure and an enduring resource, we have succumbed to investing in materialism, corporatism, the whims of civil society, and unsustainable tourism. Busch (1989: 7) states, “Each culture constructs its own world out of the infinite variety of nature ... [Nature is] socialized ... reorganized ... [and] made into a material manifestation of social structure.” Trails are thus but one of a myriad of ways to

reorganize “nature” and embed such transformative landscapes with meaning. A collaborative management model best mediates these many ways of redefining and reorganizing the landscape.

The inconspicuous nature of professional trail builders reinforces the invisible nature of trails as a constructed infrastructure for social control, without which wilderness environments would either be hopelessly degraded, or no one would bother to visit them. This invisibility devalues the legitimacy and professionalism of skilled labor and perhaps can explain, in part, the federal trail maintenance budget deficit and declining staff. Thus, a wilderness that provides jobs will prove itself to be sustainable. If this social function is eliminated, authenticity is eliminated, along with crucial connections with the past, and wilderness is left at the whim of touristic fads. I argue that it would serve us well to divorce trails from wilderness, as we have a tendency to manage them as one cultural domain, when in fact, in terms of values, they are not, which ultimately answers my third research question: What is the relationship between wilderness as an idea, and trails as its practice, and appears as follows:

<u>Qualities of Wilderness</u>	<u>Qualities of Trails</u>
Resource	Infrastructure
Disinterested	Self-Interested
Preservation	Conservation
Intellect	Emotion
Enduring	Transformative
Immaterial	Material
Solitude	Solidarity
Unconfined	Confined
Romantic	Raw
Leopoldian	Muirian

This merging of two inherently contradictory resources has skewed our ability to manage wilderness and trail resources in a sustainable fashion, and keep unnecessary conflict out of the wilderness arena. Ultimately, trails are us—symbolic of the self, and reflective of changing socioeconomic and sociocultural conditions. We define trails, and trails define us through our experiences. In many ways trails complement and support the NWPS, but only if balanced with the humility, restraint, and intellect incumbent to wilderness values. Finally, I am humbled by awareness that the role of “builders,” all builders, is to further the mobile nature of humankind, and to further the drive to globally connect our species. According to Goffman’s framework, as engineers of highways, rails, or trails, we build the touristic experience, but as builders, we are still tourists ourselves. Trails are integral infrastructure for furthering the drive for capitalist expansion, as evidenced by the lucrative outdoor gear and tourism industry. Building is about economic and capitalist expansion as much as it is about expanding the touristic consciousness.

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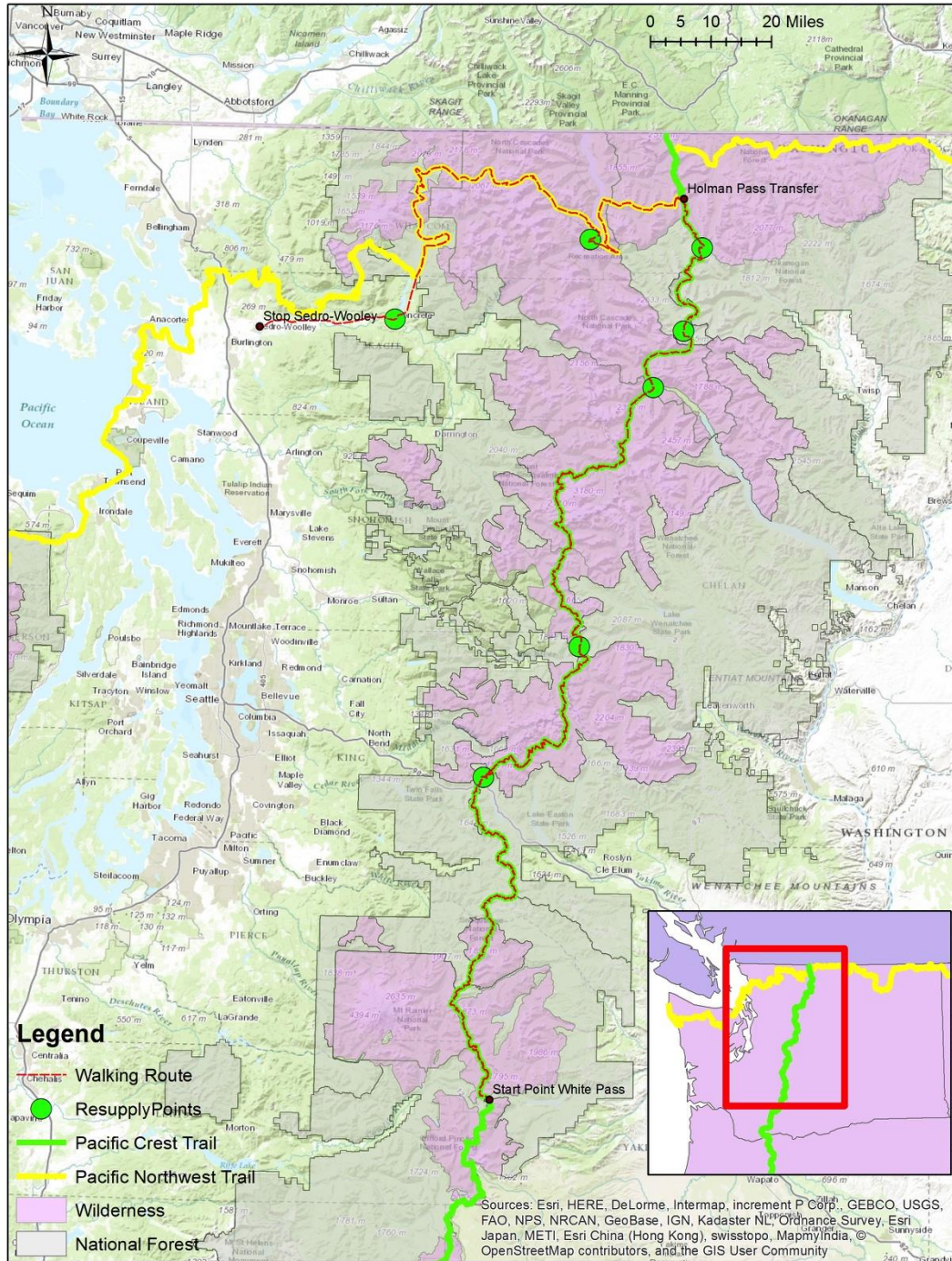
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APPENDIX A

MAP OF STUDY AREA July and August 2015



APPENDIX B

Questionnaire for National Scenic Trail Sense of Place Survey

(Adapted from Spartz and Shaw 2011)

1. How did you come to learn of or hear about the PCT?
2. What does/did this trail experience/thru hike/section hike mean to you? Why are you doing it, or why did you attempt it?
3. When not thru hiking, how do you typically find ways to spend outdoors? How are those experiences different/similar to thru hiking?
4. How would you describe your experience to someone who has never heard of thru hiking, or the PCT, or National Scenic Trails?
5. Are there places along the PCT that you consider special? If so, why do you consider these places special?
6. What is your most vivid a) pleasant, and b) unpleasant memory of the PCT?
7. What were you doing/what was your life like before you embarked on your thru hike? Do you miss it (if applicable)?
8. Tell me about your trail name, if applicable.
9. What connections exist between your neighborhood or home and the PCT, if any?
10. Did you notice landscape changes along the PCT? How do you feel about those landscape changes that have occurred?

11. If you could change anything about your PCT experience, what would that be?
12. Do you use National Scenic Trail (NST) corridors when not thru hiking? How often and in what ways?
13. Is this your first NST thru hike? Will you do another thru hike?
14. What does wilderness mean to you? What does community mean to you? Do you think they can coexist? Explain.
15. Where are you from?
16. Age, gender, and racial/ethnic identity? (Optional)

APPENDIX C
SAMPLE GEAR LIST

Item	Weight	Price
Gregory Maya 42L	2 pounds 6 ounces	\$170
REI Quarter Dome 1 Tent	2 pounds 2 ounces	\$219
GoLite quilt	1 pound 8 ounces	\$200
Lowa S-Cloud Trail Running Shoe	1 pound 6.6 ounces	\$120
GoLite Demaree 800 Fill Down Jacket	13 ounces	\$130
Thermarest ProLite Small	11 ounces	\$80
Salomon Minim 2.5-Layer Rain Jacket	8 ounces	\$112
Evernew 1.3L titanium pot with lid	7 ounces	\$70
Snow Peak GigaPower Auto Stove	3.75 ounces	\$50
Snow Peak GigaPower Windscreen	2 ounces	\$10
Snow Peak Titanium Spork	0.6 ounces	\$9
Black Diamond Trail trekking poles	16 ounces	\$100
Black Diamond Gizmo Headlamp	3 ounces	\$10
50L Camelbak Antidote water reservoir	6.4 ounces	\$30
Aquamira water purification system	3 ounces	\$15
Total:	12 pounds	\$1,325

Other Miscellany:

Tablet (camera, GPS, field notes, maps and trail app)
 Socks (2 pair)
 Hiking skirt
 Leggings
 Long sleeve
 Short sleeve
 Beanie
 Gloves
 Sun visor
 Buff
 Pocketknife
 Wet wipes
 Travel toothbrush
 Toothpaste powder
 Snack size Ziploc bag sized first aid kit
 16 ounce Nalgene bottle
 Cell phone
 Chargers for electronics and external battery pack
 Guide book and trail town guide (for PNT portion only)
 Small notebook

APPENDIX D

TAHOE RIM TRAIL ASSOCIATION THRU HIKE TRAIL ANGEL GUIDE (TRTA n.d.)

Trail Angels are an essential component of the TRTA Thru Hiking Program, and play a vital role in making the trek enjoyable and doable for all the participants.

Trail Angel Responsibilities:

1. Meet with the staff Thru Hike Coordinator at the TRTA prior to the start of the Thru Hike to go over details and logistics and to practice driving the TRTA jeep and hitching and the trailer.
2. Arrange to pick up the jeep and trailer at the start of the Thru Hike. You may also pull the TRTA trailer with your own vehicle.
3. Shop and prepare the menu for the trail angel stop:
 - Fresh food and some salty type snacks, as well as items on the Trail Angel Menu (for example: cut up fresh fruit like cantaloupe, watermelon, strawberries-not cut, avocado slices, oranges slices, apple slices. Salad is a big hit. Yogurt, mini carrots, some salty things like pretzels, nuts, chips, licorice, cookies, etc... Stuff they couldn't get on the trail)! **Trail Angels are responsible solely for the purchase of the food and drinks** (juice/lemonade). **All other items in the trailer are provided by the TRTA.** *Keep all your receipts for reimbursement.*
4. The inside of the TRTA trailer should have the following items provided by TRTA:
 - Participants' duffel bags (which have their extra clothing, lunches, snacks and gear).
 - Large tarp (to place duffel bags on).
 - 3 – 4 tables (space the tables so the participants can walk around both sides of the tables).
 - Dish tubs for the participants to wash and rinse their hands, along with and some antibacterial soap and paper towels (or clean towels).
 - 3 – 4 water jugs filled with water for the hikers to refill their water containers. You will need at least 15 gallons at each stop. **Trail Angels are responsible for filling the water jugs before each stop.**
 - Rubbermaid containers with freeze dried breakfasts and dinners for the hikers to pack for the next segment. These need to be taken out of the trailer and placed away from the tables.
 - Assortment of Ziploc bags and trash bags (put these out for participants to throw their trash into—really important so they do not have to carry it). The hikers might need to be reminded if you don't see them dumping their trash.
 - Garbage Can – Please line a garbage can with a garbage bag for participant trash.

- Burlap recycling containers – Please set out for items like Gatorade bottles and soda cans which are often served at Trail Angel stops.
- Empty bin or cardboard box for empty fuel canisters.
- Hand washing station - this will need to be set up at each stop.
- 2 Ice-Chests full of ice (fill before each stop) with (juice, lots of Gatorade, ice tea, diet and non-diet sodas and other food that needs to be kept cold).
TRTA will provide alcohol for a couple of select stops. Please do not purchase any alcohol for the hikers. Receipts should be submitted to the TRTA.
- Gatorade – Please place Gatorade in the ice chests with ice before each stop.
- 4 hand-held radios with 4 chargers. **Trail Angels should charge these radios before each stop.**
- Camping chairs (you may want to bring some of your own, as well). Both Trail Angels and participants need a place to sit at the various stops!
- Fuel – Participants will exchange empty fuel canisters for full ones at stops. Please pull the box of fuel out of the trailer at each stop.
- First Aid Kit Supplies – Guides and participants will need to replenish their kits at each stop.
- Rubbermaid bin with plates, utensils, paper towels and cleaning supplies. Please set these items on the tables. The cleaning supplies are for wiping down the tables at the end of each stop.
- Extra backpacking gear – just in case...

5. Arrive at the designated location approximately a half hour before the hikers are scheduled to arrive. Some groups are fast and may be early but most groups are behind schedule. FYI---You might be waiting for HOURS for them to arrive. The guides will do their best to notify the trail angels by cell phone if they are going to be early or late.

Before the hikers arrive:

1. Pull duffels out of the trailer and place them on a large tarp. Please be careful though as these duffel bags are very heavy. If they are too heavy, wait for the hikers to arrive and they can help with pulling them out of the trailer.
2. Set up tables and have water jugs, a hand washing station and the food set out.
3. The Rubbermaid bins of freeze-dried food should be placed out in a separate space for participants to grab what they need.
4. The garbage can and recycling bins should be set out.
5. Fuel canisters and first aid supplies should also be set out.

When the hikers arrive:

1. The guides will announce how many breakfasts, lunches, and dinners the participants need to get from the freeze-dried food bins.
2. The participants will dump their trash into the garbage can.

3. Participants will access their duffels from the trailer and swap out clothing and/or gear and/or snacks and lunches.
4. The group will clean their hands; start eating the food that you have put out and also things they have brought.
5. Everyone will fill up their water containers and rest for before heading back out on the trail (unless it is an end of the day trail angel stop).
6. The stop will typically last about one hour depending on the guides and the organization of the participants with their duffel bags.
7. The final step is that the participants should help to put the duffel bags bag in the trailer.
8. The Trail Angels will then pack everything back into the trailer and repeat at each trailhead.

There are a couple locations where this procedure changes:

1. At Granlibakken the group typically has pizza (this is a secret!) delivered by a TRTA staff member. The TRTA usually provides beer and wine for the participants. Their duffels are still needed as are some pre-pizza snacks and salad to eat with the pizza.
2. The August hikers are treated to ice cream at the Echo Lakes Chalet and then take the boat taxi across Echo Lakes. The Trail Angels or TRTA need to have the TRTA van at this stop. There will need to be enough vehicles to transport ALL the participants, guides and their backpacks. The participants are transported from Echo Summit to Echo Lakes across Hwy 50 for this portion of the Thru Hike.
3. On the final day of the thru hike, TRTA staff will meet the group with a finish line, champagne, and certificates of completion. Again there will need to be enough vehicles to transport ALL the participants and their backpacks back to the TRTA office. Trail Angels are not needed at this stop, but they do need to have the TRTA vehicle and trailer back to the TRTA office before the last day of the hike.

TRAIL ANGEL MENUS

Be sure to consult with the TRTA Thru Hike Coordinator before the start of the program to determine the various dietary restrictions of the participants and guides. Often, we have participants who are vegetarian or vegan, as well as those who have allergies to nuts, shellfish, certain fruits, gluten and soy.

Evening Trail Angel Stop Suggestions

- Grilled burgers/dogs (include veggie burgers and dogs)
- Burrito Bar
- Pasta Salads
- Potato Salads
- Beans

- Lasagna (For vegans, pasta with veggie marinara)
- Deserts – Chocolate Brownies

Morning and Afternoon Trail Angel Stop Suggestions

- Sandwich fixings, including peanut butter and jelly and/or tuna
- Hard boiled eggs
- Watermelon & fruit salad
- Salad
- Mixed Nuts
- Guacamole
- Bagels & Cream Cheese
- Mini candy bars
- Veggies & hummus
- Peanut Butter & Celery
- Cheese & Crackers
- Chips / Salsa
- Cookies
- Bananas
- Licorice
- Yogurt

Drinks

- Gatorade (TRTA provides)
- Soda
- Ice Tea
- Lemonade
- Fruit Juices (Orange, Apple)