

**“HIKER TRASH” ALONG THE PACIFIC CREST TRAIL: AN APPLICATION
OF THE SOCIAL WORLD AND SERIOUS LEISURE FRAMEWORKS**

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

This study took place along the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), a 2,665-mile footpath in the Western United States. The PCT has seen increased use; the Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA) recorded 369 hikers completing the trail during the 2014 hiking season. The increased use of the resources along the PCT corridor has implications for participants, citizens of gateway communities and natural resource managers alike and has been all but ignored from leisure scientists. This study sought to better understand the growing social world of hikers along the PCT by answering two interrelated questions. First, are there subworlds of hikers along the PCT and if so, what are the sources of differentiation? And second, what effect does a hiker's social world have on his or her experience? To answer these questions, both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed.

Throughout 45 days spent in the field collecting data, fifteen in depth interviews were conducted, extensive participant observation was undertaken, and narrative analysis was performed. In addition to these qualitative means, 153 experience use history (EUH) surveys were administered to gauge the experience levels of hikers along the PCT. This study found that the relationships formed between fellow members of the PCT long-distance hiking community had a positive effect on the hiking experience. This study was also consistent with the assertion that social worlds tend to dissolve into subworlds. The subworlds along the PCT formed around one's ideas about *authentic* hiking. Two subworlds were identified within the long-distance hiking social world: the

purist and the *social* hiker. Both, purists and social hikers have an idyllic approach to hiking the PCT and consider those who deviate from this standard as “doing it wrong.” One theme that emerged during this study in addition to hikers’ contesting authenticity is participants’ concern over the increasing amount of hikers utilizing the trail. This study adds to the social world body of literature and also illuminates the need for this particular social group and environment to be examined using several different frameworks including recreation specialization and serious leisure, carrying capacity, place attachment and social bonding. The PCT has not been researched in great detail and the growing number of participants along the trail will soon demand academic inquiry to provide information for managers of natural resources.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to my personal, sufficient, sin absolving savior, Jesus Christ. I hope that my scholastic efforts honor and bring attention to your name instead mine. Calvary is my North bearing. Also, I would like to dedicate this study to long-distance hikers everywhere; the simplicity of the hike is a beautiful thing. May the sun be in your face and the wind at your back!

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INTRODUCTION

The Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) stretches roughly 2,665 miles from Mexico to Canada, traveling through California, Oregon and Washington, although there is no way to know the actual length of the trail as it changes annually due to wild fire, downed trees or water damage (Echols, 2009). The trail encompasses a wide variety of environments including the rugged Mojave Desert and the lush rainforests of the Pacific Northwest. Furthermore, the PCT traverses spectacular landscapes such as high California peaks that hosted many of John Muir's adventures in the 1860s and 70s, the Yosemite Valley of the High Sierra that was so extraordinarily captured by the photographer Ansel Adams, and the rugged Cascade Range of Oregon and Washington.

In addition to a high level of ecological variation, there also exists a high level of social variation along the trail. Along the PCT, hikers (if completing an end to end hike of the trail) travel through 26 National Forests, seven National Parks, five State Parks and three National Monuments. While on the trail hikers are exposed to the harsh conditions of the desert, high alpine, and rainforest, all offering a different set of obstacles to be negotiated.

The southern section of the PCT (commonly referred to as "the desert" for short) travels through the Mojave Desert where temperatures regularly climb above 100° during the day and dip below freezing at night. In the desert section of the trail hikers tend to hike from water source to water source. It is not uncommon for water sources to be twenty or more miles apart along the trail. From the Mojave, hikers climb into the

Sierra Nevada range where the PCT climbs over numerous high alpine passes and at its highest point ascends Forrester Pass at 13,153 feet above sea level. Unlike the desert section, the extreme elevations of the Sierra often hold snow and ice well into the summer months. Hikers often pick up their ice axes and crampons (placed on the bottom of shoes to create friction in icy terrain) at Kennedy Meadows, which is the gateway to the Sierra for the northbound hiker signifying the end of the desert. After meandering through the desert and Sierra, the trail enters into the Cascade Range of Oregon and Washington. The Cascades are notorious for cold rains that create hypothermic conditions.

Much like the diverse environment along the PCT, so too is there diversity among hikers. MacLennan and Moore (2011) found that there were multiple subworlds within the hiker social world along the Appalachian Trail (AT). Similar to the AT, subworlds were observed along the PCT within the long-distance hiking social world. Furthermore, there exists diversity in the *type* of hiker along the PCT. Long-distance hikers are referred to as “thru-hikers” or “section hikers”. Thru-hikers are the individuals who plan on hiking the PCT in its entirety from the southern terminus in Campo to the northern terminus in Manning Park, Canada. Section hikers are hikers that intend to hike a significant portion of the PCT. Often section hikers complete the PCT over the course of years, picking up where they left off on the last time they hiked. Besides thru and section hikers, there are hikers that are on the trail for shorter periods of time, maybe not even for a single night. Hikers that are on the trail and do not camp overnight are referred to as “day hikers”.

Although much has been written concerning the PCT, the majority of the literature takes the form of memoir (Echols, 2009; Grinter, 2012; Strayed, 2013; Walker, 2013) or guidebook (Schaffer, 2003; McDonnell, 2014). In the academic context, the PCT has provoked inquiry from the medicinal fields (Anderson, Rebholz, White, Mitchell, Curcio, Feldman, & Kahn 2009; Derlet & Carlson, 2002). Academic literature within leisure sciences concerning the PCT specifically is sparse, not to mention the effect level of involvement (used synonymously with commitment, specialization, and seriousness), social worlds, and setting, might have on hikers' wilderness experience.

Sociologists have long been interested in social worlds (Shibutani, 1955; Strauss, 1978; Unruh, 1979; 1980). Leisure researchers have since borrowed these ideas to better understand leisure participants (MacLennan & Moore, 2011; Scott & Godbey, 1992; 1994). The social worlds literature has been incorporated by leisure frameworks such as recreation specialization (Bryan, 1979) and serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982) to understand the worlds of leisure participants which are highly committed to their activities.

This study seeks to better understand the experiences of hikers along the PCT by incorporating ideas from the social world, specialization, and serious leisure literatures. The findings of the study will provide recreation managers with information that will allow for natural resources to be managed more efficiently while providing more meaningful experiences for participants. Also, this study will provide leisure sciences with a new perspective on the relationship(s) between social worlds and seriousness along the Pacific Crest Trail.

Definition of Terms

ADZPCTKO: This acronym stands for the “Annual Day Zero Pacific Crest Trail Kick Off”, which is an event is held every year near the southern terminus of the PCT where a lot of the hiking class for that year meets and camp with trail angels, veterans and other people involved in the PCT community. Also known as “Kickoff”.

Bear Box/Can: A metal storage box that is provided by the Forest Service to protect food from bears. A bear can serves the same purpose but it is smaller and is carried by the hiker in their pack.

Camelling-up: refers to when a hiker drinks a large amount of water at a water source before heading to the next one.

Fastest-Known-Time (FKT): the fastest known time of a complete through hike.

HYOH: acronym for hike your own hike.

Hiker Box: a common use box where hikers can give unused items in their possession for the use of hikers behind them on the trail who may need the item they have left.

Hiker Trash: contested term that is used to refer to a long-distance hiker and their lifestyle while on the trail.

Nero: When nearly zero miles are hiked in a day that day is labeled a “nero” day.

NoBo: acronym for “northbound”, which refers to a hiker’s direction of travel.

Road Walk: this refers to a portion of trail that is a road. Often times road walks are a result of a trail being incomplete or re-routed due to an impediment on the trail.

Siesta: In the desert section of the trail many hikers will find shade to rest in during the hottest time of day. This is commonly referred to as “taking a siesta”.

Slack-Pack: used to describe hiking without a pack. The hikers’ pack is carried for them (usually by automobile) to their stopping point for that day.

SoBo: acronym for “southbound”, which refers to a hiker’s direction of travel.

Trail Angel: someone who gives back to the trail in any way. Trail angels are individuals who volunteer along the trail. Most commonly this refers to individuals who offer their home as a respite from the trail for hikers, offer rides to and from trailheads, set up Bar-B-Q’s in campgrounds or popular trailheads, or maintain water caches in the desert (without water caches in several strategic locations in the desert, hikers would have waterless stretches of trail approaching and in some cases exceeding 100 miles).

Trail Magic: contested term that most commonly refers to something out of the ordinary along the trail (e.g. an ice chest full of sodas and candy bars) that someone has put out for long-distance hikers.

Trail Name: the name that is given to a hiker on the trail. Mine for example, was “Survey”.

Veteran Hikers: veteran hikers are those who have hiked the PCT in the past and are continuing to hike the trail whether that takes place every year or not.

Yellow Blazing: refers to hikers hitchhiking instead of hiking a section of trail.

Zero: refers to a day when no miles are hiked, a rest day.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer two questions.

1. Are there subworlds of hikers along the PCT? If so, what are the sources of differentiation?
2. What effect does a hikers’ social world have on the experience?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social World Literature

Shibutani (1955) provided an early, and albeit brief, discussion of social worlds and how they were constructed. The social worlds that Shibutani (1955) described were built on past work done by sociologists in the context of reference groups (Hyman, 1942). Following Shibutani (1955), we can understand social worlds as being dynamic groups that are not coterminous, but connected loosely by spheres of interests that contain special communication systems unique to the social world in which provide participants opportunity to carve out their own leisure career which develops, and enhances, his or her status.

Strauss (1978), recognizing the importance of the social world perspective, argued that social worlds should be better understood and used as a way to understand social change. Strauss (1978), asserted that social worlds may form around a numbers different interests such as basketball, Catholicism, opera, baseball, and stamp collecting. Social worlds also are distinguished by size, location, social class, structure, permeability of borders, publicity, and are highly diverse and malleable (Strauss 1978).

The works of Shibutani (1955), Strauss (1978), and Irwin (1977), lead Unruh (1979) to formally characterize social worlds as “a unit of social organization which is diffuse and amorphous in character” (p. 115). According to Unruh (1979), social worlds are also, “generally larger than groups or organizations” and “must be seen as an internally recognizable constellation of actors, organizations, events, and practices which

have coalesced into a perceived sphere of interest and involvement for participants (p. 115). In addition to the above characteristics, Stebbins (1999) found that participants in social worlds have unique norms, beliefs, and values associated with the social world that they are situated in.

Scott and Godbey (1992) used the social world perspective that was introduced by others to study adult play groups in the context of contract bridge. Borrowing from Shibutani (1955), Spradley (1980), Hall (1987), and Pearson (1981), Scott and Godbey understand a social world as being,

a unique scheme of life in which members share in a special set of meanings... and in which various cultural elements—activities and events..., conventions and practices..., and specialized knowledge, technology, and language...are created and made meaningful by social world members and serve to set the social world apart from other social worlds. (p. 49)

Scott and Godbey offered a significant addition to the social world perspective when they observed what Strauss (1984) speculated regarding differentiation into subworlds.

Scott and Godbey (1992) stated, within the context of contract bridge, there exists *subworlds* that allow for further segmentation within the social world. The two subworlds that they observed were characterized as the *social* bridge player and the *serious* bridge player. They found that within the social world of contract bridge the central source of differentiation between subworlds was the “perceived social versus serious nature of the group activity” and also that the differentiation between social and

serious bridge players related to the activity within the subworlds (p. 57). This phenomenon was also observed by MacLennan and Moore (2011) when they observed multiple activity styles and orientations between *purists*, *blue blazers*, and *yellow blazers* (all common nomenclature along the Appalachian Trail to describe different types of hikers within the hiker social world largely based on attitudes and orientation towards the activity).

The social world perspective lends to a better understanding dynamic systems of human interactions, such as PCT. The PCT provides a setting to apply the social world perspective in a way that would be new to the literature through the examination of the *unique ethos* (Stebbins, 1999) that exists throughout the trail culture. The social world perspective is advantageous for broadly understanding the amorphous connection between “hiker trash” along the PCT and is supplemented by level of involvement literature, which provides a more meticulous commentary on the social world. “Hiker trash” is an internally recognizable term to the hiker social world that refers to those who are members of the social world. The may also be used to refer to those who are living the “hiker lifestyle” meaning hiking has been made a central life interest by the individual.

Recreation Specialization, Serious Leisure, and Progression Literature

Hiking can be a central life interest. Many hikers spend the “off-season” fine tuning their equipment, getting into better physical condition, and planning their next trip. I would refer to myself as a fairly serious hiker and I cannot remember a time during my college career that I was not either on a trip or plotting the next one.

Individuals who are highly committed to their leisure activity are required to negotiate constraints in order to maintain the behavior (Hubbard & Mannell, 2001; Stalp, 2006; Stebbins, 2005). These individuals often seek out those sharing similar interests that they might garner more skills and knowledge, Stebbins (1982) refers to this phenomenon as a *unique ethos*. More specifically, *unique ethos* refers to “subcultures composed of special beliefs, values, moral principles, norms, and performance standards” (Stebbins, 1982, p. 257). Stebbins’ idea of the *unique ethos* was an application of Unruh’s social world to the context of serious leisure.

According to Scott (In press), “intensity of participation” has long been recognized by researchers to be a point of variation among recreationists and understanding “how involvement changes over time can enhance leisure service delivery and policy” (p. 2, citing Bryan, 1977; Scott, 2012; Selin & Howard, 1988). Scott (in press) notes that while scholars have generally been in agreement regarding level of involvement having important managerial implications, agreement cannot necessarily be found about how to best define and measure intensity of participation. However, according to Scott (in press), two frameworks, namely recreation specialization and serious leisure, have come the forefront of understanding intensity of participation. Furthermore, it is important to note that there is significant overlap between the recreation specialization and serious leisure frameworks. Some researchers assert that the two frameworks may be describing the same thing (Lee & Scott, 2013).

Indeed, there is significant overlap between the two frameworks. Stebbins (1982) defined serious leisure as “the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer

activity that participants find so substantial and interesting that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a career centered on acquiring and expressing its special skills, knowledge, and experience” (p. 3). Likewise, Bryan (1977) articulated recreation specialization as “continuum of behavior from the general to the particular, reflected by equipment and skills used in the sport and activity setting preferences” (p. 175). There are differences between the two frameworks as some researchers have argued (Stebbins, 2007), and much of the research conducted within the serious leisure framework has neglected specialization altogether (Scott, 2012; in press). This study adopts a pragmatic approach to research and thus incorporates both the serious leisure framework as well as recreation specialization as both offer great insight into leisure activity that some refer to as serious (Stebbins, 1982), intensity of participation (Scott, in press), seriousness (Lee & Scott, 2013), progression (Bryan, 1979; Kurten, 2009) or high intensity (Mannell, 1993).

Recreation Specialization. Recent studies have considered recreation specialization in a number of contexts including place attachment (Oh, Lyu & Hammitt, 2012) fishing site substitution (Oh, Sutton, & Sorice, 2013) and restorative environments and mountain hikers’ flow experience (Woran, & Arnberger, 2012). The recreation specialization framework was first developed by Hobson Bryan (1977). Bryan (1977) suggested that recreationalists move from broad to the particular within the recreation activity and the activity participants can be arranged along a continuum of involvement from casual to committed. Bryan studied this phenomenon within the context of anglers. He found that the longer an individual was involved with angling, their attitudes,

behaviors, and preferences progressed to more advanced levels relative to those of a neophyte. In the context of hiking, one may be asked to go on an overnight camping trip by a friend and thus exposing him to the outdoors. This person may then begin camping and hiking more frequently in different environments. Progression would continue overtime until the hiker sought out longer trips offering specific settings requiring the acquisition of skills and knowledge.

In his review of literature, Scott (in press) found that the specialization framework goes further than the serious leisure framework in describing specific styles of participation along the proposed continuum of involvement. Bryan (1977) asserts that the style of participation can be represented in the form of a typology (Scott, in press). For example, Bryan (1979) organizes anglers into four different groups: occasional fishermen, generalists, technique specialists, and technique setting specialists. Bryan (1979) distinguishes between the four different classifications of anglers by considering the individual's preferences towards equipment, skill, setting (both physical and social). For the angler then, progression occurs from the occasional (novice), to the technique setting specialist (expert).

The idea that participants progress along a continuum from novice to expert in a logical and systematic manner was challenged by many researchers (Keuntzel & Heberlein, 2006). Bryan (2000) addressed the issue by stating that he meant for specialization to be understood in terms of behavior, attitudes, and values. Understanding the specialization framework in terms of behavior, attitudes, and values gave the framework malleability. Scott and Shafer (2001) propose that the progression of

recreationists across the specialization continuum “be understood in terms of (a) a focusing of behavior, (b) the acquiring of skills and knowledge, and (c) a tendency to become committed to the activity such that it becomes a central life interest” (p. 326). It may be helpful to consider the specialization framework as progression both horizontally and vertically. As the participant progresses from novice towards expert they may experience times of stability or even decline in the activity. This variation within the progression stage (Bryan refers to the stages as occasional, generalist, technique specialists and technique-setting specialist) is what is being referred to as the vertical progression whereas the horizontal refers to the linear movement from novice to expert. In addition to the nature of progression from novice to expert being questioned by researchers, so too was progression itself. Scott and Shafer (2001) considered the recreation specialization framework and identified that progression was often the *exception* rather than the *rule* for the career of the recreationalist. Studies have since confirmed this assertion finding that participants often follow patterns of stability or even decline (Kerins & Cronan, 2005; Kuentzel & Heberlein, 2006; Scott & Lee, 2010). As previously mentioned, Scott and Shafer (2001) offer an understanding of the recreation specialization framework that is much more fluid than the original understanding of the specialization framework, namely they suggest that progression takes place by way of various stages of involvement, turning points, and career changes. This revision allows for recreation specialization to be an applicable framework to a myriad of recreation participants whose leisure careers ebb and flow sporadically rather than a steady, predictable progression.

Serious Leisure. As previously noted, the serious leisure framework and the recreation specialization framework are similar to one another. They both provide insight into complex leisure activity by characterizing participants as they become more or less committed (serious). Stebbins (1982) developed the serious leisure framework to describe complex leisure activities and later distinguished between serious and casual leisure (Stebbins, 1997).

Stebbins (1982) states that serious leisure contains six distinct qualities: perseverance, the ability to find a career in the activity, realization or acquisition of benefits, identification with the activity, and the development of a social world. Stebbins also found that these six qualities can fall under three different categories: amateurism, hobbyist, and career volunteering. The serious leisure perspective relevant to the social world perspective as the serious and casual participants are found to be situated within specific social worlds and the social worlds are further refined into various subworlds.

The first quality, according to Stebbins (1982) that distinguishes it from other forms of leisure is the need for the serious leisurist to “*persevere* at it” (p. 256). Stebbins (1982) observed that throughout the leisure career moments arise when the activity is no longer enjoyable. For example while on a hike, especially a long-distance hike, a participant may become extremely mentally fatigued, physically fatigued, or both, this period of time during the leisure activity requires the participant to *persevere* through it.

Another characteristic distinguishing serious leisure from other forms of recreation is the “tendency for amateurs, hobbyists, and volunteers to have *careers* in

their endeavors” (Stebbins, 1982, p. 256). These endeavors are lasting pursuits. A leisure career that is serious will often last years. Consider long distance hikers. These hikers have acquired a skill set and knowledge by training for years on end.

The leisure career that is serious likely depends upon a great amount of effort on the part of the recreationist. Stebbins (1982) states that *effort* is the third quality of serious leisure setting it apart from other forms of leisure and the effort is based on knowledge, training, or skill. Return to the example of the long distance hiker. This individual has, over the course of their career, put forth a prodigious amount of effort to acquire the skills, knowledge, and training demanded by the potential environmental dangers as well as the stress long distance hiker can put on the body.

The fourth characteristic of serious leisure separating it from unserious leisure is what Stebbins (1982) broadly refers to as “*durable benefits*” (pp.256-257). More specifically, these durable benefits are: self-actualization, self-enrichment, recreation, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, self-expression, social interaction, and belongingness (Stebbins, 1982). There is a ninth durable benefit and it is the only benefit that is shared between serious and unserious leisure, “self-gratification, or pure fun” (Stebbins, 1982, p. 257).

The fifth distinguishable characteristic of serious leisure is the “*unique-ethos*” that is developed from the pursuit of the activity (Stebbins, 1982, p. 257). The unique-ethos as described by Stebbins is similar to social-world as described by Unruh (1979; 1980). One need not look far to find example of social worlds surrounding leisure

activities. Consider tri-athletes, they often train, hang-out, and sometimes even live together because they all share a central life interest: triathlons.

The last quality that distinguishes serious leisure from unserious leisure is dependent on the preceding five, that is, participants tend to *identify* with their leisure pursuits (Stebbins, 1982). If an individual identifies with their leisure pursuit they are likely to be a great advocate for the activity. This might include talking to others about the activity proudly and frequently for example.

The six qualities that segment serious leisure from casual leisure are categorized as three types of pursuits according to Stebbins (1982): amateurism, hobbyist, and career volunteering. Amateurs may be found in “art, science, sport, and entertainment where they are inevitably linked... with professional counterparts” (Stebbins, 2007, p. 6). The amateur is heavily influenced by their professional counterpart who often shapes the pursuit and helps establish the career of the amateur.

The hobbyist, like the amateur, has “definite and lasting purposes” and is serious about the leisure pursuits even though “they frequently feel no necessity or obligation to engage in them” (Stebbins, 1982, p. 259-260). Hobbyist pursuits consist of activities for which there is no professional counterpart. The critical difference between the amateur and the hobbyist is that the hobbyist is not a part of a system comprised of professional counterparts, amateurs, and the public, which Stebbins refers to as the “professional-amateur-public” (P-A-P) system (Stebbins, 1982, p. 260). In other words, a hobby is a specialized leisure pursuit outside of one’s occupation that is enjoyed because of the durable benefits realized through the activity (Stebbins, 1982). Previous researchers have

studied hobbyist pursuits such as fishing (Bryan, 1977), contract bridge (Scott & Godbey, 1992), tailgating (Gibson, Willming, & Holdnak, 2002), document management (Hartel, 2010), and high-risk drinking (Maloney, 2011).

The third type constituting serious leisure is career volunteering (Stebbins, 1982). It is important to understand how Stebbins uses the term “volunteer”. He stated that a volunteer is one who partakes in volunteering, which is defined by action “undertaken for reasons other than economic benefit, self-preservation, physical coercion, physiological need, or psychic or social compulsion.” (p. 264). The career volunteer is one who receives durable benefits from offering a substantial amount of time and effort to help other people or services (Stebbins, 1999).

Hikers found along the PCT seem to best be characterized as hobbyists within the lenses of the serious leisure framework. An argument could be made however, to classify these individuals as amateurs because there are indeed leaders in the hiking community whom help shape the pursuit and establish a career, but these professionals are few and far between and likely not seen as a counterpart by the majority of hikers.

Experience Use History Literature. One early attempt at providing a framework to explain individuals’ attachment to leisure activities was Experience Use History (EUH) (Scott, in press). EUH has often been used by researchers in the measurement of involvement. Schreyer and Lime (1984) note that experience has two distinct, but related, connotations. First, it represents how events are interpreted by an individual and second, it may represent the amount and the types of activities that the individual has participated in. It is in the context of the second connotation that

Schreyer, Lime, and Williams (1984) introduced EUH to leisure research. Schreyer et al. (1984), citing Mannell (1982) and Knopf (1983), stated that “that there is an increasing interest in understanding the link between internal cognitive states of the individual (attitudes, feelings, motives) and leisure behavior” (p. 35). Schreyer et al. (1984) contended that EUH could add to this line of inquiry, “as it represents a link between external behavior and internal psychological processes which interpret the status of the individual in his/her environment and initiate behaviors” (p. 35).

EUH helps researchers garner information concerning how participants progress in their activities over time. Similar to recreation specialization, EUH assumes that participants become increasingly serious (gain skills, knowledge, and focus on activity) with increasing experience (Williams, Schreyer, & Knopf, 1990). In their study, Schreyer and Lime (1984) categorize activity participants along a continuum ranging from novice to veteran. Data was gathered by surveying river users to learn how long the participants were staying at the river, whether or not the participants were using river guides, and the type(s) of craft being utilized by the participants. The responses from these items were then used to classify participants from along a continuum from novice to veteran.

Schreyer et al. (1984) concluded from their study that “distinct patterns of participation emerge as one evaluates EUH classes with regard to number of nights camped on the river during the trip, whether the respondent is an outfitted or non-outfitted trip, and the primary type of watercraft used (pp. 41-42). Since this study, leisure researchers have used the EUH framework to investigate a number of leisure

activities such as backpackers (Hammit, McDonald, & Hughes, 1986), horseback riders (Hammit, Knauf, & Noe, 1989), golfers (Petrick, Backman, Bixler, & Norman, 2001), place attachment (Peden & Schuster, 2008; Eder & Arnberger, 2012), and crowding (Budruk, Wilhem, Schneider, & Heisey, 2008).

As mentioned above, EUH has been used by researchers in various contexts for describing a number of phenomena. EUH has also often been incorporated in studies concerning level of involvement for example, Needham and Vaske (2013), in their examination of elk and deer hunters, used past experience as a behavioral indicator in their measurement of recreation specialization. EUH has proven to be useful in involvement studies as the level of involvement (e.g., recreation specialization and serious leisure) broaden experience to include cognitive, behavioral, and psychological components (Manning, 2010).

Summary

The social world, recreation specialization, serious leisure, and EUH frameworks work hand-in-hand with one another and provide context for this study into the social world of hikers along the PCT. Bryan (1977) suggested that specialization is a developmental process in which participants progress towards more advanced levels of participation the longer the activity is participated in or as a career is developed. Similarly, Stebbins (1999) asserted that the serious leisurist invests into a career where they concern themselves with the acquisition of skills, knowledge, and experience, which eventually leads to the creation of a *unique ethos*, or social world, recreation specialization, serious leisure and social world literatures overlap at this point. Recreation specialization and serious leisure helps us to understand the unique norms, beliefs and values associated with social worlds and subworlds and therefore will serve as a driving force for this study.

METHODOLOGY

Overview

For this study I adopted a methodologically pragmatic research approach (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This means that I allowed the question I was seeking to answer drive the methods that were to be employed rather than my methodological disposition drive my question(s). Both qualitative methods and quantitative methods were therefore employed in attempts to better understand the social world of hikers and to answer the two research questions. Because I am an experienced hiker (have logged over 1,000 trail miles), and the social world of hikers was not completely alien, I was able to develop an Experience Use History (EUH) scale was from previous research for the PCT context (Schreyer, 1982; Schreyer et al. 1984; Williams, Schreyer, & Knopf, 1990; Ditton, Loomis, & Choi, 1992; Choi, Loomis, & Ditton, 1994). Quantitative methods were employed to garner an elementary understanding of the hiker population along the PCT. Further, literature concerning the social worlds of hikers along the PCT was scant at best. Because of this, qualitative methods were employed to give the study flexibility so that information about the social worlds of hikers was able to emerge naturally (Guba & Lincoln, 1982).

The data collected for this study was primarily collected using qualitative methods. An EUH scale gave a brief snapshot of the hiker social world, and qualitative methods were employed to allow the nuances of the social world to emerge. Through participant observation, the examination of written documents, and in-depth interviewing, I was able to better understand how the hiker social world is constructed,

interpreted, and what meanings are attributed to it by members of the PCT long-distance hiking social world. Therefore, this study was not undertaken to examine causal relationships between variables through the testing of a hypothesis, but rather to better understanding the different types of hikers with the PCT hiker social world and the attributes that are given to it by the hikers.

Another advantage of conducting research within the qualitative paradigm is the flexibility that it provides the researcher and the study in general. As was previously mentioned, I was already an experienced hiker prior to entering the field to collect data, which afforded me a general understanding of the long-distance hiking culture and on a practical level, my hiking experience assured me that this study would be physically feasible for me to accomplish for I was no stranger to the ten hour hiking day. It was not long after entering the field however that I got injured (slight tear in a tendon in my foot) despite my previous experience hiking. Because I was reluctant to get off of the trail for fear of negatively impacting this study I continued to hike for almost 100 miles, which only made things worse as the injury was due to overuse in the first place. Luckily, my hiking partner, Sam, had a friend who was living in Los Angeles that offered us a place to stay as long as we needed. While I was reluctant, I had no choice but to get off of the trail if I wanted to be able to continue my study as planned at a later date.

While in Los Angeles I was able to spend time reflecting on my experiences that I had up until being forced off of the trail, which meant I was able to complete much more reflexive journaling than I would have otherwise been able to achieve and also revise my interview guide so that I might become more sensitive to the intricacies of the

long-distance hiking social world along the PCT. In addition to reflecting on my experience as a member of the social world, I was able to keep in touch with fellow PCT hikers via cell phone and ask them questions as they progressed north. Because the average long-distance hiker along the PCT is accustomed to injury I was still able to maintain my role as a participant as observer for this study, many of the hikers I met before I was forced off of the trail to rest periodically contacted me asking when I was going to be back on the trail hiking and from where I would start. Because qualitative studies are by nature emergent and I relied on my own experiences as a participant in addition to participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and mining data from written documents as sources of data to draw conclusions from, I was able to turn what was originally thought to be a significant limitation (i.e. being forced out of my data collection site due to injury) into a piece of data itself and a fruitful time for writing and contemplating before returning to the trail to continue the data collection process.

Setting

Data were collected along the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). The PCT is a single-track footpath that begins in Campo, California at the U.S.-Mexico border and finishes in Manning Park of British Columbia. Throughout the hike, hikers and I traveled in and out of “trail towns” to rest and resupply. Trail towns serve an interesting purpose for the long-distance PCT hiker. They are a place to first and foremost get food and also rest, but they also provide a meeting place for hikers as they come off of the trail. Often times in trail towns hikers congregate in hostels or trail angels’ places of residence and discuss the trail amongst other things (see “trail angel” in the section titled “definition of

terms”). Speaking metaphorically, trail towns are the “chat rooms” along the PCT and provided rich source of data collection. While not in trail towns, hikers were encountered along the trail. There was however, a high level of variation in this regard. Depending on the section of trail being hiked, weather, proximity to town, and fire conditions, I encountered hikers varied from hours to days.

Hikers along the Pacific Crest Trail were surveyed for their experience use history. Surveys were administered while I was in the field for 45 days in the months of May and June, 2014. The Pacific Crest Trail traverses various public lands (e.g, National Forests, National Parks) throughout California Oregon and Washington. Because I did not know how many hikers would be encountered (there is a significant amount of variation among thru hikers alone) the sample size was determined by the encountered population. In the same way, I selected participants for in-depth interviews based on multiple factors, one of which was the amount of hikers encountered. The sample for in-depth interviewing was much more purposive and therefore smaller than the experience use history sample. Participants for in-depth interviews were solicited at all points along the PCT until data saturation had been reached.

Quantitative Methods

An Experience Use History (EUH) scale was adapted from previous research for this study (Schreyer, 1982; Schreyer et al. 1984; Williams et al., 1990; Ditton et al., 1992; Choi et al., 1994). Hammit et al. (2004) note that EUH “refers to the amount of past experience, usually measured in terms of total visits, total years of use, and frequency per year of participation with an activity and/or resource at a specific sites

and/or other sites” (p. 358). Understanding participants’ past experience will provided an elementary understanding of participants encountered in the field and therefore provide insight into the hiker social world.

Research Participants. Hikers along the PCT were the focus of this study. According to the Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA) roughly 3,000 individuals have completed the trail. This number very well may be inaccurate as there are likely individuals reported as having completed the trail that indeed have not and also there are likely unreported cases of individuals who have completed the trail. Surveys were not administered to only long-distance hikers (that is, those who are hiking for multiple weeks and several hundred miles) but also to hikers that are out for shorter trips such as 50-mile weeklong hikes and even day hikes. The reason this study does not *only* consider long-distance hikers, or thru-hikers, is because hikers may self-identify as a long-distance hiker when they are not, or hikers may not self-identify as a long-distance hiker when they are indeed a long-distance hiker. Prior to collecting data, it was thought that segmentation within the hiker social world could potentially emerge from the length of time spent on the trail and this segmentation would have been better understood if all hikers along the PCT were considered, rather than only long-distance or thru-hikers. Lastly, the PCT poses quite a mental and physical challenge, many hikers intend to complete the entire trail, but along the way are either forced, or choose to stop hiking. There is no way to confirm who actually completed the trail in its entirety.

Sampling. Participants for this study were chosen purposively and also based on convenience to complete the EUH survey (Babbie, 2007). This was necessary do to the

nature of the study. There was little regularity or predictability as to when I encountered other hikers along the trail. There were times when I went significant amounts of time between encounters with hikers but an entire day never passed without coming across a fellow hiker. Prior to collecting data any estimate regarding the amount of hikers that would be encountered would have been speculative. Therefore, I asked hikers to complete the EUH survey as they were encountered and if they were deemed to be representative of the hiking population along the PCT.

Data Collection and Reduction. Experience Use History was measured using nine categorical questions (Appendix B). These questions assessed hikers' years of hiking as well as frequency. Hikers also answered more specific questions regarding total times, locations, and duration of previous hikes. This study adapted variables from previous EUH research that has been conducted (Hammit & McDonald, 1983; Schreyer et al., 1984; Hammit, 2004). Specifically, hikers were asked how often they go hiking, his or her average distance traveled from place of residence to go hiking, his or her average length (both time and distance) of hiking trips, the total days spent "on trail" in his or her hiking career, the number of trails that have been hiked, if they had ever hiked on the Appalachian Trail, Pacific Crest Trail or Continental Divide Trail and if so, was it for 500 or more consecutive miles.

Qualitative Methods

A naturalistic model of inquiry was used to guide this study into the social world of hikers along the PCT. Babbie (2007) noted that qualitative methods are especially useful in the exploration of social worlds; indeed he is not alone in this assertion

(Bernard, 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Stauss & Corbin, 2008). Babbie (2007) argued that because social worlds are ambiguous entities with vague boundaries and populations, qualitative field research yields nuances that would otherwise not be apparent to the researcher.

Choice of Field Role. A participant as observer (Merriam, 2009) field role was adopted for this study. I was in the field hiking along with the participants for 33 days out of the total 45 days spent collecting data. Therefore, the participant as observer field role was most useful because it allowed me to adopt an “active membership role” that is “involved in the setting’s central activities” (Adler & Adler, 1998, p. 85). Furthermore, the participant as observer field role made it possible to develop an intimate understanding of the participants as well as the activity. Lastly, by my participation in the group *not* being secondary to the role of information gatherer, an “insider understanding” or *emic* perspective was achieved (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 61; Merriam, 2009).

Sampling. The nature of this study, in addition to the field role of the researcher, called for nonprobability sampling (Babbie, 2007). Available participants were relied on for data and also participants were chosen using purposive sampling techniques, that is, I chose to gather data from whom I judged to be most useful for describing the social world, or representative of the population in addition to whomever is willing to have an informal conversation (Babbie, 2007). Opportunistic sampling allowed me to garner a general understanding of the social world while continually informing conversations with other hikers. Data collected using opportunistic sampling offered me additional

criteria to use when purposively selecting participants for conversations and interviews throughout the entirety of the study.

Data Collection

Participant Observation. The participant as observer field role required me to become “hiker-trash” (common nomenclature used to describe the long distance hiker lifestyle). My participation was supplemented with frequent unstructured/informal conversations. Informal conversations were flexible/exploratory and consisted of open-ended questions (Merriam, 2009). I was aware that for hikers who are not members of the hiker social world, “hiker trash” may be a deterrent to conversation or willingness to complete the EUH survey, but this was never actualized while collecting data. Because of this potential limitation, I made a continual effort to be welcoming, approachable, and humble towards the hikers that I encountered as recommended by Merriam (2009).

Prior to conducting the study, it was difficult to say with any amount of certainty the amount of hikers that were going to be encountered while in the field and also the frequency at which hikers would be encountered. Variation also occurred regarding *where* hikers were encountered. In the desert section of the trail, hikers were frequently encountered around water and/or shade because there are extensive waterless stretches along the trail as it travels through the Mojave Desert thus hikers tend to congregate in these areas.

I had little trouble blending into the long-distance hiking social world because I was familiar with many nuances of the trail before entering the field to collect data. Take

for example nomenclature, I was familiar with common nomenclature amongst hikers like “dirtbag”, “hiker trash”, “ADZPCTKO”, “the herd”, “zero day”, “nero day” and so on. Furthermore, I entered the field with a general idea of potential gatekeepers (individuals of influence who direct the social worlds either formally or informally) within the long-distance hiking social world. This provided me with what anthropologists refer to as the *emic* perspective, or that of the insider (Merriam, 2009).

Written Documents. Other data were recorded as they became evident. Written documents were examined for data throughout the entirety of the study. This included books, magazines, or online chat rooms and blogs. Written documents were a rich source of data for this study because many hikers record their experiences in form of memoir (Echols, 2009; Grinter, 2008; Strayed, 2013), and “hang-out” in online chat rooms. Written documents were especially utilized towards the front end of this study before I began collecting data from participants in the field. This was essential to inform me what I should expect to encounter while hiking.

In-depth Interviewing. Fifteen in-depth interviews were conducted with hikers along the PCT. Interviews were conducted using an interview agenda, but were conducted in such a way that participants felt as though they were having a casual conversation. Merriam (2009) referred to this type of interview technique as being semistructured. The semistructured interviewing technique is advantageous when the researcher does not know enough about the phenomenon to create a structured interview guide and thus must react to the situation at hand and allow for the worldview of the respondent to emerge (Merriam, 2009). Despite being an experienced hiker before

collecting data and having a rudimentary understanding of the hiker social world, segmentation(s) within the hiker social world were unknown. Therefore, questions were purposively open-ended and flexible so that the participant was able to answer the question in his or her own words. By giving participants flexibility in answering questions, themes and characteristics of the long-distance hiking social world naturally emerged during conversation.

Recording and Transcribing Data. Field notes were used extensively as a source of data for this study. Merriam (2009) asserts that notes during observation may be transcribed as soon after the observation as possible. Since I was in the field (that is, hiking or in a trail town) for the entirety of the study, time for transcription was set aside daily. Time set aside for transcription occurred at various times during the day, but often times it took place in the afternoon when hiker commonly take extended breaks to rest. Time for taking field notes fluctuating along with the trail. For example, in the Mojave Desert, it is a common practice for hikers to rest during the hottest times of the day. So, during times when high temperatures forced me to take several afternoon hours off from hiking I spent this time recording and transcribing data in addition to conducting interviews and conversing with hikers. This was not the case once the trail entered the Sierra Nevada range as temperatures allowed for me to hike the entire day and the landscape prevented me from doing anything otherwise (the significant elevation profile of the Sierras require a much slower hiking pace than the relatively flat desert does). While hiking in the Sierra, data were recorded and transcribed during the evenings after camp was set up for that night. Sometimes this proved challenging for me because after

spending the entire day hiking I would be tired and ready to go to sleep at the day's end. Therefore, in addition to the scheduled times per day for the recording of field notes, data were also transcribed throughout the day if and when necessary. For example, several times while hiking with participants, one would make an interesting comment or statement that was especially insightful. When this happened I would either step off to the side of the trail and make a note of it or simply record it while walking. I also performed a member check by asking the participant to repeat what they had just said to ensure the accuracy of my transcription. These transcription practices help ensure data collection was both credible and consistent (Merriam, 2009).

Analysis of Data

The quantitative data gathered using the EUH survey were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics were used to create mean scores and to evaluate how experienced the participants are along the PCT. During the analysis of qualitative data, the constant comparative method as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was used to create categories of data. The descriptive statistics of EUH were then compared to other categories of data that emerge during data analysis.

The qualitative design is by nature emergent, likewise, the process of data analysis is dynamic (Merriam, 2009). While in the field, data were simultaneously collected and analyzed. By simultaneously collecting and analyzing data questions for interviews were allowed to develop and mold to the emerging themes. Often, I took time for what Merriam (2009) referred to as “data collection sessions”, which involves the

researcher reviewing field notes throughout the study and using the field notes to follow specific leads when collecting future data.

Once data were collected, the constant comparative method as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was used as a method of analysis and a means of building grounded theory. As a way to recognize dominant themes, data were reduced into *categories*. Category construction involved constantly comparing data “within and between levels of conceptualization” (Merriam, 2009, p. 200).

At the outset of comparison, the data were analyzed and any data that was useful to the study was recorded. This technique is referred to by Merriam (2009) as “open coding” because the researcher is “open to anything” that might emerge from the data (p. 178). Open codes were then grouped into categories. This process of grouping open codes is referred to as axial coding by Corbin and Strauss (2008). It is in the axial coding process that data began to be interpreted. After axial coding, core categories and propositions were developed (Merriam, 2009). This process of coding is referred to as selective coding by Corbin and Strauss (2007). The naming of the categories was in response to the purpose of the study and guided by the theoretical framework of the study. Data were continually analyzed until categories became responsive to the purpose the research, mutually exclusive, sensitizing, and conceptually congruent.

Trustworthiness. The trustworthiness of findings was insured throughout the collecting and analyzing of data via prolonged engagement, persistent observation, data triangulation, member checking and reflexive journaling. Spending 45 days in the field collecting data and adopting the hiker perspective myself achieved prolonged

engagement. My being a persistent observer was achieved by the contemplation on the aim of this study while in the field and when necessary putting these thoughts to paper in the form of reflexive journaling. This often proved difficult because in addition to concentrating on persistent observation I also had to consider the demands that the hike was placing on my body. Hiking twenty or more miles a day for consecutive days is physically demanding and requires one to pay attention to their body and take the best care of it they can. This includes monitoring body weight, energy levels, calorie intake, and hydration. Therefore, there is competition for mental capacity between observation for data collection and observation needed to remain healthy. Data triangulation was achieved by comparing data across the various sources they were collected from. For example, a theme that emerged from an interview was looked for in written documents and my journal entries. These strategies were undertaken to insure the trustworthiness of this study.

RESULTS

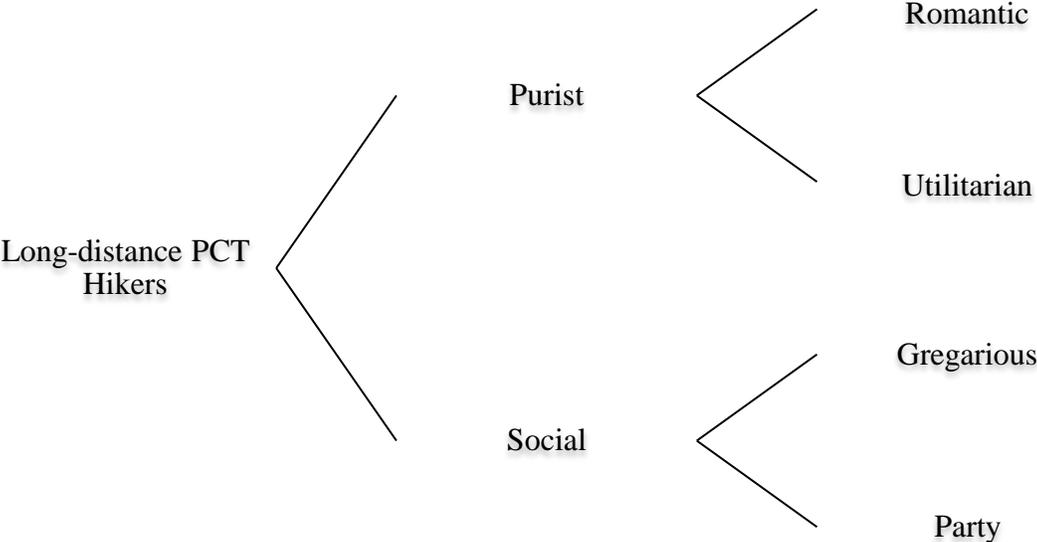
Introduction

The hiking community along the PCT was found to be an extremely diverse social world. Two major themes emerged from the data: the PCT is a distinct social world unto itself and there are stark points of segmentation within the social world. Consistent with the social world perspective, the PCT was found to be a cultural area in which various internally recognizable and non-coterminous groups of individuals oriented their behavior in an identifiable way (Shibutani, 1955; Strauss, 1978). Furthermore, as Scott and Godbey (1992) noted, social worlds “tend to be differentiated into smaller, more specialized subworlds.” (p. 50). The PCT clearly demonstrated the distinction into smaller subworlds throughout the hiking community. There are multiple ways that the social world surrounding the PCT is differentiated. Speaking in a general sense, the sources of segmentation within the social world involve the type of hiker one is. More specifically, the hiker’s existential predispositions towards hiking and wilderness, their attachment to the PCT and their role within the social world can all be sources of division. It is important to note that these characteristics are not independent of one another in all cases for there were some individuals who do not fit nicely into one category but rather, several.

This chapter will be presented in three sections. The first will summarize the data gathered using the Experience Use History survey. The second will discuss general types of hikers. For the purposes of this dialogue, general types of hikers will refer to characterizations of hikers that are representative of the vast majority of hiker regardless

of the social world in which they are or are not a member. In the third section the social world surrounding the PCT will be discussed in detail, providing a description of the distinctiveness of the PCT and also the segmentation within the social world. Also included in the second section is a list of commonly used nomenclature with the social world of the PCT. Figure 1 below illustrates the segmentation within the social world of long-distance PCT hikers. As previously mentioned, each of the types of hiker shown in Figure 1 is subsequently discussed throughout the section.

Figure 1. Types of Long-distance PCT Hikers



Summary of Experience Use History Data

The sample (n=153) was conveniently chosen as hikers were encountered along the trail. Respondents answered nine questions that measured their level of past experience hiking. This survey acts as a supplement to the qualitative data that were collected for this survey and is meant to provide a brief quantitative snapshot of the hikers that I encountered along the PCT while data were being collected for this study. A report containing the response rates for each survey item may be found in Appendix A. A summary of these data may also be found in Table 1 below.

Hikers along the PCT were found to be highly experienced, 49% had spent between 31 and 364 days hiking throughout their career and 34% claimed to have spent more than a year hiking throughout their leisure career. The vast majority (94.8%) of respondents had hiked at some point in the past before hiking on the PCT. Even further, the average hiker that I encountered reported hiking 7 times per year with 55.6% hiking ten or times per years. Most hikers (61.4%) also reported to travel less than 99 miles from their place of residence to go hiking and 71.2% of hikers sampled said that on average their trips last between zero and three days.

This would indicate that a large number of these hikers are committed to hiking more than the one or two times per year that they are able to get out and undertake a large hike such as the PCT.

Respondents were also found to have hiked on numerous trails before hiking on the PCT for their current trip. Specifically, 47.1% of respondents had hiked on more than 30 different trails before setting out on the PCT. Of the previous trails that respondents had hiked on, 59.5% of hikers had hiked on at least one of the “big three” trails: the Appalachian Trail, Pacific Crest Trail, or Continental Divide Trail. Of those who had previously hiked on one of the big three, 30.7% had hiked on that trail for 500 or more miles.

Table 1. Summary of Experience Use History Data

Question	Response Categories	Percentage Per Response
Is this your first time hiking?	Yes	5.2%
	No	94.8%
How often do you go hiking?	1 to 2 times per year	15.7%
	3 to 5 times per year	13.1%
	6 to 9 times per year	12.4%
	Over 10 times per year	55.6%
	Prefer not to answer	3.3%
How far do you travel from your home to go hiking?	99 miles or less	61.4%
	100 miles to 499 miles	20.3%
	500 miles to 999 miles	9.2%
	More than 1,000 miles	5.9%
	Prefer not to answer	3.3%
How long do your hiking trips usually last?	1 day or less	40.5%
	Between 2 and 3 days	30.7%
	Between 4 and 6 days	11.1%
	Between 7 and 30 days	8.5%
	More than 31 days	5.9%
	Prefer not to answer	3.3%
When you go on a hiking trip, how far do you hike throughout the entirety of your trip?	0-19 miles	47.1%
	20-99 miles	37.3%
	100-499 miles	5.9%
	Over 500 miles	6.5%
	Prefer not to answer	3.3%
How many days have you spent hiking in your lifetime?	Less than 7	1.3%
	Between 8 and 30	12.4%
	Between 31 and 364	49.0%
	More than 365	34.0%
	Prefer not to answer	3.3%
How many different trails have you hiked or hiked on?	Less than 5	9.2%
	Between 6 and 14	17.7%
	Between 15 and 29	23.5%
	More than 30	47.1%
	Prefer not to answer	2.6%
Of the previous trails you have hiked on, were any of them the Appalachian Trail (AT), Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), or Continental Divide Trail (CDT)?	Yes	
	No	59.5%
	Prefer not to answer	35.9%
If you have previously hiked on one of the AT, PCT, or CDT was it for 500 or more continuous miles?	Yes	4.6%
	No	30.7%
	Prefer not to answer	47.7%
	Prefer not to answer	21.6%

General Types of Hikers

One of the foci of this study was the segmentation within the social world surrounding the PCT. I begin by describing four types of hikers that are recognized inside and outside of the context of the PCT: day hiker, multi-day, section hiker and thru-hiker. While useful, this form of segmentation tends to ignore the motivations and general orientations of PCT hikers. For example, whether or not someone was a day hiker or section hiker was relevant to their standing in the social world, but what proved to be more relevant to the participant's standing in the social world was whether or not they were a purist or social hiker. Being a purist or a social hiker was more indicative of the role that a participant would take up in the social world of long-distance hiking because these types of hikers have different ideas regarding *why* they are hiking. These two types of hikers (purist and social) are discussed in a subsequent section.

Day Hikers. Day hikers are, as the name implies, individuals who hike without the intention of spending the night on the trail. The number of day hikers along the PCT appeared to be related to the trail's proximity to urban areas and national parks. For example, many more day hikers were encountered in San Diego County and Yosemite National Park than there were in the area between the town of Mojave and Walker Pass, which is a highly secluded stretch of trail. Day hikers tend to carry a backpack containing basic necessities such as a small amount of food, water, waterproof jacket and anything else they think they might need while on their day hike.

Multi-day Hikers. The multi-day hiker is a participant who intends to spend at least one night on the trail whether that be in a shelter along the trail (common along the

AT are shelters typically consisting of a platform, three walls and a roof, which are few and far between along the PCT) or one that is carried by the hiker themselves. Unlike the typical day hiker, the multi-day hiker often requires more planning and experience (depending of course on the specific trip) to complete their backpacking trip.

Section Hikers. The term “section hiker” is used to refer to someone who has aspirations of completing a trail but does not do so in a single trip, but rather in sections. The difference between a section hiker and a multi-day hiker is the specific goal of completing the long-trail over the course of several hikes. Some section hikers complete their hikes in two sections while some may complete their hikes over the course of several years, even decades. The motivation for section hiking is diverse. Some decide to section hike for pragmatic reasons (it does after all take less commitment to set aside one or two weeks every year than it does five months) and some simply prefer to hike for periods of time less than it would take to complete a thru hike.

Thru-Hikers. Like section hikers, thru-hikers aspire to complete a long-trail from beginning to end. However, thru hikers set out on their journey with the intention of completing the trail from beginning to end continuously, that is, within the same hiking season, which is usually from April to September or October along the PCT (this differs depending on the setting of the specific trail). Thru-hikers are required to devote four to five months to completing the trail in most cases, although some are able to complete the trail in less than four months while some require more than five.

The Social World Surrounding the PCT

The community along the PCT was found to be a distinct social world unto itself. It can prove difficult to distinguish social worlds from a larger social systems of interaction as most social worlds tend to dissolve into smaller subworlds (Scott & Godbey, 1992; Strauss, 1978) Indeed, there is uncertainty as to where the boundaries of a specific social world begins and ends. The larger social system of long distance hiking would seem to constitute its own social world with the various subworlds being situated around geographic areas. Even further, the long-distance hiking community satisfies several of the indicators of a social world as laid out by Strauss (1978). While the PCT has intersecting points with other social worlds, such as the AT and CDT (Continental Divide Trail), several themes were identified that show the PCT remains a social world unto itself. These will be discussed in detail below.

Identification with the Other PCT Long-Distance Hikers. By nature, to self-identify with something necessitates excluding other potential self-identifiers. For example, if I make the statement, “I am left handed” I am simultaneously stating that I am *not* right handed. It was found that long-distance PCT hikers identified themselves as being PCT hikers to the exclusion of other forms of hiking (day hiking for example) and other trails (the AT or CDT for example). Hot Pants was one participant that provides an interesting story in regards to identification with the trail.

Hot Pants was an aspiring thru-hiker with whom I hiked consecutively for two full days after having crossed paths several times before. He was a twenty-year-old college student from Virginia that was using his summer and fall to hike the PCT and

had hiked the AT the summer before. While hiking together, Hot Pants and I discovered that we both had a love for soccer and had both been bending our hiking schedules to get into towns to support the United States in the World Cup. Before the U.S.A. match against Portugal both of us decided we would hike significantly longer than normal in order to reach the a venue to watch the game together, which happened to be Vermilion Valley Resort (VVR). VVR is at mile 878.8 on the PCT, which means when northbound PCT hikers have reached this point they had hiked the challenging 700 miles through desert terrain (because of this, to see non long-distance hikers is uncommon) and are in the heart of the High Sierra. Furthermore, VVR is along the John Muir Trail (JMT), which shares roughly 190 miles of trail with the PCT, and is one of the few places where JMT hikers can re-supply while on their 211-mile thru-hike. As a result, Hot Pants and I had been crossing paths with quite a few JMT hikers the days prior to our VVR arrival.

After spending one night at VVR and watching the World Cup match the next afternoon, Hot Pants and I decided we would night-hike together to get back to the actual PCT in lieu of paying for another night to stay at VVR and also to blow off steam caused by the frustrating result of the U.S.A. World Cup match. During our hike we were discussing a myriad of things when Hot Pants began to talk about the people he had met along the trail, which were all either fellow long-distance hiker or trail angles. This of course interested me and I asked him what he thought about the JMT hikers, “Uh... they are okay I guess. You can spot them from a mile away with those huge packs, that’s for sure!” He paused for a moment to collect his thoughts and continued, “Besides when they think they are one of us. I mean, we have hiked almost 1,000 miles and 700 of it

was in the desert!” Other long-distance PCT hikers expressed Hot Pants’ sentiment as well. By identifying JMT hikers as “not one of us”, PCT hikers formed and maintained boundaries between the long-distance hiking community and outsiders.

Identification with the PCT. Simultaneously, long-distance hikers along the PCT tend to identify with the PCT itself. This is an important criterion that needs to be met for the long-distance hiking community of the PCT to be considered a distinct social world. If hikers do not identify specifically with the PCT then the PCT would constitute a subworld of the long-distance hiking community social world. It was found that hikers identified themselves as PCT hikers in two different ways. The first and most common way of identifying with the PCT, as opposed to other long-distance trails, is an identification *based on current activity* (i.e., hiking the PCT). The second way PCT hikers identify with the PCT is *regardless of current activity*. The second type of identification is less common and is an indication that the participant is more committed to the social world than the first type of identification with the PCT (based on current activity).

Hot Pants provides an excellent example of the first type of identification with the PCT discussed above. Hot Pants was a highly experienced hiker. During the previous hiking season Hot Pants completed a thru-hike of the AT in which he had fully involved himself in the social community of the AT and at the time would have identified himself as an AT thru-hiker. This changed however once he began to hike the PCT. After sharing experience with fellow long-distance hikers along the PCT, Hot Pants had developed an affinity for what constitutes the trail, i.e., the physical trail as well as the

other long-distance hikers he was hiking with. This sentiment was expressed by the majority of long-distance hikers along the PCT.

The second, and less common, type of identification with the PCT that was found involved the participant identifying with the PCT *regardless of current activity*. A key informant for this study, Lighter-than-air (discussed in further detail in the section “Trail Angels and Veterans”) identified himself as a PCT hiker whether or not he was actually hiking the trail; in fact, when I first encountered Lighter-than-air he handed me a business card which read “Long-Distance Hiker” for occupation. One evening my hiking partner (Sam) and I were eating dinner with Lighter-than-air and I began to ask him questions about his hiking career which consisted of some 14,000 miles of hiking on various trails (10,000 on the PCT). He mentioned that he had hiked on various trails including the AT and several in the Northwest of the United States. After learning of all the miles that Lighter-than-air had logged hiking various trails I began to think out loud, “Man, that must have been incredible! I’ve always wanted to hike on the AT and even more so in the Rockies through Wyoming and Idaho.” The response I got was unexpected, “I don’t know why you would want to hike anything but the PCT, I would rather hike the PCT year in and year out.” Despite Lighter-than-air’s substantial amount of hiking both on and off the PCT he was first and foremost a *PCT* long-distance hiker.

The ADZPCTKO. ADZPCTKO is an acronym for the “Annual Day Zero PCT Kick Off” (“Kick Off” for short) and is the main point of entry to the PCT social world as well as a main source of socialization for the majority of long-distance hikers. Kick Off has been organized by a group of volunteers and held every year since 1999 near the

end of April twenty miles north of the southern terminus of the PCT at Lake Morena County Park. The ADZPCTKO provides a meeting place for trail angels, veteran hikers and neophyte PCT long-distance hikers before the aspiring hikers head north on the PCT.

The Kick Off gathering was originally started by a volunteer group comprised of past thru-hikers and people who were enthusiastic about the PCT. The Kick Off has continued to grow; the number of individuals expected to attending the 2015 gathering is upwards of 1,000. This is especially impressive considering the Kick Off has been intentionally advertised to only the long-distance hiking community. Furthermore, the organizers reserve the entire campground at Lake Morena County Park so they can control who attends the Kick Off; specifically, Kick Off is intended to be limited to those who are “attempting to thru-hike that year”, “planning to thru-hike in the next few years... [to] join the trail community” or have “completed a substantial portion of a thru-hike” and would like to “reconnect with others you hiked with, and share your pictures, your knowledge, your joys, and your harrowing experience with a new generation of hikers. If you’re not in one of these categories, ADZPCTKO is probably not for you. Although we’d love to throw it open to anyone and everyone with a passing interest in the PCT, we no longer have the space to do that. Come on back when you’re ready for your thru hike!” (ADZPCTKO.org).

Guidance into the Social World. In addition to the Kick Off gathering, socialization to the social world occurs through interaction with trail angels and veteran hikers. Strauss (1978) refers to this as a “coaching process” (p. 123). Trail angels and

veteran hikers serve different roles within the community along the PCT, yet both are *gatekeepers* and are integral to its social fabric. These individuals are well known within the hiking community and generally looked up to by other hikers. This guiding (or, coaching) process took place during interactions with two key informants in this study, a trail angel in the San Diego area and Lighter-than-air who is a trail angel as well as veteran hiker (see “Trail Angel” in definition of terms).

Before my friend (Sam) and I set out to hike the PCT and gather data for this study, there was a fair amount of planning that went into the trip. This planning began with the purchase of the most common trail guide for the PCT, *Yogi’s Pacific Crest Trail Handbook* by Jackie McDonnell (2014). Yogi is a veteran hiker that has several long-distance trails, including the several thru-hikes of the PCT, and has provided an excellent resource to the hiking community in the form of a trail guide for the PCT. In the guide she covers a myriad of topics from re-supply points, best/worst trail towns to motivations for long-distance hiking from her perspective as well as others’. One thing that Yogi offers is a list of the trail angels who have allowed Yogi to put their information in the guidebook. The trail angels in and around the San Diego provide transportation from the San Diego airport to the Southern terminus of the PCT and to any gear shops along the way for last minute supplies. It is an invaluable service to the community to say that least and it is also how Sam and I, along with most other hikers starting at the Mexican border, got from San Diego to the Southern terminus of the trail.

I contacted a trail angel in the San Diego area as soon as I knew that I would be hiking the PCT from the Mexican border to work on this project. The trail angel I

contacted was quick to respond to my email with a list of things that he needed from me including my flight information, any items I would need to purchase while in town and whether or not I would be requiring a trip to the post office. It felt as though I had contacted a professional guide service.

Sam and I landed in San Diego mid-day, retrieved our luggage from baggage claim and proceeded to go outside to passenger pickup just as we had been instructed to by the trail angel. I thought it odd that he did not give us a specific place to meet him for pickup or even information regarding the type of vehicle he drove, but he was eager to inform me when I first contacted him that he had been hosting hikers for close to fifteen years so I did not question whether or not he knew what he was doing. So Sam and I made our way outside from baggage claim and stood waiting for a few minutes not knowing what to expect, and suddenly a white minivan pulls up, rolls down the passenger window, and says, “Lum and Keith right!?” to which we replied, “...um, yes!” The abruptness of the whole situation took us off-guard. We got in the car exchanged the normal pleasantries, discussed what errands we needed to run before going to the trail the next day, and it was no long before that Sam and I were being “guided” into this new social world from the perspective of the most experienced trail angel at the southern terminus of the trail.

As Sam and I were riding in the car we were eager to ask him about all of his years of experience in the PCT community. It did not take him long to mention the AT and how it is a different trail than the PCT, he was specifically adamant to mention his attitude towards the young twenty something guys from the AT, “I hope those hooligans

don't bring their trail out here. You know, we have worked hard to have good relationships with people around the trail and that could all be gone." Shortly thereafter he also mentioned that there were a lot of "rookie hikers this year and that it was up to the 'vets' to teach them their trail manners." There is a certain way of doing things within the PCT community and those that have vested interests in the trail and have devoted much of their lives to it are especially keen to teach newcomers to the social world what is and what is not acceptable behavior.

Later that evening at the trail angel's house we met the Canadians. The Canadians were a newly married couple that had left their desk jobs in Toronto and spent the better part of the preceding year travelling all over the world. The Canadians joined Sam and I after getting settled into the RV trailer next to the house that had been purchased by the trail angel for additional space to host hikers. We spent an hour or so in the living room talking about all things related to the trail, including towns, gear, how many miles per day we planned on doing, and water needed. Feeling compelled to offer the Canadians advice just as he had done for Sam and I, our trail angel interjected to give advice, "First off, 'Sierra' [in reference to the mountain range] is plural, if you throw an S on the end of it thru-hikers will think you are backwards. Second, you guys are hikers, not backpackers; hikers wear packs while they hike." This dialogue continued the next morning. We all woke up 4:30 am to head to the trail head and over the course of the hour it took to drive to the trailhead the trail angel continued teaching us various things about the trail that he had learned from other hikers and trail angels during his time in

the PCT community. Once we got to the trail he wished us all luck and told us that he didn't want to hear from us again until next year.

The next gatekeeper that we encountered along the trail was Lighter-than-air. Lighter-than-air is an especially interesting person as he is both a veteran hiker and a trail angel. We met Light-than-air in quite the peculiar way. After Sam and I had been hiking for a few days I developed a small tear (as I would later find out) in a tendon in of my left foot from overuse. This caused serious discomfort while walking and forced us to find a place to rest for a few days. The next town (we soon learned that the meaning of "town" varies depending who is using the word) that we would be able to stop in was Warner Springs. After a series of events we found ourselves sitting in front of the community center (mobile home with a porch) that we had heard about through the grapevine on the trail. Much to our dismay it was closed and no one was in sight. Without a knowledge of the area, access to something with said knowledge or cell phone service we felt helpless indeed.

After some time sitting in front of the building talking about what we might do to get some medical attention and/or rest for a few days an old beat up Toyota Tercel pulled into the parking lot. Out stepped a man who quickly walked to the door of the community center while looking at the ground and mumbling under his breath. He soon learned, as we had, that it was locked and turned around to make his way back to the car which had been left running. After walking by us for the second time he said, "Mind if I take a seat?" we of course didn't mind. Our packs, which were very small and lightweight, had caught his eye. He leaned over and while picking Sam's pack up said,

“You got food in here? How many days?” Sam said we had a few days’ worth, “You don’t need more than that with packs this light.” This sparked a conversation about our equipment that we were carrying for the hike among other things. We learned that Lighter-than-air had been hiking the PCT for years and had logged over 10,000 miles on the trail. He reminisced about his first time hiking the trail and told us about the first trail angels he had ever met:

I had been hiking for a couple weeks from the boarder when I came to a point where the trail passed through a campground. There was an older couple that started talking with me and was asking all about the trail and I told them about the hardships of the desert section and how tired I was at the moment. Then as they got up to get in their car and go home they turned around and looked at me, “Well are you comin’ or what?” I didn’t really know what they were talking about but I knew they were going home and they likely had a shower there so I followed them. When we got to their house the couple got out of the car and showed me around, “over there is where hikers stay, around that corner is the washing machine, dinner is at 6:00 sharp and here is a clean set of clothes you can put on after you shower.”

Lighter-than-air stayed the night with these trail angels and they took him back to the trail the following morning after making him breakfast, never asking for anything in return. After we had listened to more stories that he had from his years on the trail he got up and started to head to his car. We were still sitting in the lawn chairs in front of the building taken aback by him getting up and leaving in the middle of a conversation, but

not wanting to be rude neither of us said anything. He bent over to pop the trunk and looked towards us, “Well you guys comin’ or what?” we did not know where we were going but we knew we had no place to stay for the night and that I could not hike on my injured foot.

After about ten minutes in the car we arrived at his house. We all got out and began giving us a speech that sounded as though it had been delivered several dozen times before:

Leave your packs out here on the porch; you will need room to eat in the living room. The washing machine is out back in the shed; I’ll put your clothes on to wash as soon as you have both had your showers. Here is your set of clean clothes to wear after you shower and while your clothes are being washed.

Dinner will be served at seven. Make yourselves at home.

Lighter-than-air showed us the same hospitality and trail magic that the trail angels he met on his first PCT hike had shown him. We ended up staying there a few days to let my foot heal, which led to several interesting conversations with Lighter-than-air. He loved sitting around the table and telling us stories from his days hiking and also from the hikers that he has had in his home over the years. When I asked him about the community as a whole he lamented that things are changing, “this is the entitlement generation you know. It is not so much about the hike as it is about the food and people feeding each other.” This comment was a bit out of left-field but Lighter-than-air was trying to communicate to us that the PCT was a “family” and one that has always supported itself by people going out of their way

to help one another. This sentiment expressed by Lighter-than-air is better understood after knowing a bit of his personal history. He had spent the majority of his adult life bouncing around from job to job while dealing with a disability. He would tell us about places he used to work and several times he would say, “I just couldn’t take it anymore, I had to get out of there” and he never once mentioned his family or loved ones. He then moved into the food service industry (which gives context to his cooking which is renown all over the PCT) where he again said that he just could not continue to work with his disability.

In the early 2000s he was told about a trail that went from Mexico all the way to Canada. That lead him to hike the entire trail one year and he has in some capacity hiked every year since and also volunteered. In short, the trail has become his life and a source of identity. This is why he was so negative about the changing culture along the trail. Lighter-than-air informed us that the all-for-one and one-for-all mentality of the PCT was diminishing and he brought to our attention recent events of hikers taking advantage of trail angels’ hospitality to prove his point. He used this as an opportunity to tell Sam and I that this was not acceptable behavior for the PCT.

Not every member of the social world agrees with the opinions of the trail angels and veterans hikers on every issue, but by in large the sentiments expressed trail angels and veteran hikers are at minimum respected by the community as whole and often time agreed to. This speaks to the amorphous nature of social world in general and shows that as segmentation arises within the social world as do various frames of reference

regarding the central activity or interest. As subworlds developed within the social world of the PCT the stakeholders within each group constructed a different frame of reference to interpret what was and what was not authentic hiking. It was found that there is a right and there is a wrong way to hike the PCT and the right and wrong varied across the social world.

Trail Names. A trail name, as the name would imply, refers to the title that a hiker goes by when hiking. Typically, the trail name is given to a hiker by another member of the social world and is often is reference to something memorable that happened to the hiker being named or a unique characteristic of the hiker. My trail name was “Survey”, which I received for being generally curious about trail happenings and also for the constant soliciting of hikers to complete the EUH survey for this study. My hiking partner, Sam, was given the trail name, “Guinness”. Sam received Guinness in quite the unusual way. Often while Sam and I hiked we would carry on conversation as entertainment, these conversations range from serious soul searching conversations to what food we were looking forward getting once we got into town and hypothetical “Would you rather” questions. One afternoon we were hiking in the desert section during an unusually hot day (temperature well over 100 degrees Fahrenheit) and had been talking to pass the time. Somehow we began discussing world records and how it would be incredible to be in the Guinness Book of World Records. Sam claimed that he thought he had the world’s widest tongue, to which I objected.

Later that afternoon, after several miles of sun exposure, we decided that we should stop at the next spot with shade so that we could drink some water, eat and get off

of our feet. The next available piece of shade was provided by some shrub brush about waist high (the sun was not directly overhead so we were able to crouch down and lean up against it to avoid direct sunlight). We must have not been the only hikers who had taken refuge next to this bush because between where we were sitting laid a six-inch paper ruler that someone ahead of us had dropped. Given our previous conversation regarding the width of Sam's tongue, I felt as though our happening upon a tape measure was quite the coincidence. Given our proximity to town (about 10 miles out) we were able to look up the record for the world's widest tongue using the Internet on our phones. We learned that Sam indeed had a wide tongue but much to his chagrin it was not the world's widest and it nevertheless gave rise to his trail name, Guinness (in reference to the *Guinness Book of World Records*).

Acquiring a trail name is a right-of-passage for long-distance hikers along the PCT. The meaning and importance of acquiring a trail name varies from hiker to hiker, but it does communicate to the long-distance hiking social world that you are a fellow long-distance hiker and have left your previous life behind at least for the time being. I had an interesting encounter with a hiker at the top of Muir Pass in the Sierra that shed light on what trail names mean to hikers.

The night before climbing up and over Muir Pass I camped a mile or two south before the trail began climbing towards the pass. As usual, I woke up that morning, had my coffee from the warmth of my sleeping bag, read, and watched the sunrise from inside my tent while waiting for the sun to peak over the surrounding peaks and warm me up. An hour or so after waking I was on my feet hiking towards Muir Pass and by

mid-morning had hiked the few miles and several thousand feet up to the summit. As most hikers do, I took a break at the top of the pass to rest and eat to prepare for the fifteen miles that still needed to get hiked that afternoon. As soon as I was getting ready to hike again two hikers made it to the top of the pass themselves. We spoke for a minute or two about normal trail topics (e.g., food, weather, soreness) and as I was leaving I asked their names. The man standing on the left responded enthusiastically, “Radical Free! What’s yours?” “Survey.” Looking to the hiker on the right I asked, “What about you? What is your name?” “Tim.” I was a bit puzzled. It was rare to meet a hiker as far north as the Sierra without a trail name. “You don’t have a trail name? Why not?” Tim’s response was telling, “I don’t have a trail name because I want to be me.” Tim was implying that many long-distance hikers become different versions of their “real life” selves upon entering the long-distance hiking community.

Segmentation within the Social World

Scott and Godbey (1992) noted that a basic characteristic of a social world is its tendency to be differentiated into small groups referred to as subworlds. Strauss (1978) stated that analysis of social worlds becomes difficult because, “most seem to dissolve, when scrutinized, into categories of subworlds” (p. 123). This was found to be the case along the PCT as well. Within the PCT social world, various segmentations emerged out of the data. The segmentation found to exist within the community along the PCT was between the purist and the social hiker. It is important to note there are several different types of hikers found along the PCT (e.g., day, multi-day, section, thru hikers). This typology differentiates among hikers solely on the basis of the amount of time they

spend on the trail and whether or not they aspire to complete the trail in its entirety. The purist and the social hiker are categories that differentiate hikers by considering ultimately their (E)nd¹ in hiking the trail.

The Purist. Two types of purist hikers were found, romantic and utilitarian, both of which are primarily motivated by the trail itself, as opposed to spending time in town or with other hikers. The romantic purist was found to be specifically motivated by and interested in the enduring benefits (e.g., contemplative, experiential and existential) associated with long-distance hiking, which for them would not likely be gained in another activity. In contrast to the romantic purist, the utilitarian purist was found to be primarily concerned with the completion of the task at hand (i.e., hiking every inch of the official trail from beginning to end). Attitudes towards towns shed light on the tendencies of the romantic and utilitarian purist. The romantic purist views towns as an obstacle to get around in order to return to the trail, whereas the utilitarian purist views the services found in towns as tools to help complete their task.

Cool Hand Luke is the quintessential romantic purist. I ran into Luke one afternoon after a notoriously hot, dry and generally difficult climb out of Tehachapi Pass in the Mojave Desert. It had taken several hours for my hiking companions and I to reach the top of the climb and where the brutality of the Mojave Desert could be seen for miles in any direction. At the top of the climb there was a lone shrub brush along the

¹This is an idea borrowed from Aristotle. In the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle makes the claim that every action is aimed at some end. The idea is every activity one engages in is done so for a purpose (end). For example, the romantic purist hikes (activity) for existential fulfillment (end).

trail greeting me, “Hey there! C’mon in if you’d like!” I walked over to the bush, bent over, and saw an opening and crawled inside. This is where I met Cool Hand Luke (Luke) with his shirt off, sleeping pad underneath him, self-proclaimed “worlds best GORP” (acronym for granola, oats, raisons and peanuts) in his lap and book in hand. Luke is retired teacher (from the middle school to university level) of 40 years and had been section hiking the PCT for five years and this was his last 100 miles of the entire trail. Most recently, Luke taught mid-level literature at a university in the Northwest. Given his academic past, I was not surprised by his enthusiasm towards my project.

Perhaps the most telling piece of information about the romantic purist was the idea that they were not “putting up with the trail” for some other reason, but rather putting up with other things so they could be on the trail. During our encounter with Luke this was exemplified when I asked him if he was a hiker and if so, what did that entail? He was quick to respond, “someone who walks self-sufficiently, on trails, carrying everything they need, but there are hikers who *put up with* [emphasis added] the trail for some other reason.” He described what it meant to take pleasure in the moment, “I was dying coming up that hill, but I loved it.” For Luke, hiking was a “spiritual experience”; he quoted a piece of literature that was familiar to him in attempts to answer the question regarding “being a hiker” in a nutshell, “I smelled civilization and thought I’d scattle.” Luke did not “put up with the trail” to gain its benefits, but rather “put up with other things [towns and ‘party hikers’] besides the trail.” For example, Luke mailed food to the trail from his home to avoid grocery shopping, so he would be able to spend the least amount of time in town as possible. Even further, another hiker,

Softwalker, would take zeros on the trail instead of in a town as most hikers do (a “zero” refers to a day when a hiker takes the day off from hiking, thus walking zero miles).

As previously noted, the utilitarian purist is more task-oriented than the romantic purist. Like the romantic purist, there is a right and wrong way to hike the PCT for the utilitarian purist but there are significant differences between the two types of hikers. As Luke demonstrated, the romantic purist is very concerned with the existential echoes made by the physical act of hiking. One of Luke’s favorite things about the desert was to camp alone on a ridgeline with nothing for miles around him because this helps him “get centered” and humbled by how small we (humanity) are. These sentiments would likely never come out the mouth of the utilitarian purist, or at least not as well thought out as the romantic.

Several years ago, I was reading a book on different philosophical systems and worldviews and in the section devoted to utilitarianism and pragmatism and the author had an interesting anecdote about a European explorer and his first time to set foot in the Americas. After a rigorous journey to the West, the exploration team came across the Grand Canyon and the only thing that came to the explorers mind was, “How on earth am I going to get around this!?” He overlooked the grand-ness of the canyon and only saw it as an obstacle. Now I do not mean to say that the utilitarian purist is hiking *only* to reach the end of the trail, but the primary motivator is completing the task they have set before themselves. A good example of the utilitarian purist is a hiker I met by the name of Backroads.

Backroads was an older male who had recently retired from his career as a corrections officer in a prison. Backroads was identified by several other hikers as being a purist (as was Luke among others). Backroads' greatest insight into his attitudes about the "right" way to hike was observed outside of the interview. As is often the case in the Southern California section of the PCT, I found myself with a few other hikers underneath a shade tree in the heat of the day trying to escape the rays of the sun. An interesting conversation started about what it *actually* means to complete a thru-hike. Two hikers, Steeltoe and Backroads, had differing opinions regarding the authenticity of a thru-hike. One hundred and fifty or so miles south of the shade tree we sat under, near the town of Idyllwild, was a section of the PCT that had been closed at the time of this study due to fire damage from a previous year. The re-route that was offered by the Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA) was a lengthy road walk (term used to describe a section of trail that is on the pavement as opposed to dirt trail) around the closed section. Many hikers opted to hitchhike the section of the road walk while others felt compelled to hike. Backroads was one of the hikers that felt that he must do the road walk in order to have authentically completed a thru-hike. Unlike Backroads, Steeltoe hitchhiked the section of road walk and felt no guilt for doing so, "I'm not walking roads, that's not the PCT." After making this comment, Backroads bluntly said, "Well you are not thru hiking then." The implication was of course that because Steeltoe had decided to not do the road walk he was not in fact hiking the PCT in its entirety and thus not thru-hiking. This discussion between Steeltoe and Backroads is one example of several alluding to

the same thing, namely that for the utilitarian purist to be an authentic thru-hiker you must complete every inch of the trail; anything less and you are a section hiker.

The Social Hiker. Another type of hiker that was identified in this study was the social hiker, specifically the gregarious hiker and the party hiker. The social hiker is one who is motivated to hike primarily for the relationships within the hiking community. Much like the purist, the way in which the affinity for social interaction is manifested greatly depends on the hiker and was found to be diverse throughout the hiking community. The gregarious hiker, as the name implies, is fond of company and derives satisfaction from developing relationships with other hikers while hiking and spending time together in town. The party hiker is similar to the gregarious hiker in that they both are fond of company and time spent in town with fellow members of their subworld, but where the gregarious and party hiker differ is the way in which that (fondness of company) manifests. The party hiker orients time spent with fellow hikers around the consumption of drugs and alcohol, while the gregarious hiker is more inclined to spend time with one another in different contexts.

Gregarious hikers value forming relationships and meeting new people more than anything else associated with the trail. This idea was personified by Goldilocks (or simply Goldi), a current college student that we met while hiking along the trail. She had previously thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail (the AT is another long trail that travels from northern Georgia to Maine traversing the Appalachian Mountains near the east coast of the United States) when she was a teenager. Knowing that she had previously hiked the AT I expected a romantic purist's mindset towards the PCT; what I learned

however was that she possessed little, if any, motivations that someone like Luke did. Despite previously hiking the AT, Goldi noted that the first couple of weeks were rough for her because she was hiking alone and was dealing with injury. Goldi did not literally mean that she was hiking alone for there were numerous hikers around her daily; what she meant was she had not found a smaller group to hike consistently with on a day to day basis.

Hiking *with* a group involves much more relational investment than merely hiking in the *vicinity* of others. During a conversation another hiker, Leonidas, I asked him about the atmosphere of his group, which was comprised of roughly five other hikers (some hikers come and go from the group, but these five were the consistent and core members). Specifically, I asked him about the atmosphere within the group, “Everybody does whatever is necessary and there is always tension, like a family.” Throughout our interview Leonidas would repeatedly return to the analogy of family to describe the group and that it was difficult at times. Putting myself in an individualistic hiker’s shoes (or boots) I was curious as to what made hiking in a group worth the seemingly numerous troubles that followed. When I asked him very pointedly, “Well, what makes hiking with the group worth it then!?” he responded off-the-cuff, “Socializing with people and building teamwork.” And after a moment’s pause he spoke with a tone that was so matter-of-fact, “and it is like a family, it really is.” His difficulty providing an account for the worth of hiking with a small group is understandable, for him it was like trying to justify the importance of family.

Leonidas' trouble putting into words his affinity for the small group hiking style was perhaps more pointedly communicated by Goldi. With the knowledge of her affinity for relationships on the trail, I asked her, "If someone were to ask you why you hiked, what would you tell them?" The response was insightful. Goldi giggled at the question and starred off into space, stating that from the outside looking in it seemed crazy. After a moment she replied, "The challenge [of the trail]; it is sucky and rewarding. My happy time is going into town. That's where you meet people and socialize." She paused yet again, shifted her weight against her pack, and provided more depth to her answer by contrasting what she considered to be two prominent motivations among the hikers, "Some people come out with different expectations, some want solitude, I want a group of friends."

Goldi provides a wonderful example of the gregarious social hiker; she is primarily motivated by the potential for meeting people along the trail. The (E)nd for the social hiker is the relationships with fellow hikers. However, just as was the case when considering the purist hiker, the data proved the label "social hiker" to be one that is too vague. During the interview with Luke and Kramers, they both identified hikers who from their perspective were only on the PCT to "party". This was confirmed by another individual, Lighter-than-air, who was a key informant for the study (who is discussed in more detail in the section "Trail Angels and Veterans"). One evening while speaking with Lighter-than-air in his kitchen he bemoaned over the younger hikers along the trail and the fact that, "they are not out here hiking, they are out here on a pub-crawl, hopping from bar to bar up the trail" (though he was adamant to say that he did not feel this way

about *all* of the younger hikers). Lighter-than-air repeatedly referred to this type of hiker as the “entitlement generation” which is synonymous with Luke’s “partiers”, Leonidas’ “hiker trash” and Rawrshack’s (another participant I hiked with for several days) “dirty hippies”. The labels provided by hikers are summed up by Leonidas when he said they are those who “come out and do drugs and party all of the time.”

Shortly after making this statement Leonidas and I were walking back to a motel (we had arrived to town that morning and were spending the night in town to rest) and on the way we passed a group of younger hikers that were on the street corner playing music. They were covered from head to toe in dirt, drinking alcohol and dressed in the hiker “uniform” that makes hikers “as distinctive as people who ride Harleys” to borrow language from Luke. Essentially this “uniform” was trail worn and beaten clothing that did not stand out on the trail but was made evident when laid against the backdrop of civilization (many hikers only carry the clothes that they hike in during the day to save weight in their packs). Leonidas and I were walking past this group of hikers just after discussing what he referred to as “hiker trash” (this term is discussed in the definition of terms section) and Luke referred to as “partiers” and as we passed he pointed, began to laugh and said, “These dudes on the corner, dirty f***ing hippies!” It is important to note that Leonidas had nothing against this group, he was merely pointing out segmentation within the PCT social world.

In sum, hikers who are primarily motivated by and interested in relationships with people along the trail are social hikers. The appetite for social interaction however was satisfied differently by the gregarious and party hiker. Some sought after

relationships via parties in various places along the trail and in trail towns whereas other social hikers actually avoided this behavior and sought their socialization in different ways.

Trail Angels and Veteran Hikers. Trail angels and veteran hikers have been discussed in detail above so it will not be exhausted here as well. However, it is important to note in addition to being one of the elements that make long-distance hiking along the PCT a social world unto itself, trail angels and veteran hikers are also a segment within the social world.

It was previously noted that trail angels and veteran hikers serve different roles within the community but were both equally important to the social fabric of the social world by way of *gatekeeping*. Due to their position(s) within the social world, trail angels and veteran hikers are looked up to by other members of the social world, but in different ways. Long-distance hikers along the PCT tend to look up to trail angels because of their altruism and level of experience within the social world even though not all trail angels are former hikers themselves. Veteran hikers however, are typically looked up to for both their understanding of the social atmosphere surrounding the trail and more pragmatically, their familiarity of the trail itself.

The below typology (Table 2) was developed from themes that emerged during the data analysis process. It is important to note the characteristics and descriptions of hikers and trail angels found in Table 2 refers to behavioral *tendencies* expressed by hikers encountered along the PCT. There are hikers who land in a rather gray area between various categories of the typology.

Table 2. Characteristics of the PCT Social World

General Hikers			Long Distance Hikers					Career Volunteer
Member Characteristics	<i>Day Hiker</i>	<i>Multi-Day Hiker</i>	<i>Social Party Hiker</i>	<i>Social Gregarious Hiker</i>	<i>Utilitarian Purist</i>	<i>Romantic Purist</i>	<i>Veteran Hiker</i>	<i>Trail Angel</i>
Geographic Region	Hikes Within	Hikes within or out of	PCT	PCT	PCT	PCT	PCT	PCT
Focus of Leisure Experience	Varies	Varies	Socialbility	Socialbility	Completion of task	Intimate physical and existential experience with trail	Reminiscence/ place attachment	Helping/ Socialbility/ Service volunteer
Intensity of Participation	Varies	Varies	Important	Important	Important	Important	Central	Central
Level of Life Orientated towards Leisure	Low	Moderate	High	High	High	High	Highest	Highest
Social Setting	Friends and family	Friends and family	Tend to hike with other party hikers	Tend to hike with other gregarious hikers	Diverse	Tend to hike with other Romantic Purists	Typically with friends they have made on trail, other veterans	Long-distance hikers whom they take in
Constructed Meaning of Trail	Valuable resource to community. Convenient.	Attractive setting to engage and escape to	Place to meet others and have a good time	Place to meet others and develop relationships	Current central life interest that is a challenge to be completed	Central life interest that is existentially beneficial	Central life interest, life is lived to make room for hiking	A means to practice altruism. be able to help people. Family-type attachment

The typology above shows the differences between hikers found along the PCT, but what it fails to communicate is the overall collectiveness of the PCT long-distance hiking community. “Hike Your Own Hike” (HYOH) is a native phrase and is one of, if not the, most commonly used phrases within the social world. HYOH refers to a mentality shared within the community in regards to each individual hiker’s hike and that it is just that, the hiker’s hike. Even though the authenticity of the hike is contested within the social world between the various types of hikers and some types of hikers feel the others are “doing’ it wrong”, HYOH is the proverbial banner that is flown by the *vast* majority of long-distance hikers along the PCT and is the root of the familial atmosphere with the social world.

The attitude of each hiker towards the community as a whole is indicative of the collective mentality among PCT hikers. While some hikers that were encountered and interviewed had their reservations about the trail community and were quick to point out characteristics and actions of different types of hikers they did not approve of, not one said that their overall experience hiking the PCT was negatively impacted by the community. This was even the case for once romantic purist, turned social hiker, Mustache. Mustache was approaching sixty years of age and decided to hike the PCT to get away from his job, which he had lost patience with over the years. Mustache mentioned that at first he just wanted “to be by myself in the woods” and because of this was going to hike the trail going south (most hikers hike the trail going north). He eventually decided to hike north with the majority of the community and had “enjoyed the social aspect” much to his surprise.

Conclusion

This study found that the PCT constitutes a social world unto itself while still having intersections with other social worlds, namely other long-distance hiking trails (the Appalachian Trail and the Continental Divide trail for example). It was found that the PCT differs from other social worlds in that its members identify with other PCT hikers, identify with the trail and gain entry into the social through events such as Kick Off and also interaction with trail angels and veteran hikers.

Consistent with the social world framework, this study also found that there were sources of differentiation within the social world that lead to the development of smaller groups called subworlds. Along the PCT the subworlds are: social hikers, purist hikers, veteran hikers and trail angels. Social hikers and purist hikers were further segmented. Two types of hiker were found to constitute the social hiker: the gregarious hiker and the party hiker. Like the social hiker, the purist hiker could also be understood as two types of hiker: the romantic and the utilitarian purists. The main source of segmentation between different types of hiker was the focus of their leisure experience as well as their constructed meaning of the trail.

This study found that despite segmentation within the social world of long-distance hikers on the PCT, there was a strong collective and supportive mentality between hikers, which had a positive impact on their hiking experience. This mentality was epitomized by the phrase “Hike Your Own Hike” (HYOH). HYOH was used by hikers as a way of coming to an agreement even if they knew that they were out there for seemingly different reasons and the trail meant different things to them. When I asked Leonidas about the differences within the small group of hikers he had been hiking with he gave an off-the-cuff response in an unflattering (of the group) tone, but concluded the thought by saying, “but it’s all worth it, it’s like a family.” Every hiker I encountered was quick to point out the differences within the social world, but the vast majority saw the community as a positive experience in their hike. One participant quite succinctly summarized the collectiveness of the community when they said, “You know, we’re all headed to Canada.”

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This study provides insight into a previously unstudied social world. It was found that PCT long-distance hikers constitute a social world unto themselves and furthermore there is differentiation within the social world that lead to formation of subworlds. This research has contributed to the social world body of literature by furthering the understanding of both the development of a social world and the segmentation within it.

Prior to conducting this study, I put forth that hikers along the PCT constituted a social world unto itself due to research that had been conducted along the AT examining the AT hiker social world (MacLennan & Moore, 2011). A social world is an amorphous group of individuals that are loosely connected together by communication channels and are situated around a central interest, in this case long-distance hiking (Strauss, 1978; Unruh, 1979). My investigation of the PCT led me to the conclusion that long-distance PCT hikers indeed constitute a unique social world. Furthermore, hikers along the PCT were found to be diverse and broadly categorized into two groups: long-distance hikers and non-long-distance hikers (i.e., day hikers and multi-day hikers). Consistent with Unruh's (1979) characterization of social worlds, long-distance hiking along the PCT was found to constitute an internally recognizable group that has intersecting points with the larger social system of long-distance hiking, which includes other long trails such as the Appalachian and Continental Divide trails.

Contributions to Previous Research

Place Attachment. This finding informs and adds to previous research conducted on place attachment. In their study of AT users, Kyle, Graef, Manning, and Bacon (2004) measured a dimension of place attachment, social bonding, by measuring four items; two of which were (a) memories about the trail and (b) special connection to other hikers (in Manning, 2010). PCT long-distance hikers' shared memories of the trail and also the relationships they formed with fellow hikers was perhaps the major contributor to the internal recognition of the long-distance hiking social world along the PCT. The memories about the trail were formed during time spent with other long-distance PCT hikers, such as a brutally difficult day of hiking in the desert section. They also foster the special connection among hikers which sets them apart from day hikers, multi-day hikers and even long-distance hikers of other long trails. A frequently expressed attitude towards non PCT long-distance hikers was an "us" and "them" mentality.

Serious Leisure and Social Worlds. Previous research affirmed Strauss' (1984) claim that social worlds inevitably divide into smaller subworlds. MacLennan and Moore (2011) found divisions within the social world of the AT that were caused by contested activity authenticity. Specifically, various subworlds of hikers along the AT disagreed on how the trail was to be hiked which led to division (formation of subworlds). This was also found to be the case along the PCT. Within the social world of PCT long-distance hiking, two subworlds were identified: the social hiker and the purist; within the subworlds of social hiking two types of hiker were found: party and

gregarious hikers. Likewise, two types of purist were identified: utilitarian and romantic hikers. Social and purist hikers disagreed over what constituted an authentic hike of the PCT and the division between the social and purist hiker is therefore best understood differing attitudinal positions. It is important to note that the two social subworlds that were identified within the long-stance hiking social world along the PCT were not “serious” and “casual” subgroups that have been identified by previous researchers (Scott & Godbey, 1992). This is because both the purist and social hikers were found to display characteristics of a serious recreationist as outlined by Stebbins (2007), namely these hikers systematically pursued the same core activity and committed themselves to gaining skills, knowledge and experience relative to the activity. This notion supports claims made by researchers that a limitation of the serious leisure perspective is the apparent dichotomy between the serious and casual recreationists (Scott, 2012; Shen & Yarnal, 2010).

In addition to the social and purist hikers, trail angels and veteran hikers also constituted an important component within the PCT long-distance hiking social world. Trail angels who volunteered for reasons other than economic benefits, self-preservation, physical coercion, physiological needs or psychic or social compulsion, would be considered *service volunteers* by Stebbins (2007). Trail angels volunteer along the PCT for primarily altruistic reasons, but the motivations and benefits from volunteering tend to shift and change over time. It is therefore important that the “trail angeling” activity be examined over the course of a *career* (Stebbins, 2007). That is, trail angels and volunteers tend to carve out a career volunteering and throughout their career the “trail

angeling” activity may manifest in different ways and for different reasons than when they first began.

Veteran hikers, like trail angels, have oriented their lives towards hiking the PCT and maintaining the social norms of the social world. Stebbins (2007) refers to the shared attitudes, practices, values, beliefs, and goals as the *unique ethos* of the community of serious leisure participants. The *unique ethos* can be described in short as the social atmosphere of the social world. Veteran hikers are often loud voices in the community whether they are hiking the trail that year or not and play a pivotal role in the creation of the *unique ethos* found in the PCT long-distance hiking community.

Frequently, veteran hikers are quasi keynote speakers at events put on by volunteers (e.g., ADZPCTKO or Trail Days) and have also been given various virtual platforms through online hiking communities (e.g., WhiteBlaze.net, pct-l, BackpackingLight.com, Facebook.com). From these platforms, both trail angels and veteran hikers mold and shape the long-distance hiking social climate and guide the community in deeming what is *authentic* long-distance hiking. *Insiders* are members of the social world that create authenticity of participation (Unruh, 1979). A process that occurs in lockstep with creating authenticity is the creating and maintaining of boundaries for the social world; this process is called gatekeeping (Scott & Godbey, 1992; 1994).

Gatekeeping is an essential characteristic to a social world. Unruh (1979) noted that social worlds are held together in part by informal non-face-to-face communication that takes place via newsletters, phone conversations, internet message boards and so on. Gatekeepers often act as facilitators of this communication and also are responsible for

moderating it. In his study of contract bridge, Scott (1991) found that insiders in the social world of contract bridge players deemed who was and was not allowed to join specific bridge groups and also what was the correct (authentic) way to play social and serious bridge. Much in the same way, the long-distance hiking community has led to friction among hiker segments. In their study of long-distance hikers along the AT, MacLennan and Moore (2011) found that conflict between hikers emerged from differing social values regarding how the trail should be hiked. Specifically, conflict arose between *purists*, *blue blazers* (hikers who frequently took short-cut trail marked by blue blazes) and *yellow blazers* (hikers who hitch hike around sections of trail) whenever one type of hiker would press their perspective onto another.

Conflict. Similar to MacLennan and Moore's (2011) findings along the AT, conflict was observed between various subworlds of the long-distance hiking social world along the PCT. MacLennan and Moore (2011) concluded from their data that conflict between different types of hikers along the AT was caused by one type of hiker, non-purists, interfering with the goals of another, purists. The social world along the PCT was similar to the social world along the AT as was recorded by MacLennan and Moore (2011). However, unlike the AT, conflict within the long-distance PCT hiking social world is best understood by considering attitudinal dispositions of participants rather than their behaviors. For example, one participant of this study, Cool Hand Luke, chose to hike late at night or early in the morning because of his attitudinal position with regard to his ideal trail environment, namely away from party hikers. Distinguishing between attitude position and behavioral position was used by Shafer and Hammitt

(1995) when they explored the relationship between participants' preferred form of resource management and whether or not they were a purist.

This study informs previous research conducted involving conflict in natural resource areas by shedding light on the tension between attitudinal and behavioral dispositions towards the leisure activity. MacLennan and Moore (2011) found that conflict occurred via goal interference among hikers, which was due to behaviors expressed by the different types of AT hikers.

Suggestions for Future Research

The environment along the PCT is unique as a long-distance trail in that, at least until recently, the PCT has had far less hikers than the AT and therefore the impact from gatekeepers has been felt more by the community. At the same time, the PCT has seen much more use than the CDT and is currently in a position of transition as more hikers find their way to the trail each year. In 2014 the Pacific Crest Trail Association reported 369 complete thru hikes of the trail; to provide context to this figure in 2003 134 hikers completed the trail and for the first time ever in 2015 the annual kickoff party at the beginning of the hiking season will take place in two sessions because there is no space in the county campground it has been held at in years past. With the growing popularity of the PCT many veterans and trail angels are worried that the trail will be “loved to death” by all of the new hikers traveling west to hike the trail. Studies that explore ideas surrounding crowding should therefore be conducted. The number of long-distance hikers that set out to hike the PCT every year has increased significantly in recent years. According to the Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA), the number recorded

successful thru-hikes completed in 2014 was up 53% from the previous year.

Considering the additional attention that the PCT has received from the film “Wild”, the PCT will likely continue this exponential growth in the near future. The future growth the PCT will undergo has many implications for research in the future.

Through an examination of crowding and satisfaction across various wilderness areas, Hall and Cole (2007) found that visitors frequently reported that crowding was the low point of their trip. In many cases, crowding was found to be highly correlated with coping behaviors such as displacement, rationalization and product shift (Manning, 2010). While displacement was not a focus of this study, it was nonetheless observed. Several times hikers were heard bemoaning the number of hikers on the trail, especially trail angels and veteran hikers who had been members of the social for an extended period of time and have seen the cultural impacts that increased growth has brought to the trail. Arguably the quintessential trail angels along the PCT are a husband and wife in the town of Agua Dulce, California who have been hosting and helping hikers for 18 years. However, after the 2014 hiking season (the most populated to date), the couple will no longer be active participants in the PCT social world after almost 20 years of “trail angeling” due to effects of crowding on the social fabric of the PCT. By using the social world perspective, this study indicates that the need for research examining effects of crowding on satisfaction along the PCT will continue to grow in the future.

The social world perspective provides a way to examine the complex social environment and has been used to examine many different leisure activities including contract bridge (Scott & Godbey, 1992), dancing (Brown, 2007), indoor rock climbing

(Kurten, 2009), and long-distance hiking along the AT (MacLennan & Moore, 2011). Following Unruh (1979; 1980). Gahwiler and Havitz (1998) examined subworlds within a YMCA and found that progression through and into social world types did not always occur and when it did it was not always linear. This supported Unruh's (1979) original hypothesis regarding progression in social worlds and was confirmed in this study. Specifically, Unruh (1979) put forth the idea that there are types of member in a social world, *strangers*, *tourists*, and *insiders*. The member types put forth by Unruh may imply a natural progression from one to another but this is in fact often not the case.

The recreation specialization framework would potentially give a more detailed account of this phenomenon if applied to the long-distance hiking community along the PCT. It would be advantageous for researchers in the future to measure recreation specialization within the various subworlds of the PCT long-distance hiking social world. Applying the recreation specialization framework in conjunction with the social world perspective could add to our understanding of the progression that participants undergo throughout their leisure careers in a way that considers attitudinal position in addition to behavioral. More specifically, this progression would occur within the subworld that they are members of within the social world (e.g., a trail angel may progress from occasionally volunteering to a career volunteer). Researchers should consider several questions regarding progression. Do participants progress from being a social hiker to being a purist? If so, what are the indicators of progression? Is a gregarious social hiker the result of a party hiker's progression? If there is no

progression between subworlds or within them are hikers socialized into one subworld or the other upon gaining entry into the social world?

Conflict in natural resource areas in another area that would be advantageous for researchers in the future to explore in light of this study. Historically conflict between natural resource users has been measured by measuring behaviors of recreationists (Bryan, 1979; Jacob & Schreyer, 1980). While this approach to examining conflict has certainly proved beneficial what it lacks is the consideration of attitudinal position of recreationists, such as the purist mentality that was discussed by Shafer and Hammitt (1995). The purpose of this study was not to examine conflict along the PCT but my data have provided an interesting commentary on the topic, especially when they are contrasted with previous research like MacLennan and Moore's (2011) work on conflict along the AT. Social and purist hikers observed along the PCT had contrasting attitudinal positions regarding the natural resource which in turn led to varied coping behaviors (see Cool Hand Luke for an example of this). Manning (2010) notes that conflict in recreation has been understood as either goal interference (interpersonal conflict) or social values conflict. Data collected along the PCT indicate room for development in future research regarding conflict. Specifically, researchers should consider attitudinal positions of participants and their relationship to goals and social values. If it is found that attitudes of participants inform and predict their goals and social values then research concerning recreation conflict would have much more depth if it were to include dimensions of attitude in addition to goal interference and social value conflict.

In general, this study has shown that activity authenticity is often contested based on one's frame of reference or particular worldview and has an impact on their leisure experience. Additionally, leisure activities can serve as a source of identity to individuals. Identifying with a leisure activity represents a high level of commitment to the activity and is likely why participants feel so strongly about any potential change to the particular social world that they have invested in and identify with. Goldenberg and Soule (2014) found that long-distance hikers along the PCT experienced many positive outcomes, namely the development of new perspectives, fun and excitement, personal growth and warm personal relationships with others.

Suggestions for future research have been made with the aim of protecting the valuable social resource of the PCT long-distance hiking social world. The serious leisure framework would lend itself useful to further explore the social world and the enduring benefits it offers hikers; recreation specialization would help researchers and practitioners better understand the changes in hikers' leisure career and also intra-activity conflict; studies of place attachment would illuminate the emotional and symbolic meanings participants have given the PCT and crowding should also be considered that negative coping strategies such as displacement can be minimized.

Limitations

A typology summarizing and describing roles within the PCT long-distance hiking social world was adapted from Scott and Godbey's (1992) exploration of a social world surrounding contract bridge and would be useful in guiding future research surrounding a historically under researched social area. In addition to the typology

developed from this study, Brown (2007) also built on Scott and Godbey's (1992) typology when she applied the social world perspective as well as the recreation specialization framework to the context of dancers.

It is important to note that the typology developed from this study illuminates *some* intricacies within the PCT long-distance hiking social world but it is in no way meant to represent a comprehensive understanding of the social world. This study lacks significant quantitative data exploring the segmentation within the social world. Stated differently, this study does not offer quantitative differences between social and purist hikers that were encountered. Furthermore, this study did not link Experience Use History survey data to particular types of hikers that were encountered during the data collection process. Finally, I did not encounter long-distance hikers that were traveling south on the PCT, which could offer relevant data and insight into the social world and may constitute another subworld of PCT long-distance hiker. These limitations, along with previous suggestions, should be the focus of future research along the PCT as these questions are of prime interest to both researchers and practitioners alike.

Summary

This study sought to explore the social complexities along the PCT using the social worlds perspective in addition to supplementation literature. By employing both quantitative and qualitative methods, I found that the social world along the PCT contained divisions between the hikers primarily rooted in their construction of an authentic way to hike. Two types of hiker were identified: the purist and social hiker. The purist was primarily motivated by the trail itself while the social hiker was

motivated by the relationships that were developed along the trail. The primary motivations of both the purist and social hiker were found to manifest in different ways. The purist motivation was found to manifest in a romantic or utilitarian way. Both the romantic and utilitarian purist were motivated by the trail itself but the romantic was concerned with existential realities they associated with the trail whereas the utilitarian was primarily interested in the completion of the task at hand (i.e. the trail). The social hiker was primarily motivated by the relationships with fellow hikers and similar to the purist hiker, the motivation of the social hiker manifested in two different ways. The gregarious social hikers was motivated by the social aspect along the trail and the party hiker was too motivated by the relationships with fellow hikers but the party hiker's activities revolved around the consumption of drugs and alcohol with fellow hikers.

These findings contribute to previous leisure sciences research as well as illuminate the need for future research that addresses the growing population of PCT hikers. Specifically, this study should motivate researchers in the future to consider the divisions with social groups of recreationists based on their constructions of activity authenticity (i.e. their "right" way to do the activity) and how these attitudes might influence the way they enjoy (or, don't) the recreation activity. This should lend itself to more informed decision making processes from natural resource managers' perspectives.

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APPENDIX A

EXPERIENCE USE HISTORY SURVEY RESPONSES

n=153

- 1) Is this your first time hiking?
 - a. Yes (5.2%)
 - b. No (94.8%)

- 2) How often (on average) do you go hiking?
 - a. 1 to 2 times per year (15.7%)
 - b. 3 to 5 times per year (13.1%)
 - c. 6 to 9 times per year (12.4%)
 - d. 10 or more times per year (55.6%)
 - e. Prefer not to answer (3.3%)

- 3) How far (on average) do you travel from your home to go hiking?
 - a. 99 miles or less (61.4%)
 - b. 100 miles to 499 miles (20.3%)
 - c. 500 miles to 999 miles (9.2%)
 - d. More than 1,000 miles (5.9%)
 - e. Prefer not to answer (3.3%)

- 4) How long (on average) do your hiking trips usually last?
 - a. 1 day or less (40.5%)
 - b. Between 2 and 3 days (30.7%)
 - c. Between 4 and 6 days (11.1%)

- d. Between 7 and 30 days (8.5%)
 - e. More than 31 days (5.9%)
 - f. Prefer not to answer (3.3%)
- 5) When you go on a hiking trip, how far (on average) do you hike throughout the entirety of your trip?
- a. 0-19 miles (47.1%)
 - b. 20-99 miles (37.3%)
 - c. 100-499 miles (5.9%)
 - d. Over 500 miles (6.5%)
 - e. Prefer not to answer (3.3%)
- 6) To the best of your knowledge, how many days have you spent hiking in your lifetime?
- a. Less than 7 days (1.3%)
 - b. Between 8 and 30 days (12.4%)
 - c. Between 31 days and 364 days (49.0%)
 - d. More than 365 days (34.0%)
 - e. Prefer not to answer (3.3%)
- 7) To the best of your knowledge, how many *different* trails have you hiked or hiked on?
- a. Less than 5 (9.2%)
 - b. Between 6 and 14 (17.7%)
 - c. Between 15 and 29 (23.5%)

- d. More than 30 (47.1%)
- e. Prefer not to answer (2.6%)

8) Of the previous trails you have hiked on (if any), were any of them the Appalachian Trail, Pacific Crest Trail, or Continental Divide Trail?

- a. Yes (59.5%)
- b. No (35.9%)
- c. Prefer not to answer (4.6%)

9) If you answered yes to the previous question, did you hike continuously on the Appalachian Trail, Pacific Crest Trail, or Continental Divide Trail for 500 or more miles?

- a. Yes (30.7%)
- b. No (47.7%)
- c. Prefer not to answer (21.6%)

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Tell me about your experience hiking along the PCT. If I have questions about anything you mention, or need clarification, I will ask later.

Prompt Questions

- 1) How did you get started hiking?
- 2) Are you a hiker? If so, what does “being a hiker” mean?
- 3) Is there anyone that you have met on the trail that you look up to? Does this person(s) influence how you think about hiking?
- 4) I have been told that there are “purists” on the PCT. Do you know what this may be in reference to, or anyone who you think is a “purist”?
- 5) What is “hiker trash”?
- 6) If someone were to ask you why you hike, what would you tell them?
- 7) What are your goals in hiking?
- 8) Is there a “hiking community”? If so, do you think that there are differences within the community?
- 9) Do you think that people you do not hike understand why you hike?
- 10) What were your expectations when you started hiking? Have your expectations in hiking changed throughout your hiking career?

APPENDIX C

INFORMATION GUIDE

'Hiker Trash' Along the Pacific Crest Trail. An Examination of the Hiker Social World.

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Clinton Lum, a researcher from Texas A&M University. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you do not want to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits you normally would have.

The purpose of this study is to better understand the community that exists between hikers along the Pacific Crest Trail.

You are being asked to be in this study because you are a hiker and/or backpacker along the Pacific Crest Trail.

Overall, 768 participants will be asked to participate in this study

The only alternative to this study is to not participate in the study.

You will be asked to complete a short survey, face to face interview, or both. Your participation in this study will last up to 50 minutes if you participate in both the survey and interview. If you choose to participate in the survey only your participation will last 10 minutes, if you choose to participate in the face to face interview your participation will last 45 minutes and includes one visit.

The risks associated with this study are minimal and are no greater than risks that would be encountered in everyday life.

Aside from your time, there are no costs for taking part in the study.

You will not be paid for being in this study.

The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Clinton Lum, David Scott, Scott Shafer, and James Lindner will have access to the records.

Information about you will be stored in locked file cabinet and/or computer files protected by password.

Information about you will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law. People who have access to your information include the Protocol Director and research study personnel. Representatives of regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and entities such as the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program may access your records to make sure the study is being run correctly and that information is collected properly.

You may contact the Protocol Director, Clinton Lum, to tell him about a concern or complaint about this research at 713-303-4442 or clintlum91@tamu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a research participant; or if you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you may call the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program office at (979) 458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

may decide to not begin or to stop participating at any time. If you choose not to be in this study or stop being in the study, there will be no effect on you.

By participating in the interview or completing the survey, you are giving permission for the investigator to use your information for research purposes.

Thank you.

Clinton Lum

APPENDIX D

RECRUITING SCRIPT

Hikers and backpackers along the Pacific Crest Trail will be contacted face to face about the possibility of participating in a study.

I, Clinton Lum, am conducting a study looking at the hiking community along the Pacific Crest Trail. I would like for you to participate in this study. If you would not like to participate in this study you are welcome to decline this offer, your participation is strictly voluntary. If you would like to participate in this study you will be asked to complete a short survey which will last 10 minutes on paper and/or a face to face interview with the researcher (me) that will last approximately 50 minutes. You will not provide any information to the researcher that he might contact you in the future with. If you do not wish to respond to any of the interview and/or survey questions, simply leave them blank. If at any point you wish to discontinue your participation in this study, notify the researcher and the survey and/or interview will be stopped and your responses will be destroyed if so desired.

Only members of the research team will have access to the data.

If you should have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact:

Clinton Lum	David Scott	Scott Shafer	James Lindner
clintlum91@tamu.edu	dscott@tamu.edu	sshaffer@tamu.edu	j-lindener@tamu.edu
713-303-4442	979-845-5334	979-845-3837	979-458-2701