

Outdoor Recreation on Sacred Spaces:
Finding Mutual Meaning, Use, and Value

by

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Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the accompanying scholar statement by Claudia R. Bueermann has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in Anthropology.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgement.....	iv
Introduction: A Storied Past.....	1
Wallula Gap, Southeast Washington	3
Spring Mountain, Eastern Oregon	5
Castle Rocks State Park, Idaho	6
Historical Understanding of Land, Nature, and Wilderness	9
Politics & Political Figures in Understanding Land Use	11
Popular Comparisons.....	13
Anthropological Framing.....	15
Cultural Relativism, Animism, and The Sacred	15
Grounding Texts	20
Engaging with Anthropology’s Contemporary Debates.....	23
Methodological and Public Anthropology Concerns.....	27
Methodological Approaches	27
Engaging with other Projects.....	28
Politics of Representation	30
Issues with the Emerging Field of Public Anthropology.....	32
Conclusion.....	33
Bibliography.....	34

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Introduction: A Storied Past¹

With growing numbers of people hiking, climbing, and participating in outdoor sports, America's outdoor recreation industry has dramatically increased leading to points of tension between recreationalists and Native Americans over land use. As outdoor recreation becomes more popular, it plays a vital role in the economy, accounting for 2.2% (\$427.2 billion) of current GDP as of 2018 (US Bureau of Economic Analysis 2018). Recent neurological, psychological, and sociological research points to several mental, physical, and emotional health benefits of the outdoors. Doctors have even begun to write prescriptions for time outside to help treat obesity, anxiety, depression, and ADHD (Klass 2020). However, as people rush into the outdoors and snap pictures for Instagram, very little attention is dedicated to *which* landscapes are being “used” in the name of outdoor adventure pursuits and well-being.

This project investigates three unique case studies about the relationships between governing land agencies, climbers, and the Native peoples associated with territories of Southeast Washington State, Northeast Oregon and South-Central Idaho. The first case study, Twin Sisters at Wallula Gap, Washington is an example of how city government and a recreational rock-climbing ban have resulted in secretive climbing activity. The second case study, Spring Mountain, just outside of La Grande, Oregon signifies an arrangement of compromises from both climbers and the Native American Tribes – all mediated through the National Forest Service. Finally, Castle Rocks, just north of the

¹ *Whitman College resides on stolen land from the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla peoples. All research for this statement was conducted on land forcibly taken.*

City of Rocks National Monument in Idaho represents a complex and very divided governing system, which contributed to the complete banning of climbing in some areas and a free for all in others. In order to make this project accessible to the public, I compiled interviews and the ethnohistory of each of these case studies into a series of podcasts outlining the political tensions surrounding climbing on culturally significant and sacred spaces for different Native American tribes.

Governing agencies in these areas have mediated the relationships between Native peoples and outdoor recreation groups (specifically climbers) for years as the popularity of climbing and other recreational activities has grown. The following outlines the historical background for the three case study areas including discussion of stakeholders, geographical information, and the present-day management of climbing.

Wallula Gap, Southeast Washington

Two massive pillars stand sixty feet tall side by side at the confluence of the Snake River and the Columbia River in Southeast Washington. Fifteen thousand years ago, the Missoula Floods carved this landscape into what it is today (Glacial Lake Missoula Resources 2019). The area represents a storied landscape for the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla tribes because their histories are deeply and complexly woven into the land. The *Caw Pawa Laakni* [Sahaptian Place Names Atlas of the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla] explains that the traditional name of these pillars is *Waatpatukaykas* meaning “standing for the spirits place” (Hunn et al. 2010:84). In surrounding towns, it is also referred to as the “Twin Sisters.” For the Cayuse tribe, the landform is tied to a story with Coyote, the trickster spirit hero of many native stories:

Coyote fell in love with three sisters who were building a salmon trap on the river. Each night Coyote would destroy their trap, and each day the girls would rebuild it. One morning Coyote saw the girls crying and found out that they were starving because they had not been able to catch any fish in their trap. Coyote promised them a working fish trap if they would become his wives. They agreed, and Coyote kept his promise; however, over the years he became jealous of them. He changed two of the wives into these basalt pillars and turned the third into a cave downstream. He became a rock nearby so he could watch over them forever (Lewis and Clark Chapters 2004).

Climbing on this formation began in the early 60’s. At the time, the Forest Service managed and maintained the area. However, as the government began consolidating their larger properties, they began selling off smaller, isolated sections of land. In 1972, the land went up for sale with the hope of handing it over to a private landowner. However, several climbing associations along with the Audubon Society advocated for the City of Walla Walla to purchase the land. The land was officially acquired in 1977 (Andy Porter,

“No Rock Climbing,” *Union Bulletin*, Apr. 12, 2001). Climbers, hikers, and birders frequented the space for decades. Yet, in 2001, after meeting with the Washington Risk Management Team, the City began to investigate whether climbing was an acceptable form of recreation on the Twin Sisters. The city council in February of 2001 voted to prohibit climbing on these two basalt rock pillars out of fear of liability. Without notice or public input, “no trespassing” and “no rock climbing” signs were posted around the Twin Sisters area (Andy Porter, “Twin Sisters Will Remain Off Limits,” *Union Bulletin*, Apr. 14, 2001). That same year, the city council held a meeting with private landowners in the area, climbers, and members from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR); they asked each group to contribute their perspective on the situation. During the meeting, the CTUIR pronounced the Twin Sisters landform a sacred space. With no further meetings all climbing on the landform was banned.

The Whitman College Outdoor Program frequented Twin Sisters for years prior to the closure, having led numerous and varied instructional trips to the area. After the shutdown, the Outdoor Program needed to locate a new climbing area. Due to a lack of developed climbing spots in the region, members of the Outdoor Program and other people in the climbing community found a cliff band a few miles downstream from Twin Sisters and established new routes. This new climbing “crag” is technically placed on Whitman property (Whitman College Farms 2008:4). There has been minimal consultation between the City of Walla Walla or CTUIR, despite the cultural significance of the land, regarding the new climbing space. Still the area serves climbers from Walla Walla, the Tri-Cities, and surrounding towns.

Spring Mountain, Eastern Oregon

Spring Mountain is a geologically unique area in comparison to the surrounding region in Eastern Oregon where it sits. According to regional geologists, a large landslide thousands of years ago created and exposed a long cliff band of andesite rock, which is rare and stronger than other rock types in adjacent locations (Pogue 2008). *Caw Pawa Laakni Atlas* explains that the Cayuse and Nez Perce call this area *Cuquulii Kuus* (Hunn et al. 2010:67). The Cayuse and Nez Perce have deemed this cliff band sacred for time immemorial because of the availability of medicinal plants, and because it is used as a site for vision quests and spiritual gatherings. Their oral history references this space as one of extreme specialness.

In the late 1970s, climbing began in this area. Climbers from La Grande, Oregon in the early 1980's began placing fixed anchors for sport climbing on the rock face.² In 2001, a few members from the CTUIR discovered that climbing was occurring at Spring Mountain. They contacted the Umatilla National Forest Service demanding an investigation and the halt of all climbing. In an attempt to mediate the conflict, the Director of the Umatilla National Forest held a meeting for climbers and members from the Tribes to come together and reach an agreement on how the space would continue to be managed. After a year of meetings, they reached a final consensus: climbing could continue in the area, but new routes could not be established; the Tribes would pay for camouflaged anchors and bolts to replace the current bright silver metal ones; and, the

² Fixed anchors are any type of artificial gear that once placed is left permanently or "fixed" to the rock. To attach the rope, climbers clip their rope through the chains or bolts at the top. Sport climbing refers to when climbers are attached to a rope and clip into "bolts" which are permanent fixtures on the rock face. Clipping in helps arrest a fall. Almost all references to climbing in this paper will be about sport climbing.

Forest Service would pay to have a new sign installed about the history and cultural significance of the area (Spring Mountain Official Meeting Notes 2002). The tribes also hired two Whitman College students in both 2005 and 2014 to walk the length of Spring Mountain to record and track the number of routes and make sure that it matched the number of routes from the initial meeting in 2001; indeed, no new routes had been established (Whitman Wire 2014).

Castle Rocks State Park, Idaho

Castle Rocks has been a contested area for decades due to the ways the land is divided between governing agencies and the tribes associated with the area. In the early 1900s, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), acquired “useless land” around the United States. The present-day BLM section of Castle Rocks became acquired because the land was deemed unfarmable. However, a large section adjacent to the BLM property was owned by a large private cattle ranch. The private ranch owners had dedicated an enormous amount of energy to properly cultivate the land for cattle grazing. The BLM recognized that without constant supervision and immense effort, the land they acquired did not have the potential for farming. During the formation of the National Forest Service, a section of the BLM land was converted into National Forest. In 1998, the National Parks Service (NPS) initiated conversations with the ranch owners about a purchase of the private land. The Castle Rocks Acquisition Act of 2000 allowed for the National Parks Service to purchase the private land. However, the National Parks Service did not actually plan to possess this land for long; instead, they arranged a trade of the Castle Rocks land with the Idaho State Parks Department for their Hagerman Fossil Beds

land (House of Representatives 2000). Despite the authorization from Congress of the Castle Rocks Acquisition Act, the National Parks Service did not immediately have access to the funds. Rather than allow the ranch land to sit on the market and risk having another private party purchase it, The Conservation Fund acquired the ranch land until the National Parks Service could complete the transaction (CRSP Climbing Management Plan 2016). Once the transaction was successful, NPS traded lands with the Idaho State Parks. The area officially opened on Memorial Day of 2003 as the Castle Rocks State Park, now managed by the Idaho State Parks Department (Idaho State Parks and Recreation 2011).

The land today is still divided into three distinct boundaries: BLM, National Forest, and Castle Rocks State Park. Despite no change in the geology, natural resources, cultural resources, or landscape, there are three distinct sections each with different governing plans for a space just over 2,500 acres (CRSP Climbing Management Plan 2016).

In addition to the tri-part interest in Castle Rocks, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation located in Southeastern Idaho recently became involved in the decision-making processes because of their longstanding residence and utilization of resources on the land. From hunting to gathering pine nuts, the rocks and forests of Castle Rocks have provided excellent access to food and shelter for the tribes. In addition, the site is considered sacred as it is discussed in their creation stories. In 2005, archaeologists discovered different types of artifacts such as hunting tools and cooking implements that the Shoshone-Bannock tribes claimed (Keck interview 2020).

Climbing became common to Castle Rocks in the mid-1980s and has only grown more popular; thousands of climbers flock to the area each season (CRSP Climbing Management Plan 2016). Due to the surge in park attendance, archaeologists, tribal members, and land managers became worried about the impacts of climbing on the preservation of cultural resources. Climbers set up their staging area at the bottom of the rock face so they can belay. Over time, the ground becomes compacted and leveled out; as the soil and ground materials shift, cultural resources can become unearthed or damaged. The Idaho State Parks and Recreation department (IDPR) in conjunction with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) identifies and declares the distinctions between cultural and natural resources, which ultimately dictates the level of preservation an area requires (CRSP Climbing Management Plan 2016). When asked how the IDPR and SHPO defines cultural resources, Superintendent Wallace Keck of Castle Rocks State Park, stated:

Cultural resources refer to anything that is of historic or prehistoric nature – a prime example of this would be pictographs, oral histories, and stories connected to certain outcrops and parts of the park. All of that then becomes designated as “cultural resources.” And cultural resources are very common in Castle Rocks. It’s easy to find flakes and various evidence of artifacts from 500 to 3,000 years ago (Keck interview March 10, 2020).

In response, the State Park developed a Climbing Management Plan (CMP) in 2006 and updated it in 2016. It outlined a permitting system for first ascents and new route development (CRSP Climbing Management Plan 2016). This system has worked well to maintain a strong grasp and record of climbing in the area. However, in 2013, the BLM section of Castle Rocks announced a complete ban on any type of climbing, regardless of

whether it required drilling into the rock or not.³ The BLM had not established a CMP and could not contain the spread of climbing in the area and its impact on cultural resources. On the other hand, the Forest Service portion of Castle Rocks remains completely unregulated. The State Park CMP will undergo a review and rewriting process in the next few years (Keck interview 2020).

Historical Understanding of Land, Nature, and Wilderness

The birth of the National Park Service in 1916 and the Wilderness Act in 1964 stand as the first major legal actions taken to designate spaces and protect them based on their natural beauty and resources.^{4 5} Through the process of designating specific areas as wild and natural based on “solitude and naturalness levels” spaces were made accessible for leisure (Gartner et al. 2000). Research about outdoor recreation became common in the 1960s as “recreation in the wilderness” became a familiar concept within specific types of family life. (Gartner et al. 2000). Leisure activities began as early as the 1930s.

³ Some forms of climbing allow for climbers to place their own gear along the route. This is referred to a “trad climbing.” Climbers are responsible for placing their own protection throughout the climb, rather than clip into a metal bolt hanger, and then remove this protection upon descent. This form of climbing does not require leaving anything behind on the rock face.

⁴ The Wilderness Act of 1967, signed by Lyndon B Johnson, sought to set aside certain lands “in their natural condition” and protect them as natural spaces. The Wilderness Act produced the ideology that man should be separate from nature – and these “natural” spaces could then be protected as man was only seen as a “visitor” in these areas. It resulted in the creation of the National Wilderness Preservation System – a program that oversees and protects 111 million acres of wilderness. This ultimately instigated a surge of new visitors and recreationalists, all seeking to observe “wilderness” and “natural” spaces.

⁵ There is an important distinction between preservation and conservation. Conservation tends to refer to the *proper* use of resources while preservation works to protect nature *from* use.

However, it was not until the 1960s that leisure became more generally available to the American (white, middle and upper class) public (Birch 1998).⁶

Although wilderness spaces are designated as “natural” and are set aside for preservation, elements of inequality in access persist. A primary issue in the outdoor industry is the lack of easy entry points into it – ranging from learning skills, paying for the proper gear, or simply the time off to go out. Outdoor industry trendsetters, (including noteworthy brands such as Patagonia, the North Face, Outdoor Research, etc.) have an exceptionally whitewashed marketing streak, which ultimately aids in developing an exclusive market for the people that can afford it. The outdoor industry trends towards catering to white, upper-middle-class people with the privilege of going outside. Despite being the traditional homelands for Native Americans, these spaces became appropriated for use by majority white people as “empty” areas, devoid of humans. This shift to talking about these areas as unoccupied “spaces” in order to preserve naturalness aids in creating a further divide between some humans and the “natural” world.⁷ These spaces are constructs that are a product of capitalism and have resulted in a surge in specific outdoor-lifestyle consumerism.

The whitening of these spaces has become a perpetual loop based on the high price-tags for entering “wilderness” (primarily, National Parks) and the intensely white marketing streak of the outdoor industry. This whitening of spaces could be equated to anthropologist, Mei Zhan’s discussion of the ways Traditional Chinese Medicine (and specifically acupuncture) has been appropriated, marketed, privatized, and capitalized on

⁶ Race, age, gender, sexuality, ability, income, occupation, and residence all played major roles in determining *who* leisure is available for. Recreation was primarily only available to middle- and upper-class white families with disposable income.

⁷ See following section, *Politics & Political Figures* for more on the rhetoric of “uninhabited” spaces.

by white practitioners in the United States (Zhan 2009). The restrictedness of the whitened Americanized forms of Traditional Chinese Medicine emulate this construction of a highly exclusive, white, outdoor industry that has recontextualized an entire space to represent something new.

The dominant rhetoric about access to outdoor recreation typically focuses on race, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and skill levels. However, one of the major elements that is frequently left out of the dialogue is *space*. The spaces that recreationalists in the Pacific Northwest love to explore exist on stolen lands from hundreds of Native tribes who lived in this region for time immemorial. Many places that are considered great adventure feats exist on sacred land.

Politics & Political Figures in Understanding Land Use

Different land management agencies, organized and run by the Federal Government, dictate all decisions as to how America's public lands are utilized. Outdoor recreation began taking place on public lands with little to no acknowledgment of the indigenous inhabitants. Native Americans were forcefully removed from areas in order to maintain the pursuit of "pristine wilderness" for recreation seekers.⁸ As "wilderness" became a specifically designated space, Native peoples had to relabel, reconceptualize, and argue for what their land meant to them.

⁸ There are many cases that highlight the removal of Native Americans from what are now America's National Parks in order to achieve these "unoccupied" and "empty" ideals that correlate to the American standard of "wilderness" and "nature." For example, the Southern and Central Miwok tribes were forcibly removed from their thriving homeland of what is now Yosemite National Park in order to maintain the goal of "uninhabited wilderness" (Oatman-Stanford 2018).

Sacredness is a challenging concept to outline and define, as it holds different connotations depending on circumstance and group. When a space is in jeopardy, the signifier of “sacred” can be utilized as a last resort in order to save or preserve it from specific activities.⁹ In many Native American tribes, it goes against tradition to reveal information to outsiders about why a space is sacred. The politics of this become challenging as the attempt to preserve cultural resources or advocate for a sacred space frequently depends on sharing the information about why the area is important. In the example of Castle Rocks, Keck notes:

In the first five years of Castle Rocks, there wasn't nearly enough consultation with the tribes, but as the evidence began to surface and as the tribes became aware of how many cultural artifacts were there, they then took an interest in repatriation of artifacts and promoted leaving the land alone and not developing the landscape. Then they began to share the sacredness of the land to them. This is not normally something we would know, and not normally something they would tell, because that is part of their religion and sacredness, but part of their origin story is connected to Castle Rocks and City of Rocks and they will tell a little, but they won't tell it all (Keck interview March 10, 2020).

By sharing sacred stories with the land management agencies, the Shoshone-Bannock tribes' ability to advocate for their land increased, ultimately resulting in the establishment of new measures to better preserve the area. However, this exemplifies how Native Americans must break cultural traditions in order to most effectively defend their lands and sacred spaces.

⁹ I meditate more on this concept of spaces at risk becoming “sacred” in my section, *Engaging with Anthropology's Contemporary Debates*.

Popular Comparisons

There are a few popular examples of conflict over Native American sacred spaces and outdoor recreation. One of the more frequently cited instances around this issue is over climbing at Devils' Tower National Monument in Wyoming (U.S. National Parks Service 2016). Tensions between climbing communities and local tribes have existed for decades. More than a dozen tribes are affiliated with the area; the primary ones being Lakota, Cheyenne, Crow, Arapahoe, Shoshone, and Kiowa. The National Parks Service recorded oral histories for twelve different tribes and tracked their stories about Devils Tower. Although clearly deemed sacred by so many, climbers and Native peoples in the area have fought over "proper" ways to use the land. In 1995, the Devils Tower National Monument Climbing Management Plan established a voluntary closure for all climbing routes for the month of June (U.S. National Parks Service 2016). This was designed to respect the cultural events of Native American's during their most important month for traditional ceremonies. Climbing during the month of June has seen an almost 90% reduction since the management plan was put into action (U.S. National Parks Service 2016).

In a more drastic and recent case, Ulura Rock in Australia saw similar contentious emotions between tourists and Aboriginal groups. In October of 2019, the rock formation was officially closed to climbing. The Anangu peoples have been lobbying for the closure of climbing on Ulura for decades (Abbot et al. 2019). Rather than partially closing for certain months or for certain types of climbing, every form of ascending the rock has been completely banned.

The example of Devils Tower contrasts with the Ulura Rock example insofar as that an agreement between *both* parties (climbers and Native Americans) was reached and resulted in the closure of the monument to climbing for one month out of the year. In the Ulura Rock case however, the result of the complete ban was seen as a victory for the Anangu, while tourists, climbers, and scientists saw this as a restriction to freedom and meaningful research opportunities.

Anthropological Framing

Cultural Relativism, Animism, and The Sacred

This project is rooted in understanding the anthropology behind the politics of how land use is decided, who is consulted, and how these issues move through political and cultural shifts. Applied in the undertaking are the established anthropological traditions of cultural relativism, wholism, and animism.

One of the primary issues at stake is the element of cultural relativism. It is a deeply anthropological theory and one that helps ground most of the research across a range of scopes in the field. It has been a highly used tool in investigating the politics between climbing communities and indigenous groups. As is the issue with most complex political discussions, neither side can always see or understand the other's view. However, cultural relativism extends beyond identification of a group's beliefs and perceptions; it aids in investigating exactly *why* and *how* these spaces are sacred for indigenous peoples – and subsequently, *exactly why* other groups do not understand the importance. In context with this project, all groups discussed are categorized within their own culture and not in comparison to anything or anyone else. While obviously the CTUIR and Shoshone-Bannock tribes have their own cultures, there are grounds to also contextualize climbers as having their own culture as well to adequately understand each groups' motives behind their defenses of preserving a specific space. I have utilized cultural relativism as a key theme in order to understand the political separation between

climbers, Native tribes, and land management agencies in order to understand the differences in each group's perceptions on the issue.

As a collective group, climbers have their own form of culture and discuss their own unique connections to the land. In an interview with a climber who has climbed at all three case study areas, they stated: "unless there is something specific to point to such as paintings, artifacts, or actually recorded details, just people saying it's important to them isn't enough. These spaces are sacred to me too!" (Anonymous interview February 12, 2020). On the other hand, a climber from the Tri-Cities pointed out while climbing at Wallula Gap: "I get it. We gotta all share this land. We should climb where it's okay and leave alone what they want us to leave alone. Pretty simple." (Ecohen interview March 4, 2020). From the climbers' viewpoint, they frequent these spaces, take care of the land, and argue that they come and use the space in appreciation of what it has to offer. Leave No Trace principals that most climbers and outdoor recreationalists strictly follow, could be compared to cultural land use rituals (Center for Outdoor Ethics 2018).¹⁰ The ways these spaces are utilized by climbers should not be discounted or categorized as unsubstantial or thoughtless land use due to the lack of their history associated with the area. Rather, this project approaches climbers as their own type of culture as well. By positing climbers as such, utilizing the theory of cultural relativism to understand and highlight the different cultural views between Native peoples and climbers becomes more achievable.

¹⁰ Leave No Trace, a program developed and deployed into the outdoor community through the Center for Outdoor Ethics, champions a guide of seven principal to minimize impact on lands while enjoying the outdoors. This is widely known, discussed, and written about within outdoor communities around the country.

On the other side of the argument, recorded in the meeting notes from the Spring Mountain negotiations, a member from the Tribes stated:

Elders were taken into the forest where they went to as children. They went to burial sites, hunting, fishing and gathering sites, and other sites of importance. There is a lot of oral history connected to Spring Mountain and the surrounding areas. The elders are very connected to Spring Mountain (Spring Mountain Official Meeting Notes 2002).

These three statements represent very clear differences in the views on Spring Mountain and how it should be used and maintained. In this specific case, climbers have developed deep relationships to these specific areas where they can do their sport, while Native American groups also have cultivated a rich cultural history to the area. These two groups each demonstrate their commitment to the spaces through their own versions of respect and care for it. However, cultural relativism helps provide a more robust explanation as to what exactly makes understanding the other side so difficult.

Theories of wholism are also at work in all three case studies since both the CTUIR and Shoshone-Bannock tribes describe a feeling of complete connectedness to the contested land. For many Native North Americans, land is seen as an extension of their bodies. Annie Booth notes in her chapter *We Are the Land: Native American Views of Nature* in the book *Nature Across Cultures*:

Native American cultures and histories are based in the land, and their lives are inseparably intertwined with it. In a most real sense, it *is* their life. This interconnection between person and land is not merely a thing of historical significance. Present-day Native Americans continue to acknowledge their ties to the land (Booth 2003:331).

These human/non-human connections are intertwined throughout stories and are ultimately at the core of many Native American religions and cultural practices. At Wallula Gap, Coyote watches over the three sisters, but in other legends, the two pillars represent spirits watching over the river. In the case of Spring Mountain, during the same meeting previously mentioned, Armand Minthorn, a spokesperson for the CTUIR stated: “Elders say that Spring Mountain needs to be taken care of because the mountain has taken care of them.” (Spring Mountain Official Meeting Notes 2002). Lastly, Keck pointed out:

The Shoshone’s position on climbing is that generally they are opposed to it. As some of the more vocal members of the tribes would say, it’s kinda like poking holes in your body. They believe their origins come from the rocks and the rocks are part of their origin story so anything you do to the rock to deface it, is to deface both them and their ancestors (Keck interview March 10, 2020).

In all three examples, wholism helps illuminate the foundations as to why each of these areas are so important and sacred to their respective peoples. Understanding the viewpoint that Native people’s bodies extend into the landscape around them aids in unearthing the reasoning behind their frequent opposition to climbing.

As an extension to the concept of wholism, theories of animism also help construct the anthropological framing around the case studies of Wallula Gap, Spring Mountain, and Castle Rocks. In Sir Edward Tylor’s book, *Religion in Primitive Culture*, he establishes the framework of animism as the belief that objects, places, and elements of the natural environment can have a spiritual power or essence (Tylor 1871:101). He had contentious theories about religion and believed animism arose through dreams or visions, it persisted as a type of anthropological theory to understand “primitive” or indigenous religions. Although outdated in aspects of language, elements of animism can

be seen in the case of Wallula Gap, the story of Coyote and the sisters represents this conception of animism. The Cayuse believe there to be spirits inside the landform. The natural world around them is infused with stories of different types of “ideas of pervading life and will in nature” (Tylor 1871:104). In the case of Spring Mountain, when Minthorn pointed out that the mountain took care of the elders, he was essentially pointing to the idea that the mountain possessed a powerful essence able to heal and look after the human soul.

Although a sociologist, it is important to investigate Émile Durkheim and his book *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* as it presents fundamental theories about religion and the sacred in conjunction to what Sir Edward Tylor presents regarding animism. Later, these theories will be relied on to understand the more contemporary theories presented in Mark Shibley’s *Nature Religion in the Pacific Northwest* as one of my grounding texts for this project.

Durkheim argues for the distinction between *naturism* (the phenomena of nature – winds, rivers, stars, and those relationships to great cosmic forces) and that of *animism* (spiritual beings as souls and are animated and conscious agents that power nature and are not visible to human eyes) (Durkheim 1915:61). Durkheim set out to write about the developments and early forms of religion and through that explored the rationality of whether animism is a valid form of early religious thought. Although he dissects the theories of animism in attempt to disprove the concepts, Tylor’s original conceptions still stand as a grounding theory in this project based on the elements that the CTUIR, as noted in the *Caw Pawa Laakni*, believe there to be spirits watching over and existing in these landscapes (Hunn et al. 2010:84). Many of the spaces the landform atlas discusses

include discussion of how spirits or souls became infused into the rivers, land, or mountains.

Grounding Texts

My project is grounded in understanding the political, gendered, and religious divisions over climbing on certain landscapes. Through a critical analysis of gender in the climbing community and developments in nature religion in the Pacific Northwest, I will employ two different texts as my foundation for these arguments. First, Sherry Ortner's text, *Life and Death on Mt. Everest*, will allow me to investigate gender under the much broader umbrella of all types of climbing around the world. Second, sociologist Mark Shibley's text, *Sacred Nature: Earth-based Spirituality as Popular Religion in the Pacific Northwest*, examines nature-based religion through an extension of Durkheim's theories of naturism.

Gender divisions persist throughout the climbing community. Sherry Ortner's arguments about gender and masculinity in her book *Life and Death on Mt. Everest* helps play into understanding gender segregation in climbing communities. Most anthropological research on climbing focuses almost exclusively on high altitude mountaineering and of that mostly around Mount Everest. Within this narrow purview, the dominant discourse on gender overwhelmingly corresponds to Sherry Ortner's characterization of mountaineering:

Himalayan mountaineering until the 1970s had been an overwhelmingly male sport. It was engaged in almost (but not

quite) exclusively by men, both Sherpa and 'first world' – it built on male styles of interaction derived from other all-male institutions, especially after the army; and while it was about many things—nature and nation, materiality and spirituality, the moral quality of the inner self, and the meaning of life—it was always in part about masculinity and manhood (Ortner 1999:112).

Although some women existed in climbing communities in the 60's through the 90's, climbing communities have only recently become more accessible to women. Over the last two decades, climbing has become increasingly more privatized. Individuals new to the sport can now hire experts to guide and teach them. This rapid privatization has opened high-altitude climbing to new populations. Sherry Ortner discusses the trends of women's expeditions, Sherpa expeditions, and other expeditions that highlighted the abilities of groups and individuals who previously did not have access to mountaineering in the high Himalayas (Ortner 1999). The result of this neoliberalization of high-altitude mountaineering experiences means this form of climbing is available to anyone who can pay the exorbitant expenses required – regardless of gender or ethnicity. This is a new development that has transcended the previous conditions and cultural norms for mountaineering.¹¹ Although slightly more accessible in comparison to high alpine mountaineering, sport climbing too has witnessed this transition in cultural norms of gender in climbing due to the increase in popularity of gym climbing. In the case of this project, gender, although not completely obvious, is still present in the political discussions; the majority of the climbers setting routes, holding meetings to determine the future of these spaces, and ultimately managing these lands discussed in all three case

¹¹ It is important to note, however, that gender and ethnicity are important to global socio-economic structures. These structures indeed stand to impair individuals' ability to be able to afford and or pay the dues required for high-altitude climbing due to this new privatization. (See section titled *Historical Understanding of Land, Nature, and Wilderness* for more explanation on issues within the outdoor industry pertaining to gear and acquiring appropriate technical knowledge.)

studies, are all male. In the case of Spring Mountain, out of fifteen route developers, not one person identified as female (Pogue 2008). Although there is not a direct impact on the space, it is important to note the lack of female bodies in these discussions.

Defined as one of the least religious places in the United States, the Pacific Northwest stands out in comparison to other regions of America. Mark Shibley's article *Sacred Nature: Earth-based Spirituality as Popular Religion in the Pacific Northwest* makes the case that nature religion is the predominant outlook among Northwesterners due to many reports of spiritual connection to the land. While an un-churched area sounds as though there could potentially stand to be an absolute scarcity of religion or spiritual practices, this is in fact not the case. Instead of irreligious, the Pacific Northwest is instead the breeding ground for unconventional religious movements. Shibley argues: "The pursuit of outdoor recreation in the Northwest is often akin to spiritual practices. Rituals of leisure (hiking, rock and mountain climbing, skiing, fishing, etc.), are a big part of popular culture in the Northwest" (Shibley 2011:179). The notion that outdoor leisure rituals could be mirrored with religious ones establishes a framework for understanding how many people in the Northwest are viewing their outdoor activities. Rather than simply climbing on a rock face, many (according to Shibley) could be experiencing a religious or spiritual event. He points out:

For many Northwesterners, ideas about the human/nature relationship are rooted in habitual contact with the land. Attention to popular spirituality is precisely the approach needed to understand more fully religion and culture in the Northwest. The social landscape is teeming with spiritual practices, most predominantly activities that engage ways of thinking that reverse the natural world, particularly public land.

The concept of 'nature religion' is a useful construct for a lived religion approach to Northwest culture. It brings to focus a diffuse

range of interconnected ideas and spiritual practices (Shibley 2011:169).

In context with my project, nature religion acts as a grounding concept for understanding how outdoor recreation is viewed as both a cultural activity as well as a spiritual one. The emphasis on public lands in the Pacific Northwest highlights how these spaces are utilized in many types of ways. The notion that climbing can be a spiritual practice, could elevate the activity from that of disruption to land, to one of human connection to the environment.

Engaging with Anthropology's Contemporary Debates

Parts of the contemporary field of anthropology are centered around providing representation for underserved and infrequently written about populations. By basing this project in ethnohistories and interviews, I have been able to write about groups of people that do not typically receive a proportional amount of publicity or attention in comparison to other demographics. Especially with the very recent closing of Ulura, climbing and tourism on sacred spaces has been brought out into the public sphere and popular media.¹²

Another current topic is the process of deeming spaces sacred once they are in jeopardy. In some cases, once an area becomes jeopardized only then does the rhetoric around it become sacred and untouchable. As seen in the case of the Twin Sisters at Wallula Gap in Washington, only when the CTUIR was brought to the table to discuss the future of the rock formation, did historic information about the tribes' stories

¹² See *Popular Comparisons* section for further explanation on Ulura

regarding its sacred status emerge. The initial ban was not due to preserving a sacred site, but rather to shield the City of Walla Walla from potential liability. In attempt to seal the closure once and for all, the City invited the CTUIR to the meeting to discuss the closure. Upon discussion of this area, only then and there was it deemed sacred. *Cáw Pawá Láakni* points out that all the land in the greater Walla Walla region, was sacred to the tribes. However, sacredness rarely is recognized when a space does not face threats. In the wake of the realization that this space could be “protected” from recreation, it rapidly became publicly labeled as “sacred” which solidified the City’s decision.

This project also engages with tourism, a popular topic in the contemporary anthropology world. A quick search of the word “tourism” in the Society for Applied Anthropology 2020 Conference Abstracts produces a hit list of nearly thirty-five different papers published on the topic just in the last year. Eco-tourism, nature-tourism, and outdoor-recreation-tourism are just some of the current discussion topics. This project explicitly engages with outdoor recreationalists utilizing spaces without knowing the politics of the land use or significance of the cultural heritage of certain spaces. Many of the tourism conversations in anthropology contain the same elements: using land or coming into a space without understanding the effects it has on economics, the ecology, or the Native peoples and the impact on their cultures.

Nicholas O’Connell is a journalist with an anthropology background. His book, *On Sacred Ground: The Spirit of Place in Pacific Northwest Literature*, draws parallels between the land in the Pacific Northwest and its connections to religion and sacredness. O’Connell’s work has been instrumental in understanding the specific connections

between sacred land and the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest. To highlight this, he cites a quote from Chief Seattle in a speech in 1854 when settlers and native tribes were on the brink of war. The territorial Governor, Isaac Stevens, invited Chief Seattle to bring everyone together to speak of peace. Chief Seattle explained to the settlers that:

Wherever my people went in this country, they are walking on sacred ground. Every part of this country is sacred to my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove has been hallowed by some fond memory or some sad experience of my tribe (O'Connell 2003:32).

Although this passage represents that of the Suquamish and Duwamish people's views, O'Connell points out that this view was widely held by the majority of the Pacific Northwest's tribes. *Caw Pawa Laakni* points out that the land in the southeast region of the Pacific Northwest is sacred land, storied, and is infused with spirits and powers that aid in constructing the stories of humans (Hunn et al. 2010). In both instances of the Twin Sisters and Spring Mountain, as discussed by Armand Minthorn, the areas are remarkably sacred. The story about Twin Sisters connects to many other stories about Coyote and his trickery. For time immemorial, the rock formation at Wallula Gap was a gathering space for members of the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla peoples. In the case of Castle Rocks, Keck recounted the Shoshone's position on climbing by saying:

They did more traditional-scramble climbing (because they would have traditionally climbed rocks themselves as they would have scrambled to high points to see the land around them.) But when they see their culture and history as cast aside and not considered worth consulting on, that's when they begin to put up a fight and say, *this is our sacred land*. They want the world to know that they have a treaty with the federal government.¹³ We allow them to

¹³ The Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868 outlined a reservation for the Eastern Shoshone in what they called the Warm Valley – the valley of the Wind River. The treaty included the Shoshone, Bannock, Paiute,

come and do what they would have traditionally done here at Castle Rocks and the City of Rocks (Keck interview March 10, 2020).

This explanation of their viewpoint on climbing exemplifies current anthropological discussions of wholism through the ideology that the rock is a part of their physical bodies and spiritual worlds. Another important portion of this sentiment is the aspect of how different types of climbing are viewed culturally. In the eyes of the Shoshone-Bannock tribes and Castle Rocks State Park, “traditional climbing” and contemporary climbing are viewed very differently. Kevin Pogue, Professor of Geology at Whitman College and route setter at all three of these case studies, noted that “climbing is one of the least impactful sports.”

The walking paths are not being scrutinized, but climbing is. If you are worried about how the dirt is being compacted or if resources are being moved, then the concern should extend to all elements of recreation in the park, not just climbing. Walking, biking, and hiking all impact the land too (Pogue interview 2020).

The difference in how different forms of recreation have become managed are highly dependent on the cultural views and implications of the sport.

Gosiute, Ute, and Comanche tribes and granted hunting and gathering rights as well as some other miniscule benefits to the tribes in comparison to their loss of land (Wyoming History 2016).

Methodological and Public Anthropology Concerns

Methodological Approaches

This project provides a story about how different groups view land use. Through the methodological approaches of conducting interviews and collecting ethnohistories, this project is centered around individuals' stories and historical political information. Interviews have been compiled into podcast format while the ethnohistory portion informs my own questions for the podcast, direction of research, and historical background.

Of the possible methodological approaches, interviews seemed to be the best route as political views of the situation range between groups. Interviews afforded me the opportunity to gain insight into views of different stakeholders pertaining to how land “should” be used. Aside from watching climbers at Wallula Gap, participant observation did not stand as an applicable or reliable method due to the fact there was no way nor need to observe all parties involved in this multilayered issue.

Much of the archival research and information gathered has been conducted using the methodological approach of ethnohistory. Investigative research into archives, meeting notes, and original government documents outlining rules and initial climbing management plans was the most helpful in understanding the timelines of change for each case study. Despite many changes to the format of my project, I have continued to stay grounded in developing questions pertaining to how ranging perspectives on land use inform *who* uses it, *how*, and *why*.

Engaging with other Projects

One of the sources/projects that I have turned to as dialogue, yet also a warning, is a website, program, and Instagram page called *Indigenous Women Hike*. This project is dedicated to reminding people who pursue outdoor recreation about the original inhabitants of the land they are on (specifically in the High Sierras of California) (Varela 2019). Jolie Varela, director and founder, is a citizen of the Nüümü and Yokut Nations and grew up in Payahuunadü on the Bishop Indian Reservation in California. She is an activist for Indigenous rights and helps promote and publicize traditional place names. Her organization is currently focused on establishing an outdoor gear library for low-income Payahuunadü families. While her project is rooted in activism and making information accessible, I have utilized her page as a warning and guidance of where to tread lightly with this project. She frequently speaks of the “white savior complex” of people only trying to learn about the traditional indigenous backgrounds of lands in order to further exotify their outdoor experience. This was a primary reason in wanting to pivot my project from a guidebook (the original idea for this work) to a series of podcasts. Instead of essentializing the land for outdoor recreationalists through a guidebook, the podcast form allows for discussions similar to Varela’s ultimate goal with her program.

Another program I have put my project into dialogue with is *The Dirtbag Diaries*, a Seattle based podcast. Launched in 2009, this podcast provides a space for news about the outdoor industry, as well as personal stories, and political shifts in how land is managed. Within the series exists a special format of episodes titled *Endangered Spaces*. These episodes are produced a few times each year and are dedicated to outlining the history and political turmoil of outdoor spaces. Episodes include coverage of Grand

Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Prince of Wales Island in the Aleutian Islands, the Boundary Waters, etc. In each of these episodes, producer Fitz Cahall, works to complicate the relationship between land management agencies, users, and the political tension surrounding the area. For example, the episode about Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument was produced just weeks after President Trump cut the size of the monument in half and allowed drilling rights to oil and coal mining companies (Davenport 2017). This monument was established by President Obama in 2016 (Dirtbag Diaries 2017). The Bears Ears National Monument adjacent to Grand Staircase-Escalante was also slashed to almost half the size of its original status. Both national monuments are highly sacred spaces for the Native peoples in the region including the Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Ute Indian Tribe of the Uinta, and Ouray Reservation, and the Pueblo of Zuni (Sacred Lands 2019). Rather than just including the Indigenous perspective or just the outdoor recreation view, they also interviewed those who stand to benefit from the proposed drilling in the area from job development. The *Dirtbag Diaries* efforts, although skewed towards favoring the Indigenous groups and outdoor recreationalists, brings forward a conversation about the politics over land and how space is utilized.

Last, is the *Sacred Land Film Project*, a vast website and program with resources that outline and detail sacred lands around the world. With an emphasis on endangered sacred lands, this project works as a tool to raise awareness, money, and encourage political change. An interactive map highlights hundreds of sacred spaces around the world as well as a detailed description of who it is sacred to, the history of the politics around it, and the current status of protection. The format of this map allows for users to

grow awareness about the spaces around them and learn about different issues surrounding the land. They define their mission as:

Places of spiritual significance to indigenous people are the meeting ground of cultural and biological diversity. They are also arenas of conflict with the modern world. When a sacred mountain is strip-mined, both cultural and environmental impacts are extreme... A common problem is lack of understanding or respect for spiritual connection to land (Sacred Lands 2019).

Sacred Lands has developed tens of films about endangered sacred spaces to raise awareness. Many of these films take on an anthropological approach to understanding how these spaces function for Indigenous communities.

Each of these examples represent current attempts to reveal and bring the conversation of sacred spaces and outdoor recreation into the public eye. All of these projects, including my own, are grounded in interviews, archival research, and investigations of how perspectives on land use range.¹⁴

Politics of Representation

All the research for this project was conducted on stolen land. Wallula Gap, Spring Mountain, and Castle Rocks each represent different instances of Native Americans attempting to prove the cultural significance of the area – yet they receive backlash for not having a written record or specific physical items to point to as sacred. Because this land was forcibly taken from the original indigenous inhabitants it is

¹⁴ See *Specific Methodological Approaches* for more information on exactly what methods were used to conduct this project.

important to attend not just to the investigation of the political tensions regarding climbing, but to also recognize their fight in gaining representation for many other political issues such as health care, job security, food security, and water and hunting access.

It has been challenging to reach out to the Tribes (both CTUIR and Shoshone-Bannock.) However, it is important to note that students (primarily white and receiving an expensive higher education) constantly reach out to tribal members requesting help, answers, and stories and provide nothing in return for their information. I was weary of simply acting as yet another case of exotifying their experience for educational and personal benefit.

In an interview with Wallace Keck, when asked a question about why and exactly when the BLM banned climbing outright, he answered by saying: “that was right around the time the Shoshone-Bannock tribes were finding their voice” (Keck interview 2020). However, in the context of representation, approval, and input in the cases of Wallula Gap and of Spring Mountain, the CTUIR did not necessarily have any type of equal voice to that of the white climbers or the directors of the land management agencies (who represent symbols of the Federal Government – a group that has already inflicted so much pain on Native Americans.) It is challenging to assume these conversations were taking place on equal and fair grounds. Thus, identity politics have made the political process for mediating a fair agreement over land use and climbing access between all parties even murkier.

Issues with the Emerging Field of Public Anthropology

One of the primary discussions and concerns that emerged out of this project is centered around questioning exactly what the role of the anthropologist is in uncovering information and bringing light to certain topics. In an attempt to understand the state of climbing in certain areas, I spoke with many different people involved, all with different backgrounds and perspectives. In speaking with the climbers, ethical issues around exactly what my role was began to arise. In the case of Wallula Gap, Washington, climbing has continued without permission from the landowners and without tribal permission – just a few miles away from the initial restricted area. Public anthropology works to make information accessible to the community, rather than restrict the information through academia. However, it is important to remember the distinction between *public anthropology* and *investigative journalism*. This project is rooted in understanding the political tensions between climbers, Indigenous groups, and land management agencies. Ethically, this project demanded finding a hard line of what got revealed in the public anthropology format – as my role as an anthropologist is not to choose a specific side. By revealing climbing to the CTUIR, my role of simply providing insight into the politics became compromised. Although I am not arguing that I did not have a bias (as I myself have climbed at the more recently developed crag at Wallula Gap), I am arguing that the role and *place* of a public anthropologist needs to have specific guiding principles in the same way applied anthropology does.

Conclusion

By approaching this topic through the lens and scope of a public anthropology *project* (rather than an applied anthropology academic paper) this information about tensions over land use between Native Americans and climbers and how it has been mediated through land management agencies becomes accessible. The opportunity for more people to learn about their landscape is broadened. This project was rooted in making the politics of land use accessible through the format of a podcast. The emerging field of public anthropology demands that anthropological knowledge is sharable, accessible, and can be understood and utilized by many people.

As climbing becomes increasingly more popular across the country (not *just* in the Pacific Northwest), providing context for exactly what and whose land is being climbed on is becoming more important. Although there are frequently signs posted at trailheads with information about the region, rarely do those point out the cultural heritage elements. For areas deemed sacred, having this information readily available is a tremendous help in raising awareness for recreationalists and what their actions on the land exactly represent.

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