Confronting Gendered, Ethnic, and Religious Prejudice Within Park Design

Honors Thesis by

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Program in Environmental Design Honors Thesis

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Defense Date: March 30, 2021

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Research Question:

Which physical features of public parks lead non-normative women to feel threatened within Boulder County, Colorado?

ABSTRACT

Public parks often fail to accomplish their assigned agenda of being welcoming to all individuals regardless of gender, ethnicity, or religious affiliation. The use of the word welcoming in this thesis can be described as safe, comfortable, and a sense of belonging. The pursuit of this research thesis is to find which circumstances in existing park designs influence the acts of prejudice and discrimination against perceived minority women in public parks. This thesis tests a range of design features and human interactions sourced from stories that women who are not perceived as normative have experienced leading them to feel threatened in the public sphere. Women are often victims of discrimination in the form of harassment within outdoor public spaces, especially those who are not perceived as normative. That prejudice against religious and ethnic minority women is caused by a fear of threat. The literature review for this research examined historical and contemporary theories on subjects encompassing multicultural human behavior and safety in public spaces.

This explores an inductive research approach where I conducted semi-structured interviews with women who are and are not perceived as normative, then transcribing those interviews for coding and forensic mapping. These methods are to document non-normative women's experiences in outdoor public parks of Boulder County. The objective evaluation of interviews are to find elements of design features in public parks that are non-threatening.

The results are able to be organized into three categories: 1. Relative to existing theory, 2. Discrepancy of study participants, and 3. Unique to the 21st Century. These findings have told us what we are missing in public park design - they can be tested and applied to public space design for multiculturalism and safety while dismantling prejudice in American public parks. This research allowed us to engage with a gendered ethnic perspective - and find design elements that we never would have assumed to be important in inclusive design.

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OVERVIEW OF THESIS OBJECTIVES

The research examined in this thesis is grounded in identity politics because of the systemic oppression that affects the lives of minorities from various identities. It is focused on the circumstances that led physical features in public spaces to evoke the feeling of threat to all women who are not perceived as normative. Minorities around the world are speaking louder with education on the topic of injustices within their cities, and this research listens to those voices with a thorough analysis of design intention versus reaction.

This thesis includes a review of literature that includes three main categories: (1) Human Behavior in Public Space, (2) Issue of Prejudice in Public, and (3) Security in Urban Design. These sections include names of leading scholars based on their theories and principles on the relevant subjects. Historical scholars within the writing include William Whyte for his research on design standards within successful homogeneous outdoor public spaces of New York City, as well as Jane Jacobs' research on security in urban design in regards to community relations.

The result of this research is a concise list of design elements that have been thoroughly compared to the existing literature. These results are what design elements are deemed as secure and inclusive of all visitors regardless of ethnicity, religion, and gender to American public parks.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Framing of Human Behavior & Safety of Non-Normative Women in Public Space

INTRODUCTION

This literature review delivers fundamental knowledge on security and behavior toward women of differing identities in public spaces. It will provide insight into women's experiences to detect spatial factors that lead to security within outdoor public spaces. The focus on women rather than men is due to the history of women being objectified and misunderstood for their identities and self-expression used within public space. This literature review is to find correlations and contradictions within the existing literature on the topics of 'Human Behavior in Public Space,' 'Issue of Prejudice in Public' and 'Security in Urban Design.'. These sections include names of leading scholars based on their theories and principles on the relevant subjects. As each scholar and theory offers a puzzle piece, the review will look into what is missing and wherein the literature can be expanding.

HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN PUBLIC SPACE

The topic of design within public space has continued to develop with the realization of research being a valuable aspect within the discipline of architecture and the built environment. What is often overlooked in public space design is the fast-paced changes our society is undergoing. Public space is defined as an area or place that is open and accessible to all peoples, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age, or socio-economic level (UNESCO, "Inclusion Through Access to Public Space"). Public space is all around us the moment we step out our home's door, and the interaction we have within this public space can be directly influenced by the built environment we occupy. Understanding human behavior in public space will give us insight into how the built environment influences our actions and how we influence our environment.

Documented research officially began with William Whyte in the 1960s with the use of time-lapse photography, direct observations, and interviews. He found aspects of public space design that led to the success or failure of that space based on how people interact with it. In his publication The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces (1980) he coined a new phenomenon called triangulation. This called to the importance of having a center point of attention that people can share such as a sculpture, musician, or street performer. Entertainment was a large part of his additional findings including

easy access to food vendors, pedestrian traffic flow to watch people, and the opposite sex. Other findings centered around accessibility and user options including flexible seating choices, such as movable chairs, ledges, and steps, as well as space to socialize even when it's in the middle of the pedestrian traffic flow (Whyte, 1980). Where people move through space, how long they stay, and the interaction they have within the space were crucial aspects to understand how human behavior in public space impacts the success and failure within a public design. Some of these elements, in architecture, weren't originally designed to be key elements for the safety and community of a neighborhood. There is value in viewing platforms and space beyond their original architectural intent. Relative to streets and urban space, public parks hold the same quality: space for children to play and adults to sit, walk, and talk (Whyte, 1980). Whyte believed cities offer something greater than economic opportunity, he believed cities are a catalyst for bringing people together. Through his scholarship, he stressed the importance of civic engagement and community interaction, but hardly provided examples of what cross-cultural public spaces looked like and how they may differ from a traditional homogeneous urban space.

Public spaces have the potential to create placemaking for vibrant multicultural communities by bringing people together regardless of individual identities (e.g. religion, race, ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic class, etc.). A successful multicultural public space creates a welcoming environment for all with the feeling of security and inclusion from human interaction but also accessibility to amenities and features. Spaces made for people should include opportunities for interaction all while creating pockets of space to celebrate and emphasize cultural identity and practice (Knapp, 2008). In the book Rethinking Parks: Public Space and Cultural Diversity (Low, Toplini, Scheld, 2005) it was found that boardwalks, playgrounds, streets, and beaches are the most successful at creating multicultural environments. Opportunity for cross-cultural celebration and acceptance doesn't have to take the form of an up-and-coming spot or expensive materials, it is more important to create a space where individual identities are affirmed. Similar to Whyte in The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces, Low, Toplini, and Scheld also considered what makes a successful urban space. They conclude that a successful built environment is defined as a place where various beliefs and identities can be together with comfort and a place that supports healthy

interactions while also creating pockets of space where individuals can celebrate their own cultural or religious practices as they please (Low, Toplini, Scheld, 2005).

PREJUDICE IN PUBLIC

The term Prejudice is used to describe an affective feeling toward a person based on their perceived identity affiliation. The term often refers to a preconceived opinion that is often unfavorable while evaluating another person based on that person's gender, social class, beliefs, religion, race, ethnicity, language, or other personal characteristics (Gilbert, Fiske, & Lindzey, 2010). Prejudice aligns with the term value judgment, which is when something is considered bad or good depending on how it registers with a person's or group's attitude at a particular moment (Low, Taplini, & Scheld, 2005)." These terms along with discrimination, bias, and stereotype are commonly used to describe scenarios yet can be confused without defining their intended meaning. Sourced from the book Social Psychology, the definitions of stereotype, prejudice, and discrimination are as follows (Gilovich, Fiske, Linzey, 2010): "Stereotype: the beliefs about attributes that are thought to be characteristic of members of

particular groups.

Prejudice: a negative attitude or affective response toward a certain group and its members.

Discrimination: unfair treatment of a particular group based on their membership in that group." No word will be able to describe the pain caused by prejudice in our American society, so these words are used loosely to describe scenarios.

Since the Trump Administration took office in 2016, the country has become divided, and extremist views have become increasingly expressed verbally and physically than in previous years. Most Americans, a mere 65% of them, including majorities across racial and ethnic groups, say it has become more common for people to express racist or racially insensitive views since Donald Trump was elected president. A smaller yet significant share (45%) say these expressions have become more acceptable since his inauguration.

The majority of blacks and Asians (76% of each), and Hispanics (58%), say they have experienced acts of prejudice against them because of their race or ethnicity. These acts of prejudice include but weren't limited to acts of suspicion, lack of intelligence, unequal employment opportunities, and were unfairly stopped by police (Brown, Menasce Horowitz, & Cox, 2020).

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In 2004 a community-based innovative launched proposed solutions to the problem of violence and insecurity caused specifically by the social category of violence. This type of action can manifest from territorial or identity-based "turf" violence such as robbery, theft, and communal riots. Not all violence manifests in a physical form, though. The concept of "structural violence" is closing attention on non-physical, implicit acts such as exploitation, exclusion, inequality, and injustice. Interventions to reduce violence at the national, city, and community levels include traditional policy-level approaches and urban-focused interventions. Sector-specific approaches, such as criminal justice, seek to control and treat economic violence and public health. Newer approaches that focus on human rights and conflict transformation are concerned with political and institutional violence. These modernized approaches look more to the importance of integrated holisticness that has opened opportunities for citizen security such as CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) and urban renewal (Moser, 2004). Urban interventions can be utilized as a tool for social equity and security in public spaces.

Current injustices happening on our streets are being closely monitored by an innovative, multidisciplinary research group called Forensic Architecture, directed by Eyal Weizman. In their research analysis, they use architectural techniques and technology to evaluate past scenarios and events that were violent and in violation of human rights. An ongoing project they examined (as of March 2021) is the police brutality taking place at Black Lives Matter protests across America. Their data reveals patterns across months of violence (since May 2020), as well as interaction officers have had with far-right hate groups and militias (Weizman, Tavares, Schuppli, Situ Studio, 2010). Their mapping has identified information happening in public streets and plazas that are only able to be seen from the careful investigation of photography, video, and mapping of these events.

SECURITY IN URBAN DESIGN

Security in public space has been an important topic in the interdisciplinary study of Environmental Design for almost a century. In the 1950s and early '60s, this subject was explored by a journalist, Jane Jacobs. Her theories suggested the importance of pedestrian traffic with a multitude of intentions and varying

times to sustain livability and vibrancy in a city. Taking a look into community and safety in public spaces of New York City, she identified design elements that will make or break the security and ease of a space's users. One of those elements is the sidewalk. She claimed their use and placement is a marker of public versus private space and useful for the ability to watch the constant movement of pedestrians from buildings to outdoor space. This ultimately creates an "unconscious assumption of general street support" and "trust" when it is needed (Jacobs, 1961). Also, she claimed having access to public workers and vendors creates news and familiarity to the community, along with the use of sidewalks, will prevent segregation and discrimination. Regarding the importance of diversity in neighborhoods, Jacobs argued the importance of having multiple uses within a district be used at all times. She expressed the importance of short blocks to keep facades varying, active, and clean with the elimination of large empty lots to walk by, this also allows a variety of walking directions to increase safety opportunities. This would enhance social and economic development. Finally, she mentions that having a density of people, including workers and residents, will encourage the use of the space (Jacobs, 1961). Jacobs concluded that

frequent users of a space are what makes a space appear lively, thriving, and safe. Walter Hood through his scholarship in 2003 has also been concerned with design's response to community needs and the expansion of what a park can be used for. Through analysis of specific American parks, Hood found that parks of any size can be used as a tool to solve social and cultural problems with the use of "hybrid landscapes" (Hood, 2003).

Women throughout history have been subject to danger from the public. Second Generation Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) takes a different approach than Jacob's, as it pertains to a proposed framework focusing on gender that considers the utilization of four main strategies, each tailored to directly address feminist concerns and enhance a locality's collective efficacy to increase women's security. The four main strategies are community culture, connectivity, and pro-feminist masculinity, community threshold, and social cohesion. As this framework relies specifically on domestic and partner abuse, it is relevant to discriminatory abuse. The developing and improving forms of defensible space design through the engagement of community-level activities create forms of locally concerning norms, beliefs, and values

about various security issues (Dekeseredy, Donnermeyer, & Schwartz, 2009).

EXPLORING GENDER, ETHNICITY AND RELIGION IN PARKS

By focusing on differing identities of women and their experiences within outdoor public space, the review was expected to better define the normalized conception of discrimination toward women in differing forms. This in turn can challenge the standard design elements of security to be better informed and inclusive. The literature thus far found elements that create a successful public space, proves insecurities in the public of women in America, and examines why diversity in a city is valuable. However these individualized findings don't find intersection with the three categories of 'Human Behavior in Public Space,' 'Issue of Prejudice in Public' and 'Security in Urban Design.' Most importantly, the review wasn't able to identify design elements that create insecurity for diverse women in a public space. Outdoor public spaces have the role to be inclusive and welcome to all, yet this isn't the case and little research proves that.

This leads to the proposed research question, **"Which physical features of public parks lead non-normative women to feel threatened within Boulder County, Colorado?"**
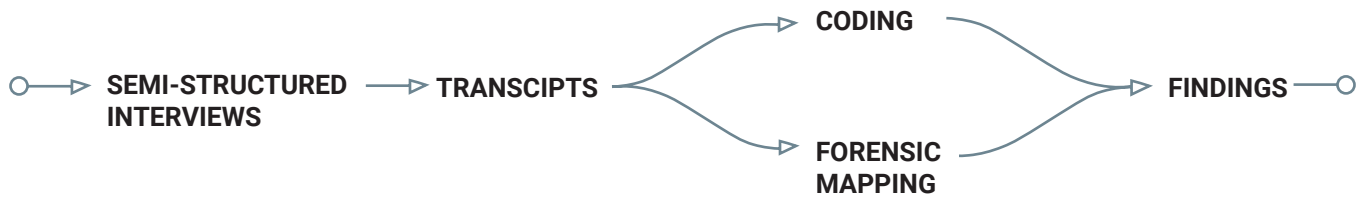
CHAPTER 3

Methodology of Research Exploration

Figure 1: Methodology Diagram. From left to right, this was the research process.

INTRODUCTION

The methodology used in this research was adapted from several scholars and focused around the inductive research approach, or bottom-up. That consisted of a system of observation, pattern analysis, tentative hypothesizing, and theorizing. This system was accomplished through the use of semi structured interviewing, transcribing, coding, forensic mapping, and finding conclusions. In addition to this system, I have found a unique approach of utilizing these methods and technologies that allow the data to support itself in different forms of analysis. Threats to reliability were considered at every stage of this research process and have been mentioned in the writing.

There were three different methodologies that could have been used to resolve the research question: historical analysis, anthropological research, and sociological research. I used the

sociological approach to study current common parks. Since the Coronavirus pandemic restricted my ability to observe people in real time, I was not able to use the anthropolical approach.

DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCHED

The choice of location to conduct this study was based on familiarity with the location as well as consideration of racial and economic demographics. Boulder County, Colorado was chosen to represent an American county with

Rural Parks
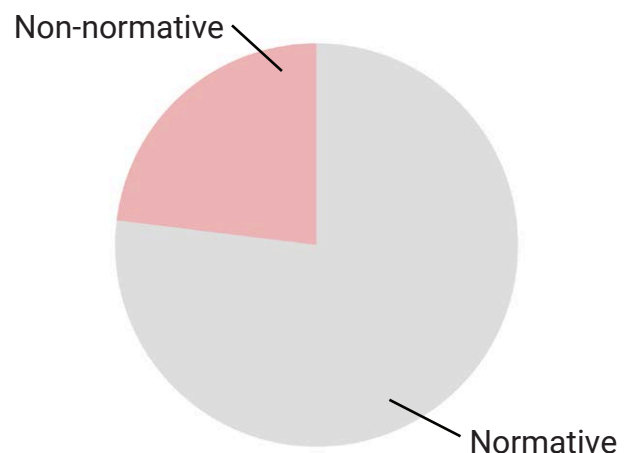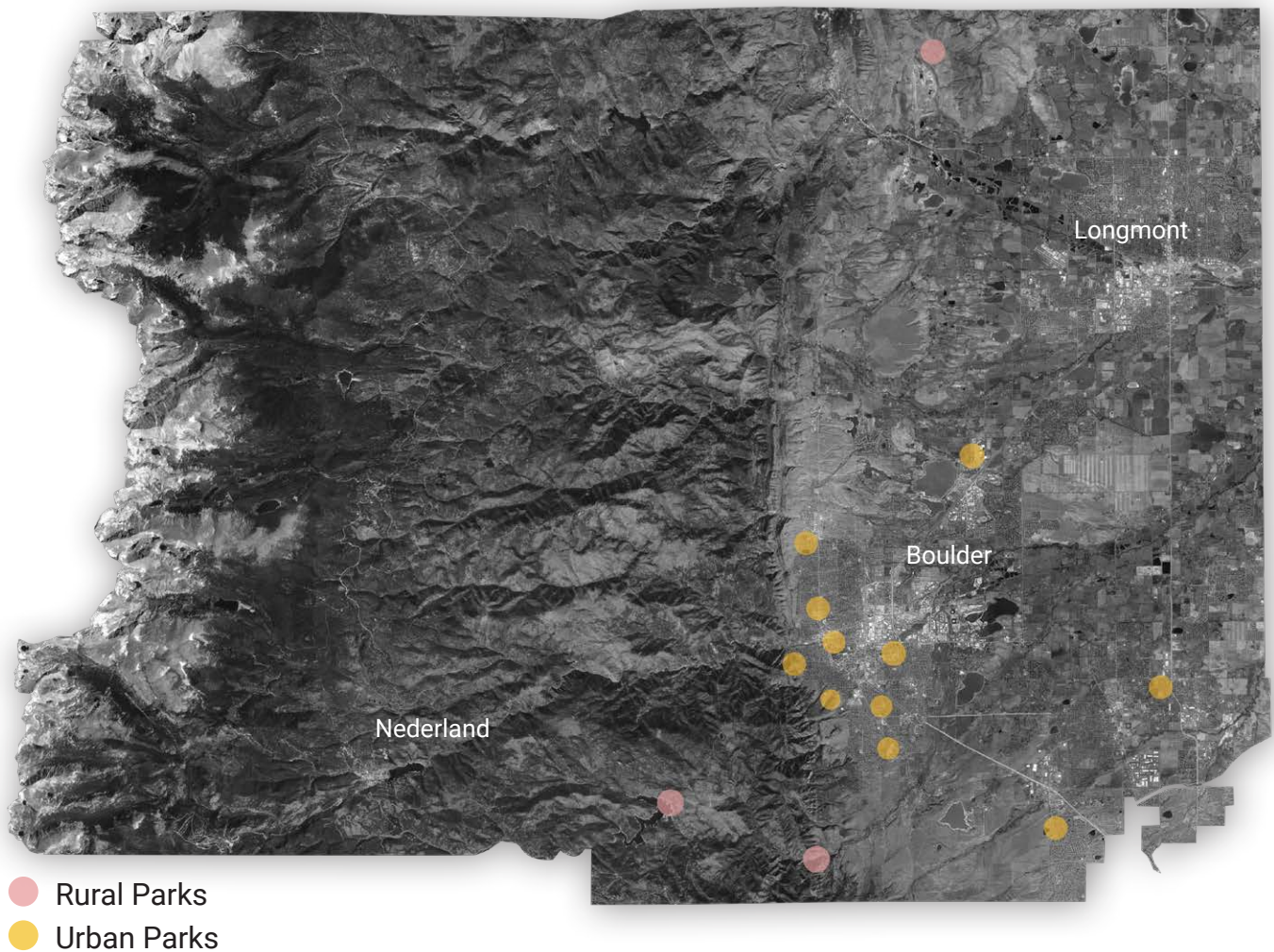
Urban Parks

Figure 2: Boulder County map highlighting concentration of rural and urban parks mentioned by interview participants.

standards of inclusivity in its most current master plan (2019). Boulder County is home to 326,000 residents, 77% are white and 23% are people of color including Latinxs, Asians, and African Americans (Data USA, "Boulder County"). The county was chosen rather than just the city of Boulder because of its socioeconomic diversity. From this population, I narrowed down my research focus to women because of the known fear that is associated with our gender in public spaces. The way others perceive women in public spaces, whether alone or accompanied, can be intimidating and dangerous. All women experience forms of insecurity in public space, but the research is focused even further on non-normative women (being women who are not perceived as traditional western-white and able-bodied). Focusing on non-normative women opens up discussion and research to contemporary issues of racial discrimination and

injustice in public spaces. Considering non-normative women are the minority in Boulder County, I found it still relevant to hear the voices of normative women as well. The purpose of choosing women's identities for this research is to unpack their personal stories and experiences within public parks of Boulder County to understand acts of prejudice among both normative and non-normative women.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The use of semi-structured interviews opened a dialogue of welcoming and unwelcoming experiences in Boulder County public parks. When the term welcoming is used, it should also consider concepts such as security, sense of belonging, and agency within a space. When the term unwelcoming is used, it should consider concepts like threatening, excluded, and insecure. These terms were gathered as a means to be specific in the type of comfort I was looking for within the experiences of the women I interviewed. Unfortunately because of COVID-19, the recruitment for interviews was conducted through email, social media postings, and word of mouth. The interviews took place

virtually through private Zoom audio and video calls.

The questions were created based on existing literature of similar research conducted by several scholars in the field. The structure of the semi-structured interviews was influenced and adapted by Jane Jacobs in her research with community advocacy (Jacobs, 1961). In The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces, William Whyte analyzed where people move through space, how long they stay, and the interaction they have within the space (Whyte, 1980). This was his mapping technique through the use of time lapse photography, which I will mention more in the next section. The concepts of what he was finding through these observations are what was adapted into the research questions for this project. In Rethinking Parks: Public Space and Cultural Diversity (Low, Toplini, Scheld, 2005), a large take away from understanding the needs of ethnically diverse park users were that we need a space in public where we celebrate our own cultural or religious practices freely without concern of disturbance, attention, and security. A few of the most common questions were based on these points in the literature.

Each interview was split into two parts: 1. The

most welcoming[1] public park in Boulder County they, the interviewee, have experienced, and 2. The most unwelcoming[2] public park in Boulder County they have experienced. Each interview part had the same set of loosely structured questions that would allow the analysis to be consistent despite the wide variety of parks that were mentioned through the interviews. I borrowed this method of semi-structured interviews from Wethington, Elaine, and Meghan L. McDarby in Interview methods (structured, semistructured, unstructured) where the use of semi-structured interviews has a few foundational questions and the rest are unplanned and completely dependent on what information is needed from that specific interviewee (Wethington and McDarby, 2015). This interview method was necessary for the success of the research since the interviews were primarily about their experience of comfort in parks. The question topics included, but weren't limited to: the use of the park (activity, where they went, comfort to perform cultural and religious practices), details of the space (season, time, frequency, duration), other users of the park (presence of others, interactions outside of

party, assumed demographic of users), and their impression of the park.

Immediately after each interview finished, I highlighted the transcripts with common themes and variables that were frequently mentioned and those that were considered from the literature review, which drove the coding that led to the research findings.

FORENSIC MAPPING

To understand how the experience of the interviewees was influenced by their surroundings, I conducted forensic, or investigative, mapping from an aerial perspective. This concept of forensic mapping was adapted from Eyal Weizman in Forensic Architecture (Weizman, Eyal, Paulo Tavares, Susan Schuppli, and Situ Studio, 2010). In their research analysis, they use architectural techniques and technology to evaluate past scenarios and events that were violent and in violation of human rights. Their data reveals patterns of behavior and/or how the built environment influences certain events or reactions. This research used forensic mapping

1   When welcoming was said in interviews, it was always described with the terms security, sense of belonging, and agency within a space.

2   Whenever unwelcoming was said, it was paired with the terms threatened, excluded, and insecure.

as a means to understand all variables detected in the interview coding, and how it related to existing literature and the existing park design.

This form of mapping was also inspired by William Whyte's Street Life Project. With a small team of assistants, he used his camera and notebook to conduct research on human behavior within urban plazas. Whyte used time lapse photography to track movement and use patterns, however I am tracking the use and movement of people but through the interviewees memory and perception of the park. Whyte's findings, as shown in his short film "Social Life of Small Urban Spaces" (Whyte, 1980), are lively with videography and a voiceover. The findings I am representing through forensic mapping are static, based on memory, and observational. A unique approach I took to understand the interviewees use of the space was to share a Google Maps tab on Zoom screen share so the interviewee could annotate their movement, activity, and observations in the park from their memory. This method of forensic mapping along with the interview coding allowed me to find unique data that will conclude as the findings.

COMPARING RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS AND MAPPING WITH EXISTING LITERATURE

Cross analyzing the three methods of information extraction in this research (interviews, forensic mapping and literature review) led me to consider variables I would not have identified from one method on its own. A private Excel spreadsheet was used to hold information from all interviewees answers and their identities. It is to remain private for the protection of their answers and identification. The spreadsheet allowed me to find common themes and variables that were used in mapping, coding and the review of literature that led to the findings.

## THREATS TO RELIABILITY

This research presents a range of threats to reliability of the results. Using Boulder County as the primary case county for this research has its limitations because of how it compares to other counties across the country. Boulder has an exceptionally low crime rate which allows

women here to have a greater sense of security and comfort in public spaces, especially if they have recently moved here from a place they saw as much more threatening. The use of Colorado also has its limitations considering its racial composition being dominantly white non-Hispanic (68%) (USA Data, Colorado). This may influence the results of the research to have bias toward public parks as white spaces considering this is the majority race to occupy this state.

Time is another consideration as a threat to reliability. This thesis began in late July 2020, but the Institutional Review Board (IRB) University of Colorado Boulder human subject interview consent was not granted to my research until late December 2020. This time frame gave me only 3 months to recruit participants and work through the entire methodology from interviews to findings. Also, the Coronavirus pandemic influenced the accessibility I had to the research method of human observation that I would have used if it were safe to be present in public spaces.

The recruitment process for the interview participants was challenging as I didn't receive a response from 85% of the institutions I contacted. Most of the people who reached out to me offering to participate were white, retired women. Since my name is typically associated
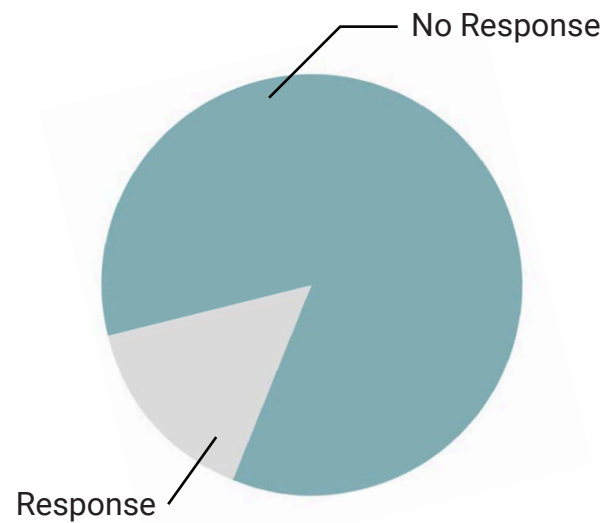
as a Caucasian female, this may have discouraged non-normative women to be interested in being interviewed by me on the subject of prejudice in parks. Most of the non-normative interviews I conducted were thanks to word of mouth from colleagues and friends, which made the average non-normative participant age range much younger (estimated average between 20-30 years old) than those of the normative participants (estimated average between 50-60 years old).

The grouping of non-normative participants was also a limitation to this research. The accessibility I had to ethnic and religious minority women influenced how I had to group the research pool. The ethnicities of the women who interviewed with me were so diverse I wasn't able to draw conclusions of independent ethnicities since there were only 1 or 2 of each ethnicity from around the world.

When interviewing the first 3 normative women, I noticed observational bias on the Zoom video calls. I believe my appearance as a Muslim hijab-wearing women influenced the answers the participants were giving. For example, when I asked one participant about the first impression she had of a welcoming park, she said "Oh! The diversity was incredible there. I saw so many families of all different colors. I started wondering where all these people were coming from!" She used the word diversity another 5 times throughout the 45 minute call to 4 different questions not related to other users in the park. This was similar to all normative interviews I conducted. After the third normative interview, I removed my hijab for the remainder of the normative interviews and noticed a drastic difference in responses, and believe the answers were natural to the experience of the park without observational bias involved.

Grouping of diverse culture, ethnicities, and religions is another threat to reliability. In this research I grouped normative women as appearing as western-white and able bodied individuals, and I grouped non-normative women as appearing as those not seen as a typical white American. This method has limitations as the primary focus of women for this research is on non-normative

women, which I categorized as one group despite it consisting of 3 different religions and each with a different ethnicity. All interview participants had their own idea of what their identity means to them, and some were more aware of social, public injustices than others.

Finally, the last threat to the reliability that I have considered is that all interview participants were debriefed before the interview what the intention of this research was. This may have influenced participants to consider their positionality on the subject, changing what their natural response may have been.

CHAPTER 4

Revealing Gendered, Ethnic and Religious Discomfort in Public Parks

INTRODUCTION

The collection and comprehension of this research data was conducted with interview analysis and forensic mapping analysis. The interview analysis was completed by identifying variables and common themes within the interview transcriptions were able to create hypotheses. The results of this analysis process have been translated into a few graphics that tell the story of this research process and where the findings are being drawn from.

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

The interviews were conducted over the course of three months, totaling at sixteen interviews from nine different ethnicities[1] and four different religions. Those that interviewed with me as non-normative women identified themselves as 2 Arab. 1 African, 1 Afghani, 1 Indian, 1 Latina, 2 African American, and 1 biracial. Those that were identified as normative were 5 Caucasian, and 1 Jewish. The religions included were Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and atheist. This being said, the word normative through

this research is defined as someone who has the appearance of a typical wester, white American. The use of non-normative in this research is defined as someone who has characteristics that are not commonly seen as western, white, and American. Interview participants were asked before coming to the meeting to think of and name the most welcoming (secure, sense of agency, inclusive) public park they have been to in Boulder County and to name the most unwelcoming (threatening, insecure) public park they have been to in Boulder County. Through the interview process I was able to identify common themes or variables that would direct my research in the future interviews and organize my findings. The most notable themes included: the presence of others outside their party, their activity in the park, the interactions they had with others outside their party, and their comfort of religious and cultural practices at the park.

The presence of others outside of the interviewee's party was an important factor that was discussed in each park. I asked a question regarding this topic twice through the interview, once for the most welcoming park and another time for the most unwelcoming park. Most

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1   The use of the word ethnicity is what I asked interview participants to provide, but was intentionally not strict on ensuring their answer was an ethnicity. Many people are not aware of what their ethnicity is, so I allowed them to answer with the race, nationality, or ethnicity that they most strongly identified with.

women would begin by saying if it was either busy or slow when they go. I would ask them to expand their answer by describing who was there - typically this would say a lot by the way they expressed through their voice and language the type of users. For welcoming parks, a common answer from non-normative women was their excitement of diversity, someone who looks like them, at the same park. Another common answer would be the presence of parents with their children at a playground, and would smile to say how much they love being around small children with their parents. For unwelcoming parks a common answer when discussing who else was there was to say they were "all white" with an exaggerated tone in their voice that suggested "of course." Their answers brought attention to the elements they distinctly remember seeing whether it was young adults laying in a hammock, or elderly near the water.

The activity the interviewee did while at the park was mentioned throughout the interview in different ways such as when they explained why they felt welcomed or unwelcomed at a park or if I asked them why they went there. Describing the activity helped navigate me through the space they occupied. I found that the welcoming parks always had more activities listed than the unwelcoming parks. During a conversation about the activities, many people would also mention any programming the park offered such as the Farmer's Market or a tennis league.

The interactions non-normative women had in the parks were starkly different. If a negative experience wasn't mentioned in their description of why they felt a park was the most unwelcoming, this is when they would tell their experience of an act of prejudice against them that influenced their memory of the park. There were several different responses to this question such as "long stares," "a large group of men yelled at me when I was alone," "approached and asked why I am wearing that," and "no one said hi back." Common responses to the same question but when asked about the most welcoming park were, "random kids and I would have staring contests," "parents compliment my baby," "we say hi while walking past each other," and "no interactions." If it isn't a negative interaction, it's a positive experience.

Understanding the comfort people have of religious and cultural practices was a bit complicated to discuss in the interview. All women said they don't have religious or cultural practice except for Muslim women who would speak about both praying as a religious practice as

well as any cultural traditions they may celebrate. This was difficult to unpack as there must be cultural traditions that are not common in our wester-white normative parks such as using a loud voice, playing foreign language music, or dancing (these are assumptions of what non-normative cultural practice may look like). From this I understood that either the question was framed incorrectly to not communicate the intention, or people are not aware of their own cultural practice restraints in public parks.

Through the analysis of women with varying ethnicities and religions, it has become clear that normative women in the interviews regarding welcomeness of public parks considered the sense of safety based on how they perceive the people around them rather than how others perceive them. The intention of this research was to identify circumstances that influence prejudice against female ethnicity or religion in public parks. That being said, for the remainder of this thesis paper, I will only be discussing non-normative women's perspectives on these issues and will discuss the findings of non-normative experiences unless otherwise stated.

Welcoming to Non-Normative Women

Multiple paths

Active playground
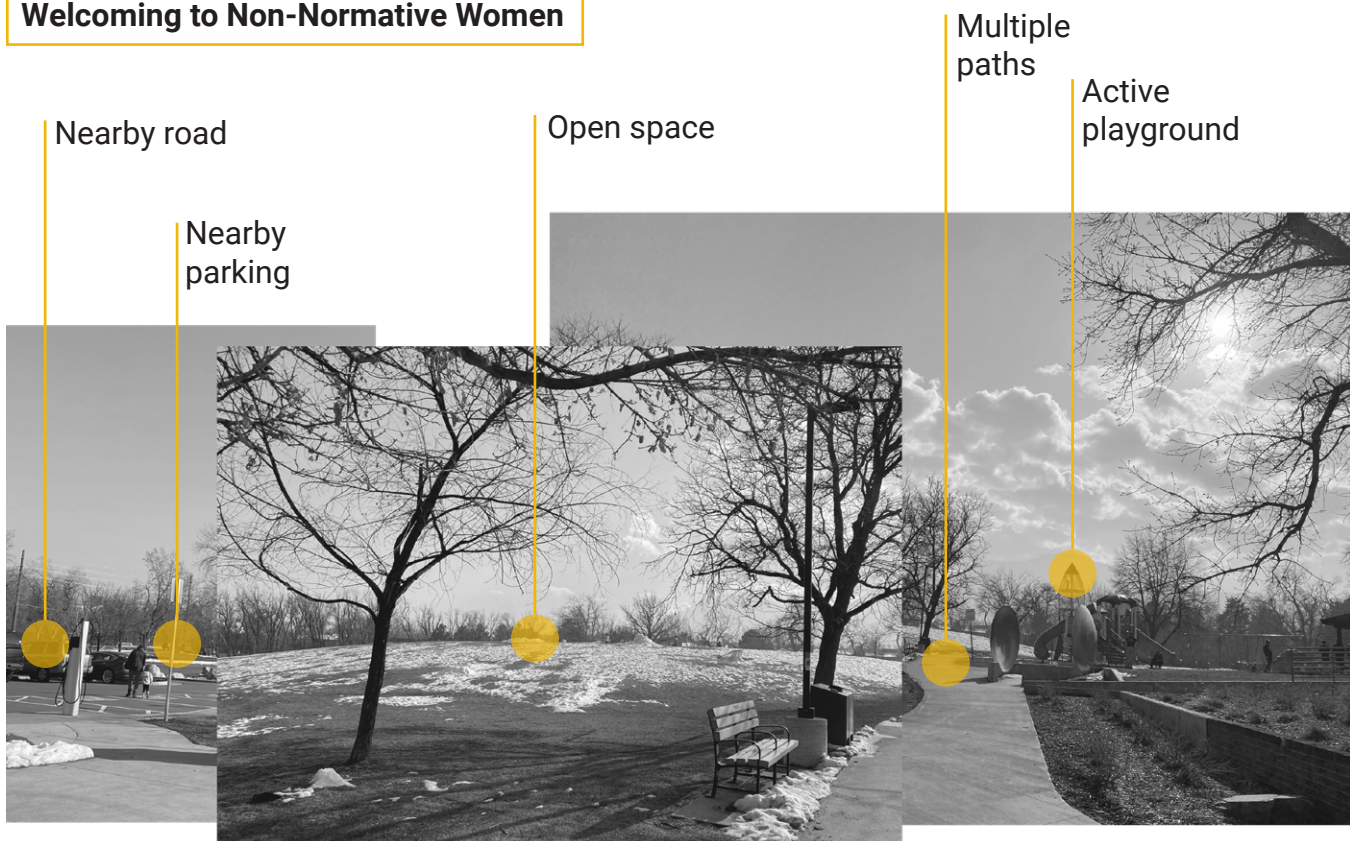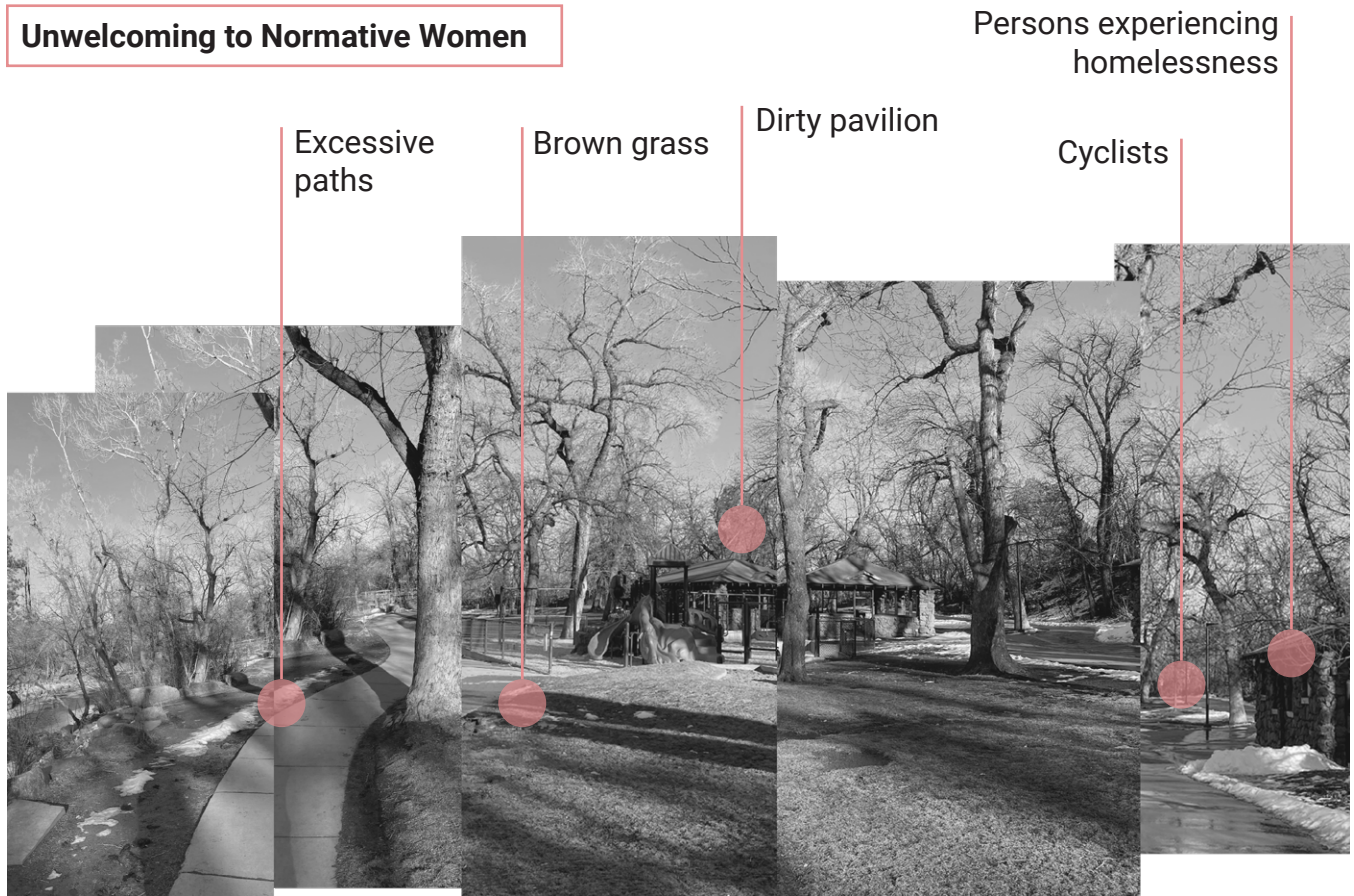
Nearby road

Open space

Nearby parking

Figure 3: Collage of images taken of Scott Carpenter Park in Boulder, CO. The images are to understand during analysis how the interviewee viewed and remembered the park.

Unwelcoming to Normative Women

Excessive paths

Brown grass

Dirty pavilion

Cyclists

Persons experiencing homelessness

Welcoming to Non-Normative Women

Water

Multiple paths

Diversity in ages, races, & activities

Open areas to sit

Accessible

Figure 4: Collages of images taken of Eben G. Fine Park in Boulder, CO. The images are to understand during analysis how the interviewee viewed and remembered the park.

Welcoming *and* Unwelcoming to Normative Women

Beautiful

Street parking

Variety of activities

Rushed parking

Crowded trails

Welcoming *and* Unwelcoming to Non-Normative Women

Beautiful

No privacy

Friendly rangers

Rushed parking

Family oriented

Crowded trails

Several people

Figure 5: Collage of images taken of Chautauqua Park in Boulder, CO. The images are to understand during analysis how the interviewee viewed and remembered the park.
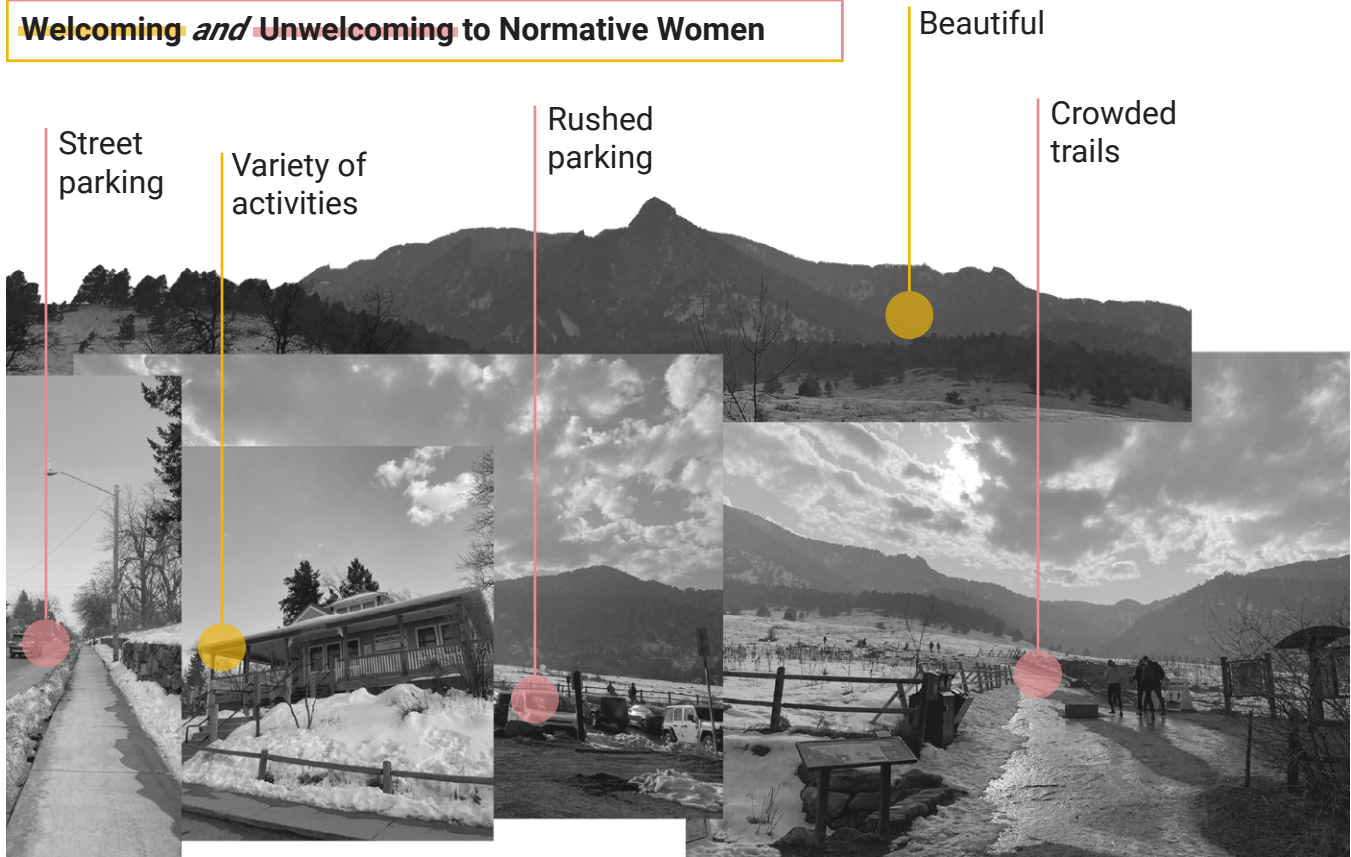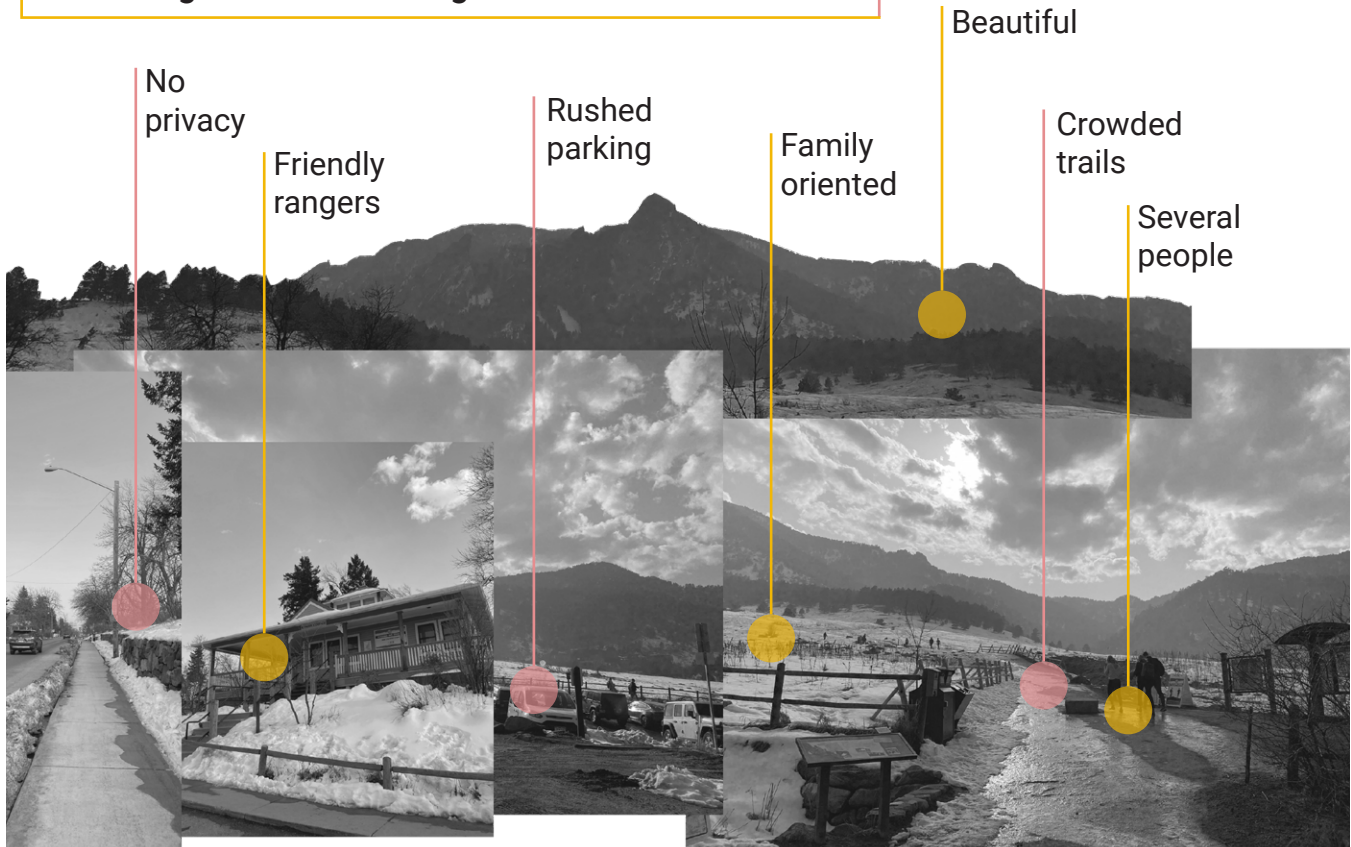
Unwelcoming to Normative Women

Excessive paths

Exposed to roads

Lonely

Illegal encampments

Cyclists

Unfamiliar people

Welcoming to Non-Normative Women

Multiple paths

Hidden from street

Families playing

Water access with rocks

Cafe and library access

Figure 6: Collages of images taken of Central Park (West) in Boulder, CO. The images are to understand during analysis how the interviewee viewed and remembered the park.

Unwelcoming to Normative Women

Dark & hidden

Approached for money

Large groups of men

Persons experiencing homelessness

Slow unless programmed

Unwelcoming to Non-Normative Women

People only pass through

No seating

Large groups of men

Transient persons
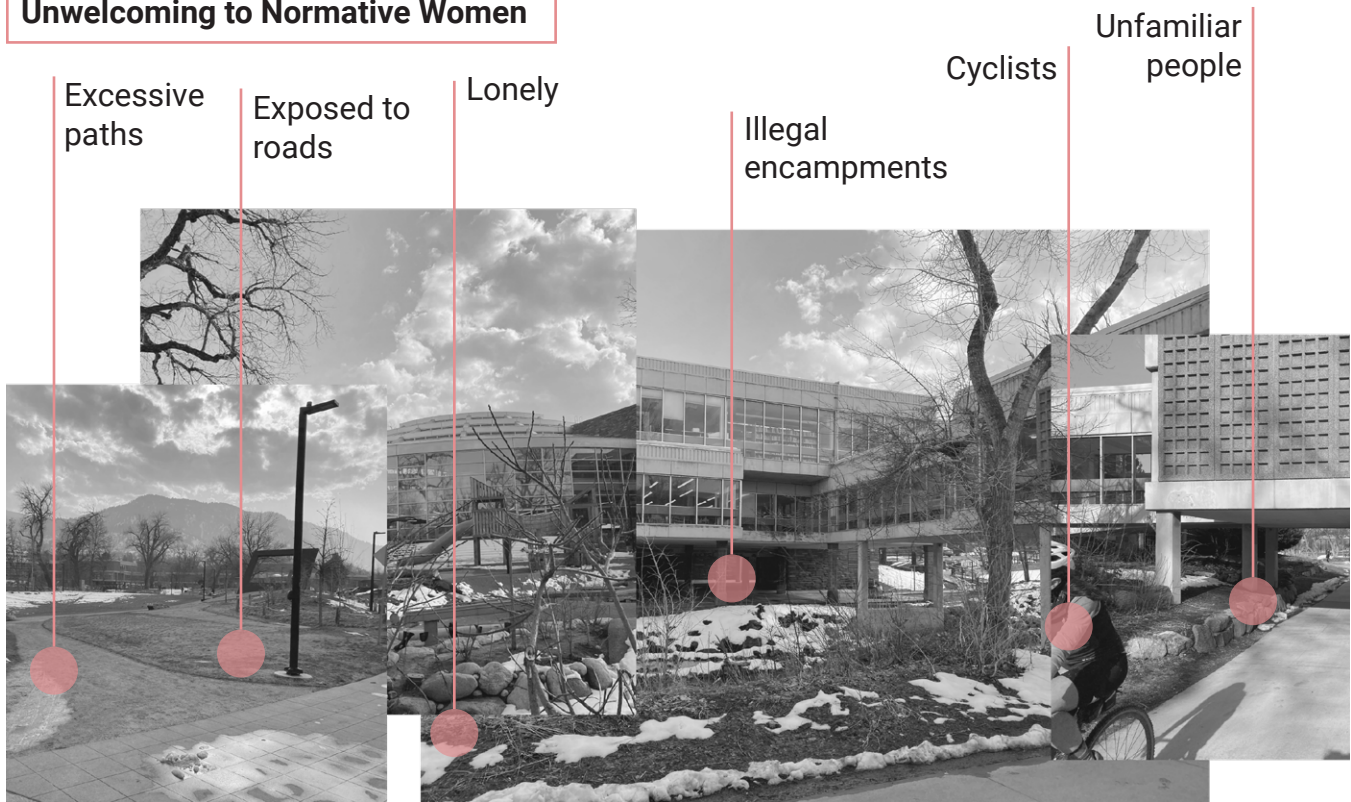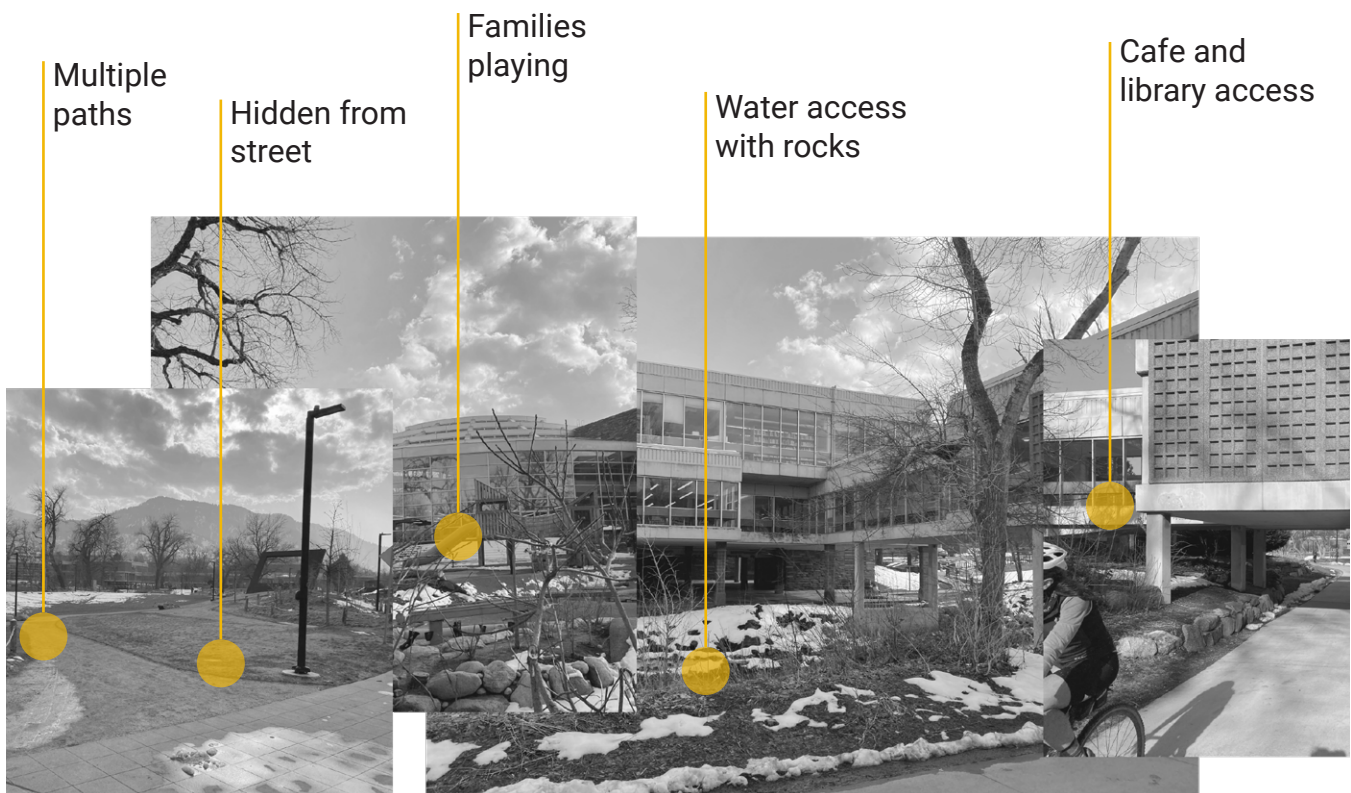
Slow unless programmed

Figure 7: Collage of images taken of Central Park (East) in Boulder, CO. The images are to understand during analysis how the interviewee viewed and remembered the park.

30

While discussing both the welcoming and unwelcoming parks the interviewee identified, I asked them to walk me through their experience there including where they came from, where they went to, what they did, and who else was there. During the Zoom call I shared my screen with the park on Google Maps so they were able to directly point out which trail, bench or tree they went to and why. The transcriptions were coded to understand common elements that were found in welcoming parks as well as unwelcoming parks. This will be expanded upon in the next section.

MAPPING ANALYSIS

Based on the information provided from the interviewee's experiences within the parks from beginning to end, I mapped all notable elements on a satellite image using circles and lines to investigate the relationship of their experience and the existing features of those parks. This perspective of the park also allowed me to compare existing literature to the current park design and how the design may have influenced the human behavior in that space ultimately leading to the positive or negative experience of the user that described it. The forensic mapping shown here are a few examples of the process I

went through to identify new elements of the non-normative women's experiences within these parks. With this technique, I found six key attributes that impacted the user's experience: proximity or parking, availability of cell reception, amount of walking trails, diversity in activities, ages and races, and the proximity of other park users. The notes seen attached to the forensic mapping are a few examples of hypotheses that were considered when viewing the park from this perspective. These hypotheses were then compared to the existing literature that was discussed at the beginning of this book.

There are several elements in this mapping that call to attention the enjoyment of playgrounds in public parks. Interviewees gave reasons such as kids are fun to watch, it feels safe being in a family-oriented place, and the enjoyment of hearing their laughter. Similarly, in Rethinking Parks: Public Space and Cultural Diversity (Low, Toplini, Scheld, 2005) the authors mentioned playgrounds as one of the four public spaces that are the most successful at creating multicultural environments. In the parks mentioned through this research, this theory is proving to be successful by creating opportunities for diversity in ages and races to come together in a family-oriented environment.

The ability to park a vehicle in or near a park has been commonly mentioned as an important factor of safety and inclusivity throughout this research. Women are using their cars as a means of easy escape if a need arises, but also as a vessel of shelter and privacy. It is also a convenient tool to bring comfort to those that need additional care or support like disabled individuals, elderly, and children.

A cell phone is being used for more than a selfie. Cell reception has been commonly said by non-normative women in this research to be a major contributing factor to their safety and even willingness to go to a specific park. This is especially important in rural parks since they are often isolated from businesses, homes, and the nearest town center.

The amount of walking trails a public space has contributes to the feeling of welcomeness non-normative women have in public parks. Jane Jacobs theorized that in her suggestion that sidewalks can have a multitude of intentions. It can be used as a marker of public vs. private and offers the ability to watch people come and go from the space they occupy.

CONCLUSION

These hypotheses were created with constant evaluation and comparison with the coding from interview transcripts and then referenced to the existing literature review discussed. The data has concluded with some new elements that haven't yet been discussed in literature and some that are branching off of existing theories from Setha Lowe, Jane Jacobs, and William Wyhte.

● Unwelcoming Parks
● Welcoming Parks
● Welcoming and Unwelcoming Parks

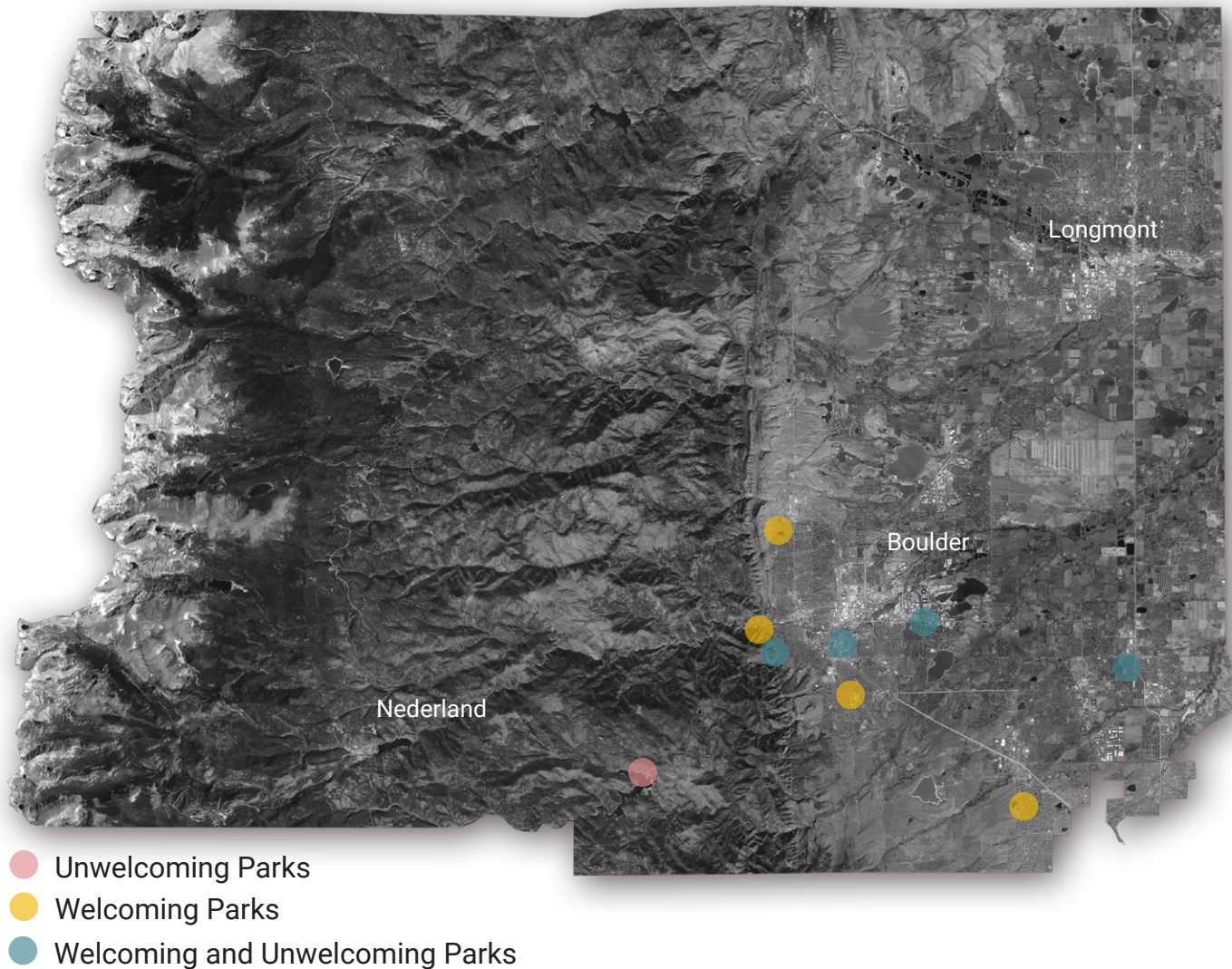Figure 8: Boulder County satelite map highlighing parks named as unwelcoming and welcoming by non-normative interview participants. This is the concentration of parks mentioned in interviews.

Figure 9: Forensic Mapping of Scott Carpenter Park, Boulder CO

Figure 10: Forensic Mapping of Eben G. Fine Park, Boulder CO

◎ Location of Activity
○ Positive Observations
○ Negative Observations
〰 Route

Legend applies to figures 9-12

Observations of Scott Carpenter Park Mapping Analysis

A. Parking near the park reassures if there is an emergency, they have access to quick transportation.

B. Adults playing with children at the playground is family-oriented and feels safe.

C. Open space to sit on the ground is functional and prevents competition of users in the park.

D. A small group of people near by playing a game a having fun is also fun for those nearby. The sound of laughter makes the park more enjoyable.

E. Loud, drunk college men are seen as unpredictable and dangerous.

F. The presence of other people enjoying themselves and minding their own business is a reassurance of security and pleasure.

Observations of Eben G. Fine Park Mapping Analysis

A. A variety of activities for all ages takes attention away from differences in identity.

B. Parking nearby allows for easy access of those with elderly and children with them, and to bring equipment for and play picnic.

C. Open space that allows freedom of activity to all users is inviting.

D. Picnic benches and playgrounds create opportunity for all abilities to enjoy the park.

E. Intoxicated persons spending the night at the park and talking to park users is uncomfortable and intimidating.
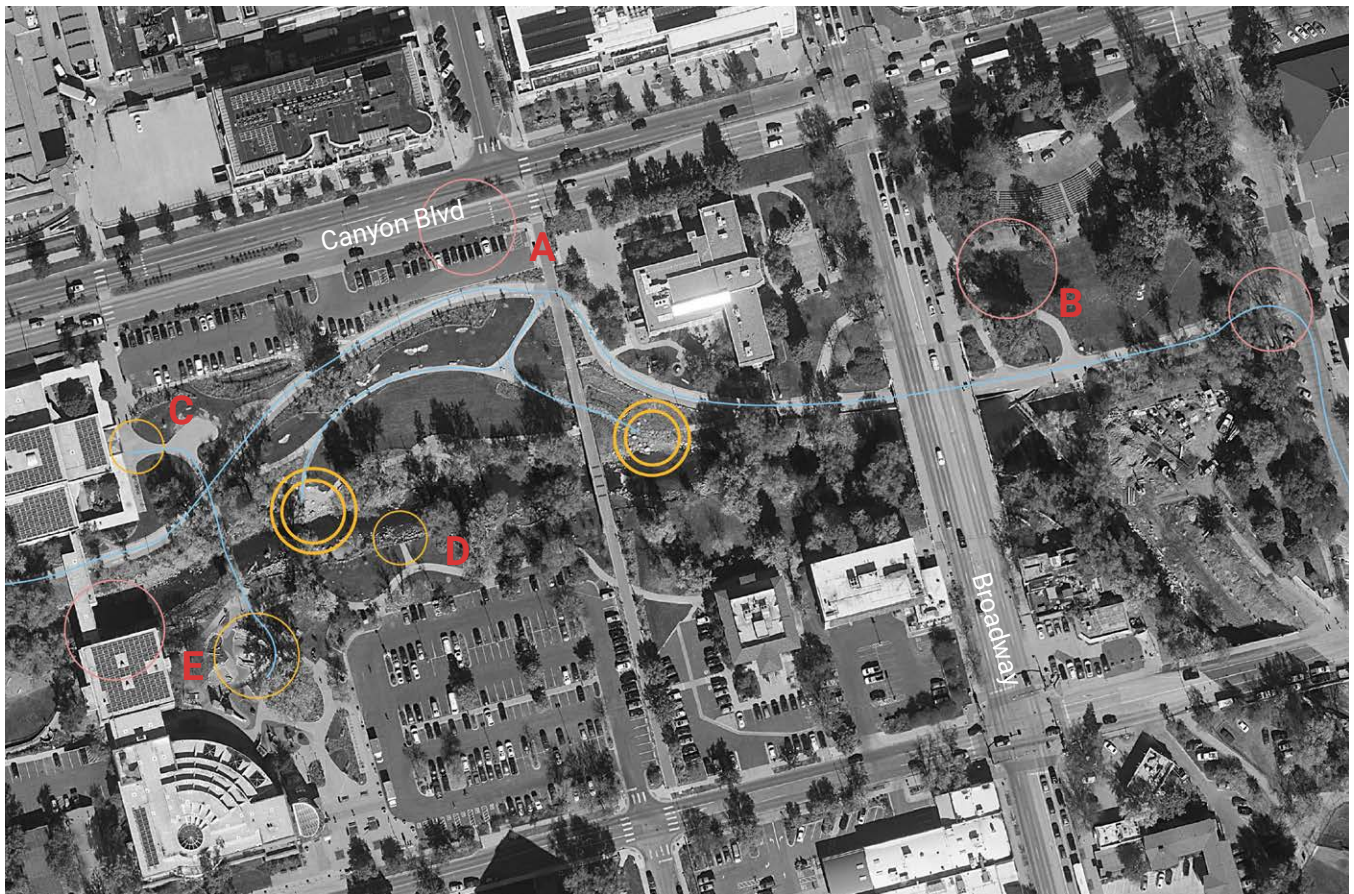
Figure 11: Forensic Mapping of Central Park, Boulder CO

Figure 12: Forensic Mapping of Chautauqua Park, Boulder CO

Observations of Central Park Mapping Analysis

A. The sound of road traffic creates anxiety of people in the park.

B. Having a section of the park that is only used during programmed events makes the space lonely and isolating.

C. Having the library and cafe here programs this space without too much surveillance.

D. Access to the water for all abilities is inviting and inclusive.

E. Pedestrian underpasses are dark and cold and if people are sleeping under them it is even more intimidating.

Observations of Chautauqua Park Mapping Analysis

A. Availability of alternative parking locations is appreciated and encourages future use.

B. Closed off space surrounded by homes and trees can appear private and draw away use from minority users.

C. Too many people of the same race in one park can bring out unique self-insecurities about our appearance in public spaces.

D. A friendly, educational and monitored central location is commonly used as a meeting point.

CHAPTER 5

Physical Elements Found to Promote Inclusion in Public Parks

INTRODUCTION

The analysis of data offered findings, some unique and some contributing to existing theories. This research's findings stress the importance of:

1. Proximity of parking
2. Access to cell reception
3. Integration of multiple walking paths
4. Diversity of activities for all users of a park
5. Separation of users through nooks or corners
6. Diversity of other park users in ages and races

I will go through each of these research findings in great detail and compare them with current literature on the subjects.

1. PARK PARKING

The ability to park a vehicle in or near a park has been commonly mentioned as an important factor of safety and inclusivity throughout this research. Women are using their cars as a vessel of shelter and privacy and a means of an emergency exit if the need arises. It is also a convenient tool to bring comfort to those that need additional care of support like disabled individuals, elderly, and children. Of the literature reviewed in this research, there has not been consideration of parking at public parks, nor the theory of cars being used as a tool for security and privacy of cultural or religious practices. Parking lots at public parks are common, but the access to them is sometimes difficult. Creating clear paths and hierarchy of movement toward parking lots can give insurance to non-normative women that they can access their vehicle when needed.

2. THE ROLE OF CELL RECEPTION AS SECURITY

The cellphone has importance to the safety a non-normative woman has in public parks, especially rural parks. Cell reception has been commonly said by women in this research to be a major contributing factor to their safety and even willingness to go to a specific park. This is especially important in rural parks since they are often isolated from bystanders, businesses, and the nearest town center. Of this research group, only three rural parks were mentioned by three different women, and only one of them was a non-normative woman. After learning of this variable, I began asking in the next interviews if cell reception played a role in the sense of safety in a place and all non-normative women confirmed that to be true. Cell reception has not

been mentioned in the literature review studied for this research - this hypothesis is unique to this study alone. Cell towers or emergency communication stations could be implemented in public parks to allow any non-normative woman to have the insurance of safety when it is needed.

3. WALKING AS INCLUSION

The amount of walking trails a public space has contributes to the feeling of welcomeness non-normative women have in public parks. Jane Jacobs theorized that sidewalks can have a multitude of intentions. It can be used as a marker of public vs. private and offers the ability to watch people come and go from the space they occupy. It is also the assumed street support and trust of people walking on paths that allows us to feel comfortable when occupying a public park. Interestingly though, most normative women actually used the reason for excessive paths to be a contributing factor to the sense of being excluded in a park. They associated more than one path in a park to be overwhelming and unnecessary. I do believe there should be a balance between too many paths and not enough to encompass

the needs of all women. Further research could identify where that threshold is and if the type of path contributes to the sense of safety and insecurity.

4. ACTIVITIES FOR ALL

A variety of activities in public parks has been found in this research to be preferred by non-normative women because it takes the attention away from their differences in identity. An example of diverse activities could be easy and safe access to a water body or a playground. Interviewees gave reasons for a playground to be a welcoming feature as kids are fun to watch, it feels safe being in a family-oriented place, and the enjoyment of hearing their laughter. Similarly, in Rethinking Parks: Public Space and Cultural Diversity (Low, Toplini, Scheld, 2005) the authors mentioned playgrounds as one of the four public spaces that are the most successful at creating multicultural environments. In the parks mentioned through this research, this theory is proving to be true by creating opportunities for diversity in ages and races to come together in a family-oriented environment. Several parks currently sit as open space, benches, and trails, but including at least one additional activity to

a park can open it to a large variety of people to enjoy together.

5. WHO'S THERE

Non-normative women found themselves to be more comfortable in a park if they had space in the park to be present, not exposed to all other users, and not hidden from all users. This suggests that nooks, edges, and corners of parks are safer for women as they are free to practice their cultural or religious routines as they prefer without worrying about their safety or the perception of them to other users. This theory is being expanded from Project for Public Space as they also mentioned corners are an opportunity to celebrate and emphasize cultural identity and practice (Knapp, 2008). It is the politics of our bodies that we are hyper aware of in public settings. This also suggests that urban design and landscape architecture are being used as the clothing of our individual identities and activities that we chose to perform in public. The practice

of corner seating can be utilized by creating soft edges around parks that have access to trails, a view of other people, and space for activities.

6. DIVERSITY IS MORE THAN RACIAL

Non-normative women often felt safer in parks that had a wider range of diversity in ages and races. Most women stated that within the most comfortable parks they enjoy being around parents playing with their young children in a park. Overall, non-normative women felt having more than one group of people outside of their party who were not normative made them feel more comfortable. They often phrased this as, "people who look like me." Similar to this theory, Jane Jacobs in The Death and Life of Great American Cities noted that the density of people matters to how many people will use a space (Jacobs, 1961). Also having multiple uses within a district used at all times will create spaces that people want to be in. She was discussing this on a larger scale than a park, however the same concept is proving to be valuable in park design. This can be achieved by more mobile and local food vendors attending parks and a large range of activities for all ages to participate in.

Relative to Theory

- Quantity of walking paths
- Variety of activities
- Public workers at meeting space

Descrepancy of Study Users

- Proximity of parking
- Quantity of walking paths
- Proximity of others
- Diversity in age and race
- Availability of cell reception

Unique to the 21st Century

- Availability of cell reception

CHAPTER 6

Moving Forward with the Research

INTRODUCTION

The findings from this research are circumstances as to what non-normative women need in public parks in order to feel welcomed as normative women do. The possible future effect of these considerations will allow multiculturalism to integrate into our daily lives and routines.

FORWARD ACTION

These elemental findings were directly related to non-normative women's experiences, the physical characteristics of the parks, and the existing literature on the subject. This research thesis contributed to the existing literature in the fields of urban design and planning. It has shaped the definition of safety in public spaces to be encompassing of people with minority ethnicities and religions. It has also shaped who we define public spaces and actually for, and has proven many people would use them if they fit their safety needs more appropriately. Application of this research can impact the system we currently use to design more inclusive public parks through America.

The academic teachings of Environmental Design are impacted by this research as well. The theories students are taught in design education can be expanded to encompass research pioneers in the subjects of minority agency in public spaces. This research has proven alternative site analysis methods that were critical to understanding the experiences of the community site use. Additionally it used investigative mapping as a tool to know which existing features are helpful or detrimental to a communities success. This all leads to the politics of how we analyze space and how we are taught to analyze space. The use of inclusive design practices should be more normalized to not have a thesis on this subject to be one of a kind, but rather of regular conversation in design education.

This research has the potential to be expanded through more funding, more time, and different economic and health circumstances. It could expand to reach cities of different sizes, socioeconomic classes and racial diversity. It could also expand to include a greater study of interview participants that reach several of each ethnic and religious minority group in a specific city, as well as those who are not English-fluent speakers.

CONCLUSION

This research offered an understanding of how design elements are responsible for the exclusion of some non-normative minority women in Boulder County and how they experience public parks. More importantly, it offered a concrete list of how our public parks can be transformed from being accepting of diversity to actually thriving with multiculturalism. Architecture has the power to inform without a word spoken, and this set of findings could influence generations of celebration in differences.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A - Semi-Structured Interview Script

Principle investigator: Lauren Oertel

Each interview is envisioned to last approximately forty-five minutes to one hour. Interviews will be conducted on private Zoom calls using audio recording.

1. **How are you today? What are your pronouns, religion and race? How long have you lived in Boulder County? Where are you from? What city are you living in now? What is your daily routine? What is your primary method of transportation (commute)?**

"How are you today? I would like to ask you a couple of questions about yourself. Can you please identify yourself with your pronouns, religion and race? How long have you been in Boulder County? (a) Where are you from? (b) What city are you living in now? Please describe to me your daily routine and the mode of transportation you use within it."

2. **How and when do you experience Boulder public spaces within your daily routine?**

"In this research we are interested in outdoor public space. Which places do you visit frequently and why (activity)?"

3. **Within Boulder County, what is the most welcoming outdoor public space you have experienced** (example words: gave you agency, made you comfortable, felt safe)? If more than one is mentioned, request to choose one.

a. **Describe what about it made you feel that way.**

4. **What activity did you do here** (music, food, friends)? **Did you go with others or alone?**

5. **How often do you go** (daily, monthly, yearly)? **Tell me more about the space. Was it night or day, busy or slow? What was the season and weather?**

6. **When you arrived in this space what was your first impression?**

7. To know more about how you use this space... **Where did you go first inside the public space** (bench, grass, feature, shade)? **How did you know to go there first? Were others going in that direction?**

8. **How much time did you spend in the there & why? Did you visit anywhere around the space?**

9. **Outside of your party, what was your interaction with others? What was the interaction like** (looks, nods, greetings, conversation, games)? **Tell me more about the people you interacted with by describing their gender, ethnicity and age.**

10. **Are there any cultural or religious practices you feel comfortable or uncomfortable doing here?**

11. **What is the least welcoming public place in Boulder County that you have experienced** (example words: removed agency, made you uncomfortable, felt insecure)? If more than one is mentioned, request to choose one.

a. **Describe what about it made you feel that way.**

12. **What activity did you do here** (music, food, friends)? **Did you go with others or alone?**

13. **How often do you go** (daily, monthly, yearly)?

14. Tell me more about the space. **Was it night or day, busy or slow? What was the season and weather?**

15. **When you arrived in this space what was your first impression?**

16. To know more about how you use this space... **Where did you go first inside the public space** (bench, grass, feature, shade)? **How did you know to go there first? Were others going in that direction?**

17. How much time did you spend in the place and why? Did you visit anywhere around the space?

18. **Outside of your party, what was your interaction with others? What was the interaction like** (looks, nods, greetings, conversation, games)? **Tell me more about the people you interacted with by describing their gender, ethnicity and age.**

19. **Are there any cultural or religious practices you feel comfortable or uncomfortable doing here?**

20. **What do you think the biggest differences are between the two spaces in terms of physical features? And in terms of interaction?**

22. To conclude the interview, the interviewer will ask the interviewees to provide additional information or perceptions about the outdoor public spaces in Boulder County in general

23. This conclusory section will be an opportunity for the interviewer to ask any remaining questions about gaps within the experience stories.