Perceptions of Natural Resource Careers: Attracting Underrepresented Groups to Wildlife Professions

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Changing Demographics
So what?

- Equity
- Diverse perspectives
- New knowledge
The Study: Purpose

- Explore and Identify:
  - The how and why of career goals
  - Knowledge and attitudes
  - Barriers
  - Opportunities
Methods

- Literature review
- Interviews
- Semi-Structured interviews
- Structured interviews
Theoretical Framework

- Barrier Theory
  - Discrimination
  - Lack of access
- Subculture Theory
  - Cultural values and norms

- Social Cognitive Career Theory
  - Self-efficacy
  - Goals
  - Personal/environmental influences
## Life Cycle Analysis of Barriers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Barriers</th>
<th>College Barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of access or exposure to nature</td>
<td>Lack of access or exposure to nature 35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative perceptions/values of nature</td>
<td>Lack of mentors 17.5%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social barriers/discrimination 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of exposure to field 12.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-efficacy 12.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>High School Barriers</td>
<td>Career Barriers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of access or exposure to nature</td>
<td>Lack of mentors 17.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of mentors</td>
<td>Social barriers/discrimination 32.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social barriers/discrimination</td>
<td>Lack of exposure to field 7.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family support of career interests</td>
<td>Lack of institutional diversity 15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of exposure to field</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Interviews

n=20

Race/Ethnicity

- White
- Hispanic
- African American

Gender

- Female
- Male
Major themes:

- Early exposure to nature
- Job qualities/goals
  - #1: Satisfaction
  - #2: Stability
  - #3: Salary
• Career motivations
  • Interesting Class  #1
  • Influential adult  #2
  • Family Member  #3
  • Media
  • Field Trip/presentation

• Barriers to career goals
  • Education (cost and time)  #1
  • Self-efficacy/aptitude  #2
  • Other people’s perception of career choice  #3
  • Few job opportunities
Minority-specific issues

- Family
- First generation citizens
- Stereotypes

“…your family depends on you. They throw all their support behind you because you’re the ideal person to get where you need to get so that the people behind you in your family can see that they can do the same thing as well.”

- 1st Gen Haitian-American Respondent

“We’re more into making the money because we’re new to the American dream…we’re hungry to be rich.”

- 1st Gen Hispanic Respondent
Knowledge of Careers

- Zoologist
- Biologist
- Park/Forest Ranger
- Researcher
- Other
Attitudes about natural resource careers:
- Low salary
- “Exotic”
- Outdoors and animals
- Many job opportunities
- Advanced degrees
What we’ve learned so far…

▪ Theoretical Framework
  ▪ Barrier/Subculture
  ▪ Social Cognitive Career Theory
Next Steps

▪ Wildlife ecology undergraduates
▪ Focus groups
▪ Quantitative survey
▪ Integrating theories
▪ Recommendations
Many thanks to the USGS Southeast Ecological Science Center and Dr. H. Franklin Percival for their recognition of the importance of this issue and their support for this project.
Questions?

If you are interested in more information contact

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