

**Outdoor recreation motivation and site preferences across diverse racial/ethnic groups:
A case study in Georgia State Parks**

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Background: As the demographic composition of the United States changes, racial and ethnic minorities constitute a larger proportion of the overall population. Understanding the nature-based outdoor recreation behavior of these groups has therefore become increasingly important to public land managers. This study examined racial and ethnic differences in motivations and site preferences of diverse Georgia state park visitors. Data were collected via intercept surveys of visitors to three state parks in northern Georgia (n=1207).

Results: Analyses revealed four broad motivational categories: social interaction, physical health and fitness, relaxation and restoration, and nature interaction. Setting preferences focused on three types of park environments: natural areas, maintained outdoor areas, and developed outdoor areas and facilities. Visitors rated all motivation categories as important; however, social interaction motivations were most popular across all groups. Latinos were more socially motivated in their visitation than all other groups, highlighting the potential value of state park settings in meeting activity needs unique to the Latino community. African American and Asian visitors were generally less likely than other groups to rate nature interaction as an important motivation. Associations between specific motivations and site preferences were observed, with social interaction motivations strongly associated with developed and maintained areas, and physical health and fitness motivations more strongly associated with natural areas. All groups of state park users reported a stronger preference for developed and maintained outdoor areas relative to natural areas.

Management implications: Efforts to understand and capitalize on diverse recreation motivations and preferences can help park managers accommodate the needs and desires of constituents from different racial and ethnic groups. Results of this study highlight the strong link between motivations and site preferences, illustrating how park design and management can facilitate or impede different types of experiences for visitors from all cultural backgrounds.