**Racial Inequality in Access to Green Space in Stark County**

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**Assignment Description:** Is there a relationship between race and access to trailheads? What do you suggest to Stark Parks? Explore the issues and ideas surrounding these questions in your assignment.

With rising healthcare costs and a prevalence of diagnoses of depression, an upstream approach to dealing with mental illness would be highly beneficial for society overall. Kaplan and Kaplan state, “People with access to nearby natural settings have been found to be healthier overall than other individuals. The longer-term, indirect impacts (of ‘nearby nature’) also include increased levels of satisfaction with one’s home, one’s job and with life in general” (Brown, Maller, Pryor, St Leger, & Townsend, 2005, p. 47). Research on the correlation between green space and well-being should be conducted as it might be a potential preventative approach to dealing with the incidence of depression. Because research shows how important access to nature is, it is also important to analyze whether or not everyone has equal access to nature. In this paper I will analyze the relationship between race and access to Stark county parks in Central Ohio.

**Literature Review**

Access to green space is very important for everyone as it provides a safe, free place to exercise, view nature, and be a part of a natural environment. Simply being in a natural environment can provide many health benefits to individuals. There is much evidence supporting this notion. There are nature based therapeutic programs which have been successful in improving a sense of well-being in participants. Also, exposure to natural environments fosters recovery from stress. People with access to nature are generally healthier than those who are not close to a natural setting. In addition, those people who have access are happier with their life in general (Maller et al., 2005). Thus, green space is a valuable resource, and it is very important for everyone to have access.

Inequality occurs when a group does not have access to a resource because of their group membership and not characteristics of an individual. This occurrence creates a system of privilege and oppression between groups (Johnson, 2006). Racial inequality occurs when there is a disparity in access to a resource based on race. A recent study found lower classes are negatively associated in access to green space at a national level in urban areas (Wen et al., 2013). There is also research suggesting positive associations between lower socioeconomic status and racial segregation (Darden et al., 2010). Drawing from the aforementioned literature, the hypothesis is as follows: There will be a relationship between the areas of racial diversity and access to Stark Parks' existing and proposed trail heads.

**Methods**

This report will analyze the relationship of racial demographics in census blocks and the location of existing and proposed Stark Parks' trail heads. Trailhead data was provided by Stark Parks. I used census data
from 2012 for the diversity index which provided the percentage of white residents in each census block. Information from Stark Parks and census data was mapped with ARCGis Explorer. Then, t tests were used in the analyses.

Results

First, I used the 2012 census data on the diversity index to map the locations of existing and proposed trail heads. Levels of diversity in Stark County is measured by a diversity index which shows the likelihood of two persons selected from the same area are from a different race in the same 2012 census tract. This is illustrated below in Figure 1. Each green pin notes a proposed or existing trail head by Stark Parks. Trailhead information was provided by Stark Parks and mapped onto Arc GIS Explorer Online. There seemed to be a relationship such that more racially diverse areas had fewer trail heads available to residents.

Figure 1: Diversity Index of Stark County, Ohio and Existing and Proposed Trail

Secondly, to test this potential relationship I performed an independent samples t-test to determine if there was any significance between index of diversity and existing or proposed trail heads. There were 85 census blocks with existing and proposed trail heads, while 185 blocks had no proposed or existing trails. No significance was found in the first analysis of diversity of proposed trail or not. This is illustrated in Figure 2 below. However, significance was found in the variables existing trail or not and proposed and existing. This is illustrated in Figures 3 and 4. Thus, inequality is observed in the variables existing trail or not and proposed and existing.

Figure 2: Mean Percentage White Population by Proposed Trailhead or Not

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addition, residents of urban areas may rent or own land that could be considered as a form of green space.

**Conclusion**

In sum, because significance was found, and consequently inequality was observed, an effort should be made to establish trailheads in Canton, Massillon, and Alliance where the diversity index is high in order to create more equal access to green space. Perhaps a trail between Crenshaw Park and Albert Reiter Park in Canton. In general, more attention should be paid to racial diversity in the areas where new trailheads are proposed. Future research should address and include other forms of green space such as other parks systems. In
References


