CONSTRUCTING THE COAST: A STUDY OF ACCESS TO THE LOS ANGELES URBAN COAST

by

MICHELLE ELIZABETH PALMA

(Under the Direction of Dr. Steve Holloway)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation looks at how the Los Angeles coast and access to it is materially and discursively constructed. I do this through qualitative research on two beaches being contested by the public and private homeowners, and through participant observation with children from the inner-city of South Central participating in a surf camp. Through a critical cultural perspective of race and the landscape, I found that the Los Angeles coast is a highly racialized landscape that directly influences people's ability to access it in material and symbolic ways. I found that the concept of access has been largely ignored by geographers, yet it has much to lend to cultural and landscape theory. I argue that access must be seen as a social relation imbued with power.

INDEX WORDS: Access, Landscape, Critical Geographies of Race, Los Angeles, Urban-Nature

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MICHELLE ELIZABETH PALMA

B.A., The University of California, Los Angeles 2005

M.A., The University of Georgia, 2007

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MICHELLE ELIZABETH PALMA

Major Professor: Steve Holloway

Committee: Nik Heynen
                     Amy Trauger
                     Peter Brosius

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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INTRODUCTION

In 1972, in response to commercial and residential coastal development and a

growing environmental movement in California, the "Save our Coast" campaign resulted

in the passing of Proposition 20, a referendum limiting development that negatively

impacts the environment and public access to the coast (Davidson 2005). The structures

established by Prop 20 were later replaced by the California Coastal Act of 1976. The

Coastal Act of 1976 ensured the public's right to access all beaches in California with few

exceptions. However, many people still do not have access or the ability to access many

of these "public" spaces which results in contentions over coastal space and access to it.

I introduce this research project with the "Save our Coast" campaign to illustrate that

the Los Angeles coast (figure) is both materially and discursively constructed and that

there is contention surrounding who has access to it.

I conducted research in two main areas (Malibu and the South Bay) along the Los

Angeles coast utilizing participant observation, interviews and archival data to

understand how these spaces and access to them are materially and discursively

constructed. I found that the coastal landscape is not free and open to the public,

contrary to the tenets of the Coastal Act. Instead, the coast is a highly racialized

landscape that directly influences people's ability to access it in material and symbolic

ways. Access itself is an uneven process influenced by those with social and economic

power.

These two main studies (figure1.1), which are discussed in more detail in chapter four, involve struggles over access to the coast and groups of people who have organized to encourage access to these spaces.

Figure 1.1 Map of Study Area
Map by: M. Palma

The first area I focused on included two beaches along a stretch of L.A. coast called the South Bay, where I conducted participant observation by volunteering as a surf instructor with an organization called Surf Bus that brings kids from the inner city to the beach and teaches them how to surf and play at the ocean. The two beaches of interest were Dockweiler Beach, which attracts mostly people of color from the inner city, while the other beach, Manhattan Beach, is predominantly white space with a history of racial exclusion. The second area I focused on was Malibu, on the northwestern edge of Los Angeles County. I interviewed people from several organizations who are interested in increasing public access to the Malibu beaches including the Los Angeles Urban Rangers,

The Surfrider Foundation, and the California Coastal Commission.   My main research

questions driving this research are:

> *1. What are the material-discursive formations of the coastal landscapes?*

> *2. How do these formations relate to access to this space?*

The following questions are specific to my two study areas.

> *3. In what ways do kids from South Central negotiate access to the coast?*

> *4. In what ways do multiple actors contest the legal designations of
> coastal "access" to Malibu and why?*

There has been a plethora of research linking overall health and well-being to

green or open spaces (e.g., Kaplan 1995, Ulrich, R.S et al. 1991, Barbosa et al. 2007,

Berman et al. 2008; Gibson 2009), which the US Forest Service defines as:

> …land that is valued for natural processes and wildlife, agricultural and
>
> forest production, aesthetic beauty, active and passive recreation, and
>
> other public benefits. Such lands include working and natural forests,
>
> rangelands and grasslands, farms, ranches, parks, stream and river
>
> corridors, and other natural lands within rural, suburban, and urban areas
>
> (US Forest Service 2012).

Furthermore, there is substantial research claiming that people have a right to public

space (Mitchell 2003; Staeheli and Thompson 1997; Young 1990; Fraser 1997; Low 1996,

2000, 2003). While public spaces are meant to be free open spaces where people can

come together and practice democratic action or recreate, there is often the

assumption that this will lead to social unity (Young 1990). This is one of the biggest

problems with the L.A. coast; there is no room for group difference, even though the

beach is a public space; it is imbued with white normative codes of behavior that people

must adhere to or risk being excluded. Young (1990) explains this in the following way:

> Because by definition a public space is a place accessible to anyone,
>
> where anyone can participate and witness, in entering the public one
>
> risks encounter with those who are different, those who identify with
>
> different groups and have different opinions or different forms of life….
>
> Cities provide important public spaces – streets, parks, and plaza where
>
> people stand and sit together, interact and mingle, or simply witness one
>
> another, without becoming unified in community of 'shared final ends'
>
> (240).

Ideally she says that the "public is heterogeneous, plural, and playful, a place where

people witness and appreciate diverse cultural expressions that they do not share and

do not fully understand" (Young 1990: 241).

The L.A. coast has the potential to be the ultimate free, public, open, urban

space. Most people living in Los Angeles are less than 25 miles from a beach if traveling

by car. However, many people don't have a car and the Los Angeles public transit

doesn't offer sufficient and affordable service to the beach. Even with a car, some

beaches can be incredibly difficult to find because beachfront homeowners have gone

to great lengths to camouflage public access ways.

Moreover, even if the material barriers of access were overcome, many people

are still not welcome at the beach because they do not feel like they belong. This is a

form of symbolic access. Most beaches are white normative spaces that do not seem

welcoming to people of color, especially from the inner city, who choose to practice the

beach in ways often unfamiliar to typical white beachgoers. This demonstrates that

beaches are highly racialized landscapes that serve to include or exclude different

people which translates into a symbolic form of access. Furthermore, access has been

under-theorized by geographers from a critical cultural perspective. By looking at these

multiple forms of access we can begin to see the complexity of how access relates to

social justice.

The two main ways that I am framing this research, informed by Sasha Davis'

(2005) definition of material-discursive formations to understand how the landscape is

constructed and represented and Richard Schein's (2006) formula for studying race and

the landscape. Throughout this dissertation, I frequently discuss how specific landscapes

are represented; by this I mean how the landscape works to convey some meaning to

those interested in it or how it helps to shape the geographic imagination of a place.

Davis (2005) explains that "geographers have increasingly recognized that landscapes

are shaped by the ways human agents conceptualize places" (607). I add to this by

arguing that access can be shaped by landscape and vice versa. To better understand

how landscapes are constructed and represented, Davis (2005: 608) uses the notion of

material-discursive formations which emphasizes nonlocal processes affecting a place;

ways in which multiple actors interpret, create discourse, and affect place reproduction;

the changing meanings of place over time; and the dialectical spatial and social

processes of place. I use this formula to understand the power of representations of the

landscape, which I found is most often represented as a white middle to upper-class

space. This representation is a manifestation of the social construction of the

landscape, which is accomplished through material-discursive *practices*. I insert

'practice' into the material-discursive formation because I see this as the major process

through which the landscape is constructed (Cresswell 2004).

Race and class were the major social relations I found operating in the coastal

landscape. There is an intersectionality between race and class that acknowledge

throughout the dissertation; however, my main focus is on race because I see that

playing a more significant role overall in this case. In future research, I intend to include

an analysis of class more carefully using a political economic perspective.   Thus, I frame

this research using Richard Schein's (2006: 14) process for studying race and the

landscape that involves exploring the material and historical relevance of a landscape,

how it is both lived and imagined, and then determining how it contributes to ideals of

race. Los Angeles has a history of racial segregation and spatial inequalities, which were

imbedded, indeed mapped onto the landscape, as I will show in this dissertation. The

landscape acted then to reproduce race and vice versa. I demonstrate that this

relationship between race and the landscape still exists today, but is produced in more

subversive, color-blind forms and directly relates to access.

The representations of landscapes play a significant role in who is meant to feel

included and excluded. This was one of the driving factors for *A People's Guide to Los*

Angeles, by Laura Pulido, Laura Barraclough, and Wendy Cheng (2012). Pulido et al

(2012) explain that guidebooks as representations of geography and history "play a

critical role in reinforcing inequality and relations of power" and the typical guide to Los

Angeles conveys a limited image of the city "as a place of glamour, wealth, and fame or the home of eccentric, creative individuals; such representations clearly ignore the vast majority of the city's population, as well as the social relations that shape their lives." Los Angeles, and the coast in particular has been consistently represented as a white affluent space (Pulido et al, 2012). This dissertation looks at how such representations deeply affect one's ability to access the coast.

While there has been substantial research on the urban landscape of Los Angeles (Soja 1998, 2010; Davis 2006; Dear 2003) the coast has been predominantly overlooked as a formation of the city (see Davidson 2007 for an exception). The coast is a part of the urban landscape that richly represents and reinforces social relations of power. Furthermore, viewing the coast as a landscape contributes to the constantly changing dialogue on how to study landscapes, and what we can learn from them. Moreover, the notion of access itself has also received little attention from geographers. Access is seen as an individual issue, and rather passive. I suggest that we use access to challenge social inequalities rather than seeing it as a detached experience. Access needs to be tied to those who are creating exclusive landscapes. The practice of exclusion, which also tends to focus less on the individual, can then be tied to an anti-access ideology. Framed this way, the source of exclusion is implicated directly in issues of access.

To understand the material-discursive formations of the landscape and access, I engage theories of race (Kobayashi and Peake 2000; Bonilla Silva 2006; Doane and Bonilla silva 2003; Bonilla Goldberg 1993, 2002; Omi and Winant 1986), landscape (Schein 2006), and practice (Cresswell 2003, 2011; Bordieu 1977, de Certeau 1984). I

use qualitative methodology to study these processes at a micro scale of individuals. My methods are ethnographic and include participant observation, interviews, internet research, and archival research.

Dissertation outline

In *chapter two*, I detail the theoretical perspectives that inform how I understand and explain the social relations that I am studying (Crotty 2005). I specifically engage critical theory on landscapes, race, and practice. My main theoretical contribution is that I apply a critical geographic perspective of race and landscape to urban natures through a study of access. I do this by bringing together complimentary theories that have not been combined before. In the broadest sense my theoretical framework tacks between critical cultural geography and critical geographies of race to understand the social relations responsible for the construction of the landscape and access. Grounded in this framework is the geographic understanding that place and identity are mutually constituted (Fincher and Jacobs 1998; Dwyer and Jones 2000; Kobayashi 2003; Mohanty 2007) and that racial processes are spatialized (Pratt 1998; Jackson 1994; Kobayashi 1994b; Dwyer 1997; Pulido 2000; Zelinsky 2001; Anderson 2002).

Within that framework I use more specific theoretical perspectives of practice (Cresswell 1996; Pratt 1998; de Certeau 1984; Bourdieu 1977), belonging (Cresswell 1996); spatial representations (Schein 2006, Davis 2005, Pulido 2012), and boundary making (Sibley 1995; hooks 1997; and Pratt and Hanson 1994) to understand the construction of the landscape. I also draw on processes of exclusion and inclusion (Sibley 1995) and racial processes of racialization, racism, and whitewashing (Omi and

Winant 1986; Goldberg 1993, 2002; Bonillia Silva 2006, Macintosh 1988, Reitman 2006) to understand how race works within the landscape and access. This theoretical framework and the included perspectives are grounded in my epistemological perspective of constructionism which is defined as "the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty 2005: 42).

In *chapter three* I discuss my methodology and methods. To best answer my research questions I employ a qualitative methodology. Qualitative methodology is "intended to elucidate human environments, individual experiences, and social processes" (Winchester 2005: 3). Similar to how I see a theoretical framework made up of more specific theoretical perspectives, my methodology is composed of several specific methods.

These methods include participant observation, semi-structured interviews, internet research, archival research, and photography. I outline how I collected and analyzed my data. I then discuss in detail some of the methodological issues I negotiated in terms of postionality and what claims to knowledge I could make.

Chapter four sets up the context for the empirics of the dissertation. I provide a genealogy of the landscapes involved in this study including Malibu, South Central, and the South Bay. But this chapter is not meant to be purely descriptive. I use the socio-history of these places to better understand how they have come to be represented today. Malibu and South Central have been represented to the rest of the world in a

very deliberate way that has produced a collective geographic imagination. These

constructions of place mutually constitute constructions of identity as well. In the case

of South Central, people who live there are seen as ghetto and unwanted at many of the

L.A. beaches. The construction of Malibu as an exclusive space is tied to a history of

exclusion that must be interrogated. Thus to understand where these real and imagined

identities have come from it is necessary to go through the genealogy of the place

where they are supposed to have originated.

Furthermore, throughout this chapter and the dissertation I make claims of structural

inequalities that are broadly articulated in Los Angeles. To support this claim, I look at

the material and discursive formation of Los Angeles as an urban metropolis with a

history of social inequalities along race and class.

Chapter five explores the construction of Dockweiler Beach and Manhattan

Beach (both in the South Bay) as racialized landscapes. I point to how the geography of

Dockweiler contributes to why people of color go there rather than other beaches

nearby. I also discuss how the fact that because people of color go to Dockweiler, it is

seen as a "ghetto" beach by white outsiders. This illustrates the mutual constitution of

place and identity. It also reveals that beaches are racialized and constructed by the

bodies that occupy them and the practices being performed. Dockweiler reveals

racialized boundaries in the landscape and how they are transgressed.

I then look at how Manhattan Beach is also racialized as a normative white

space and how residents try to control access through the maintenance of boundaries

and control of bodies. I also reveal how residents employ racist discourses to describe

people of color from the inner city. Color-blind racism is most common in the form of describing someone's practices rather than their race as a reason to exclude them. Here, I start to introduce the idea of how belonging affectss someone's desire to be in a certain place contributing to symbolic access. People of color are made to feel like they don't belong and therefore avoid this beach.

In *chapter six*, I explore the experience of the coast from the perspective of the kids from South Central participating in the Surf Bus program. I look at the material and symbolic process of going to the beach from the starting point of the inner city. I make the claim that access is limited for people of color living in the inner city due to a racist transit system and an exclusive whiteness encountered at the beach. In this chapter, I explore what it might look like if kids from the inner city could overcome these obstacles of access to this landscape. I subject the Surf Bus program to critical analysis and find that while it was not their conscious intention, they practice whitewashing with the kids in an effort to help them fit in at the beach. I also reflect on how I am implicated in this process since I was a volunteer instructor with Surf Bus.

In *chapter seven*, I focus on Malibu. I reveal the different strategies that people use to gain access or thwart it. I look at this process at a micro scale - looking at how individuals have become invested in access to this landscape. I locate the material formation of boundaries in the landscape that construct it as an exclusive space which include posting illegal signs that say "no trespassing" or "private property." Landscaping is also used to camouflage the public land by making it look like it is part of the private homeowners' property. Large trees and houses block the views of the beach which

goes against the intentions of the Coastal Act. Break walls along the shore also make it

physically impossible to safely access the beach as well.   I then explore the discourses

that are used to justify claims of inclusion and exclusion. These include the notion that

the public doesn't know how to use the beach correctly or respectfully and the

homeowners are better stewards of the landscape. Other arguments are that

homeowners paid a lot of money to live there and thus have a right to privacy. The

main actors involved in this story are Malibu residents and the city itself, as well as a

host of organizations attempting to contest the privatization of public land including the

California Coastal Commission, Los Angeles Urban Rangers, and Surfrider Foundation.

Looking at Malibu at this micro scale illuminates the everyday practices and challenges

that go into making, policing, and contesting boundaries and bodies as well as how

people attempt to transgress the actually existing landscape.

Chapter eight is my concluding chapter. Here, I weave the main themes of the

empirical chapters (4-7) into a coherent argument. In each of the empirical chapters I

focus on one or two major formations of the landscape and access even though there

are multiple processes at play, so in my conclusion, I am able to illustrate how multiple

material and discursive formations play out in all of my study areas. In doing this, I

shape these chapters into telling one story about how the construction of the landscape

affects the public's ability to access it.

Conclusion

This dissertation explores a highly contested landscape that is represented as

urban, natural, public and private. This landscape is of particular interest because it has

the potential to serve the majority of Los Angeles residents who do not regularly have access to open green spaces. The potential lies in the fact that this space is constitutionally recognized as public space, and it is closely located to the inner city. However, there are multiple processes and social relations that prevent access. The most obvious of these social relations is race.

My research demonstrates that people with white privilege and economic power dictate access through the maintenance of boundaries and the control of bodies in the coastal landscape. I interrogate the discourse of 'access,' and argue that it needs to be dealt with more critically. Specifically, we need to consider the power relations involved in the construction of access. Those who control access should be implicated in an anti-access discourse. This will allow us to see access more as a social relation, rather than an individual problem. This interrogation of access allows us to better understand the construction of public, private landscapes in urban nature.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter I detail the theoretical framework that informs my research. My main purpose is to apply a critical cultural geographic perspective of race and landscape to understand the construction of urban nature through a study of access. My overall theoretical framework is an application of Jeffrey Sasha Davis' (2005) use of material-discursive formations of place, Richard Schien's (2006) formula for studying race and the landscape and Tim Cresswell's (2004) work on practice as a way to understand how these social processes construct the landscape. I fill in this framework by applying other theoretical perspectives related to race and the landscape to interpret and situate my empirical data. I have organized this chapter into three main areas: landscape, race, and landscape and race. Again, I recognize that class is also implicated in this issue of access and the landscape, but for the purpose of this study, I focus mostly on race, while still acknowledging the income throughout the dissertation. That said, I recognize that landscapes and racial identities are mutually constituted, thus there will be some overlap and separation of ideas throughout this chapter. However, as I employ these theoretical perspectives throughout this dissertation, I demonstrate how when brought together, they provide a rich and more complete understanding of the social phenomena at hand.

In the first area on landscape, I look at how landscape has been theorized in geography. I then look at how geographers have theorized the landscape in terms of exclusion as this plays a major role in my research.   Exclusion is important because it

connects landscape to race, both materially and discursively, and speaks directly to the construction of boundaries. I also spend a significant amount of time theorizing the relationship between access and exclusion. The last part of this area is devoted to landscape and nature. Because my research is ultimately about urban natural landscape, I look at how natural landscapes have been theorized to better understand how to situate my research within this literature.

The second area that I focus on is race. I begin by outlining how I am conceptualizing race throughout this dissertation. Because race can be conceptualized through a variety of ways, this provides some clarity for the reader. I then explore how geographers have critically engaged race, which can be referred to as critical geographies of race (CGR). In this section I outline the main themes of CGR and how they can be applied to my research. Finally, I review the most prominent theoretical perspectives on race and the city. Given that the L.A. coast can be understood as an urban place in addition to being "natural" and that racial processes mutually construct the city, I go over how I conceptualize this relationship.

Landscape

Theorizing the Landscape

Geographers' interest in the landscape over time looks kind of like a roller coaster – up and prominent sometimes; low and ignored other times. We could look at this as a reason to just retire landscape enquiry altogether; however, I argue that landscape is one of the foundational, binding principles of geography. It is one of the few things that is exclusively geographic within our broad discipline. Thus, an ongoing

engagement with the landscape should always be of interest to geographers as we continue to assert the necessity of a geographic perspective to understand social phenomena.

There have been many geographers who have studied the landscape in the U.S, beginning with Carl Sauer in the late 1920s. Prior to Sauer, the landscape was seen as something unchanging that determined culture (Ratzel 1896). Sauer's (1925) major contribution was to look at the landscape as a changing system interrelated with culture. Over the years Sauer and the work that he influenced was seen as overly descriptive and uncritical (Oakes and Price 2008).

Landscape studies dramatically shifted with the Critical Turn in 1960s and 1970s when human/cultural geographers found it increasingly difficult to justify descriptive and atheoretical scholarship when there were issues of social justice going on everywhere around the world. Geographers started studying the landscape from a critical perspective informed by Marxism, feminism, and social theory. Critical cultural geographers were interested in locating power within the landscape (Oakes and Price 2008).

This line of scholarship continues to inform research on the landscape today. Some view the landscape as text, searching for power relations represented in the landscape (Cosgrove 1988; Duncan and Ley 1993; Cosgrove and Daniels 1988). However this approach has been criticized for over-emphasizing representation in the landscape and ignoring or denying the existence of a material landscape (Oakes and Price 2008). Others see the landscape as a process that acts to both hide and/or reveal material

social power relations such as class and patriarchy (Mitchell 1996; Rose 1993). Still, others view the landscape as an embodied space by focusing on the everyday experience and practice (Cresswell 2003, Jackson 1997, Benediktsson 2007). In this dissertation, I bring into conversation some of these perspectives.

To explain what the landscape is and does, Mitchell (2008) says it is: "a concretization or reification of the social relations that go into its making" (163). It is a site of struggle, and displays the normative social order of the world. Mitchell discusses the landscape within the terms of political economy. For example, in *The lie of the land: migrant workers and the California landscape* (1996), he demonstrates how the means of production, through labor and exploitation, are strategically hidden in and by the landscape so as to reproduce capitalist domination. Mitchell (2003) writes: "to understand landscape and to understand the 'culture' within which it exists, requires an examination of human practices – of forms of labor. Through labor the landscape is both made and made known." (239). Mitchell (2003) brings in David Harvey's argument that the landscape becomes a 'fixed' commodity which then "'functions as a vast, humanly created resource system, comprising use values embedded in the physical landscape, which can be utilized for production, exchange, and consumption'" (239). Because the entire landscape can be reduced to a commodity that is produced by labor – it certainly makes any other analysis of the landscape seem obsolete. Mitchell offers a very compelling argument. Yet, it does not necessarily offer insight into the everyday experience of people living within these structures. Because his theoretical perspective speaks directly to social inequalities, it is difficult to dispute. Any analysis would seem

subordinate to the larger issue of social inequality for laborers; however, everyday life

has been persisting for generations under capitalism and by focusing only on political

economy, we lose an engagement with people's everyday lives, and the social processes

that come out of the everyday. I draw on Mitchell's work in that the landscape is not

innocent of social relations; however, his argument is too confined, so I seek to bring in

more space and open up the notion of landscape so that we can recognize processes

other than/in addition to capitalism, such as race, which I explore in the section of the

chapter on critical geographies of race.

To better engage the power of everyday experience and practice, I turn to Tim

Cresswell's work. Cresswell (2003) critiques how the landscape has been theorized by

cultural geographers as a fixed representation or essentially material. He explains that:

> The challenge for cultural geographers of landscape is to produce
>
> geographies that are lived, embodied, practiced; landscapes which are
>
> never finished or complete, not easily framed or read. These geographies
>
> should be as much about the everyday and unexceptional as they are
>
> about the grand and distinguished (280).

Cresswell's (2003) perspective on how the landscape ought to be studied is informed by

J.B.Jackson (1997) who claims that "landscapes are ones that people inhabit and work

in; they are landscapes that people produce through routine practice in an everyday

sense" (from Cresswell 2003: 274). Cresswell's call to study the landscape through

practice resonates with my intentions in this dissertation because I am studying the

landscape through the struggle of access which is a very personal and active process.

Practice also helps us realize and analyze the landscape as dynamic and always in the process of being made, destroyed, remade, and lived.

I couple Cresswell's above claims with Jeffery Sasha Davis' (2005, 2007) work on Bikini Atoll. In "Representing Place: "Deserted Isles" and the Reproduction of Bikini Atoll," Davis (2005) asserts that by "[g]oing beyond the notion of landscapes as readable texts, places can be understood as material-discursive formations where the semiotic meanings of places are intrinsically entwined with their reproduction" (607). Davis uses the notion of material-discursive formations to refer to places in a way that combines four current discussions of place: 1) emphasizing nonlocal processes that affect places 2) ways in which multiple actors interpret, create discourse, and affect place reproduction 3) the changing meanings of place over time 4) the dialectical spatial and social processes of place (Davis 2005:608). This perspective allows me to construct a critical analysis of the construction and production of place and access without negating individual experience.

Furthermore, I use the term 'representation' in the same way that Davis does. He is not using it in the landscape-as-text form that it is typically associated with when studying the landscape (i.e. Duncan and Ley 1993). Instead he is looking at how and what landscapes come to *be* represented and tying this process to the construction of the geographic imagination. In his work on the representation of Bikini Atoll, Davis (2005) writes:

> different groups of people, who have very different conceptualizations of
>
> what kind of place Bikini Atoll should be, have all produced

representations of the place that are used in political ways. They do work

in the world by attempting to fix a meaning of a place and legitimizing the

production of a certain kind of place (612).

This understanding of representation can be applied to my research as well because, as

you will see, different groups create representations that influence the use of a

landscape. For example, one group who views the beach as a private place will attempt

to represent it as such, materially and discursively by manipulating the landscape to look

private.   Representations can also be used to deter people from going to a certain

place, particularly racial representations of the landscape as being a "black space" or a

"white space". These representations are used to inform exclusionary practices, which I

turn to in the following section.

Landscapes of Exclusion

One of the major themes that emerge from my empirical research is how the

landscape represents spaces of inclusion and exclusion. For this I turn to David Sibley's

work. Sibley is concerned with the human landscape, which he says can be read as a

"landscape of exclusion." He focuses on the more "opaque instances of exclusion"

which he says are "the ones which do not make the news or are taken for granted as

part of the routine of daily life" (Sibley 1995: ix). He goes on to say that "[t]hese

exclusionary practices are important because they are less noticed and so the ways in

which control is exercised in society are concealed" (ix). I argue that these opaque forms

of exclusion are prevalent with regard to the coast in both case studies; I illuminate

these processes of exclusion to better understand the construction of these landscapes

and access to them in my research. In Malibu, it's not so opaque, and yet it is – once you realize the illegality that is present, the exclusion is glaringly obvious; however, homeowners use the guise of 'privacy' to conceal exclusionary practices and beliefs. Sibley (1995) argues that we must "examine the assumptions about inclusion and exclusion which are implicit in the design of spaces and places" (x). This is the action that I take in my own research as I critically examine these assumptions in Los Angeles. Sibley (1995) explains that in terms of residential segregation:

> Resistance to a different sort of person moving into a neighborhood stems from feelings of anxiety, nervousness or fear. Who is felt to belong and not to belong contributes in an important way to the shaping of social space. It is often the case that this kind of hostility to others is articulated as a concern about property values but certain kinds of difference, as they are culturally constructed, trigger anxieties and a wish on the part of those who feel threatened to distance themselves from others. This may of course have economic consequences (3).

This feeds into some of Malibu's need to be exclusive. A Malibu real estate agent told me that people bought their homes because of the location and the prestige. He admitted that he thought it was absurd to pay millions of dollars to live there. In real estate, Malibu is always touted as an exclusive place. You would never see a listing describe ocean-front property as being adjacent to a public beach. Malibu is so wealthy because of this exclusivity, without it, it would not be nearly as valuable. People live there because so few can.

Sibley (1995) also says that "[r]epulsion and desire, fear and attraction, attach both to people and to places in complex ways" (3-4). This plays out again in different ways in my research. The people living in El Segundo (located between Dockweiler and Manhattan Beach) attach feelings of repulsion to Dockweiler Beach and in so doing, they reproduce it as an undesirable place. At the same time, they are constructing the people that go there as undesirable people. Moreover, "[p]ortrayals of minorities as defiling and threatening have for long been used to order society internally and to demarcate the boundaries of society, beyond which lie those who do not belong" (Sibley 1995: 49). This is prevalent in the infrastructure of Los Angeles; the highways do indeed hide the unwanted "defiled" from the "pure" white middle class who drive their cars to and fro.

Furthermore, in trying to "give shape to a socio-spatial theory of exclusion," Sibley (1995) revisits Gidden's structuration theory and emphasizes the presence of both structure and agency (74). He explains that the built environment does place conditions on agents but that those agents have power to "'carve out spaces of control' in respect to their day-to-day lives" (Sibley 1995: 76). Sibley goes on to look at the presence of power relations in space. He says that

> For some, the built environment is to be maintained and reproduced in
> its existing form if it embodies social values which individuals or groups
> have both the power and capacity to retain. For others, the built
> environment constitutes a landscape of domination. It's alienating, and

action on the part of the relatively powerless will register in the dominant

vocabulary as deviance, threat or subversion (76).

This process can be seen in the chapters that follow in which people living at the beach

feel threatened by poor people of color from the inner city. The landscape must be

maintained as exclusive, and free from threatening "others" to reproduce domination.

Landscape and Nature

The final literature that this research deals with is the "natural" aspect of

landscapes. In recent years, the social construction of nature has dominated the

academic discourse of nature in geography (Cronon 1996a, 1996b). Therefore, the

significance of studying this space is that it is not only an urban public space; it is also

seen as "natural." Benediktsson (2007) suggests that while academics may critique the

naturalness of places, the everyday person may see and experience the landscape quite

differently.

Yet, recent scholarship has turned away from viewing everyday spaces as

"natural." Nature, after all is a social construct. While it is imperative that we

understand the social relations that produce and are produced by the "natural

landscape," we seem to have lost touch with the normative experience and perception

of "nature" that exists outside of this academic perspective.

There is a plethora of research that has found numerous psychological benefits

of the natural environment (Kaplan 1995, Ulrich, R.S et al. 1991, Barbosa et al. 2007,

Berman et al. 2008). Indeed natural landscapes can be sites of enchantment (Gibson

2009). Benediktsson (2007) aptly reminds us that the "everyday understanding of the

landscape concept among the common people *does* tend to emphasize the scenic aspect" and suggests looking at how the concept of landscape is "put to work; on the ground; in contemporary society, through everyday use and practice" (207).

Moreover, the "natural" spaces that Mitchell and others have discussed are often public green spaces such as traditional urban parks. Other research that engages public space often emphasizes streets, plazas and parks (Young 1990; Blomley 2009). These spaces are particularly important in urban areas where access to green space is very limited. One space that often gets looked over in this discussion is coastal landscapes.

Furthermore, coastal landscapes seem to be reserved for tourism literature, which despite the critical work (Franklin and Crang 2001) that has come out of this branch of geography, has yet to gain due recognition in the discipline. Thus categorizing the coast or beach as essentially a "recreational or leisure space" is a serious oversight. It brings to mind all the other spaces that have emerged as valuable sites of analysis that had been long overlooked in the discipline such as domestic spaces (Domosh 1998; Pratt 2008), queer spaces (Brown and Knopp 2003), and teen spaces (Valentine 2004; Thomas 2005). Like the coast, many of these spaces were also seen as too banal or mundane to study. However, we now see the relevance and richness these spaces have to offer empirically and theoretically. Indeed there is much to be learned by exploring more normative uses of public landscapes such as the coast.

Swedish Geographer Karl Benediktsson (2001) offers another way to think about nature and the landscape that I find promising. He recognizes that while we must still

try to understand the sociality of nature, we also have to realize and work with how people outside of the academy define and live the landscape. One of the ways he does this is by addressing the aesthetic values of nature. He explains that, "aesthetic sense cannot be divorced from everyday life and practices" (210). I argue that aesthetics can apply to more than nature. Through a critical geography of race (CGR) perspective, I will show how the aesthetic of a landscape is also tied to the people who occupy that space. In such cases, bodies take on an aesthetic quality, just as a sunset or ocean does. In upcoming chapters, I explore how some groups avoid beaches that are not aesthetically pleasing to them because they don't like the bodies that dominate that space.

Finally, based on the subject matter of this project, political ecology, and more specifically, urban political ecology (UPE)stands as an obvious literature with which to engage. According to Blaikie and Brookfield (1987), political ecology "combines the concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy. Together this encompasses the constantly shifting dialectic between society and land-based resources and also within classes and groups within society itself" (p. 17). Robbins (2004) identifies four main themes that are prevalent among political ecologists: degradation and marginalization; environmental conflict; conservation and control; and environmental identity and social movements (14-15). (UPE) is somewhat of a response to the notion that political ecology focuses mostly on rural and "third world" spaces. Scholars have realized that urban life, in part, is shaped by and shapes the ecological environment (Robbins 2007; Braun 2005; Keil 2003; Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003).

While, the urban political ecology perspective substantively lines up nicely with my research, it does not serve my project theoretically. The vast majority of the political ecology literature gives primacy to a political economic perspective of the subject matter (Vayda and Walters 1999, Walker 2005). Manzo (2003) recognizes this critique in her reflection on political-economy: "structure and function are critical and people are seen as passive, economic abstractions whose subjective experiences are irrelevant. What is sorely lacking in their perspective is an appreciation for the role that individuals play as active participants in, and shapers of, their environment" (56). I hope to fill the gap left by many political ecologists by emphasizing the agency of the individuals involved in the construction of access and costal spaces by exploring every day practice.

Race

Conceptions of Race

As I mentioned earlier, looking at the everyday experiences of actors involved with the coast, I found race to be a dominant player in determining these processes of access and constructing place. Therefore, it is important that I explain how I am thinking about race and how I interpret the process of racialization. I use the work of Omi and Winant (1986); Goldberg (1993, 2002); and Bonilla-Silva (2006) to understand the fundamentals of race. A few terms that I constantly refer to throughout this dissertation are race, racialization, racial formation, and racism. I now turn to Omit and Winant (1986) to begin this discussion.

To begin, I see race as a social construct, which is now a widely accepted perspective among academics. Still, race is generally seen by the mainstream public to

consist of groups of people defined by their phenotypical distinctives. There are well

documented court cases in which immigrants in the U.S. have defended the position

that they are white. At one point the Italians and Irish were not considered white and

today they are (Roediger 2005). Omi and Winant (1986) explain that "[t]he meaning of

race is defined and contested throughout society, in both collective action and personal

practice. In the process, racial categories themselves are formed, transformed,

destroyed and re-formed" (61). They define racial formation as "the process by which

social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial

categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings" (61-62). So while

race often points to a person's skin color, it is far more complicated than that. Race is

not a fixed, essential category but "an unstable and 'decentered' complex of social

meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle" (Omi and Winant 1986:

68). This is one of the basic ways that I understand race to be operating particularly with

the groups of people involved in South Central, Manhattan Beach, and Dockweiler. I also

use this understanding of race to understand how it has been meaningful in different

ways over time, which will be evident in chapter four in my analysis of the genealogy of

the landscapes involved in this research.

Furthermore, in understanding how race is implicated in everyday experiences, I

concur with Omi and Winant (1986), who suggest that

We utilize race to provide clues about *who* [italics in original] a person

is… In U.S. society, a kind of 'racial etiquette' exists, as a set of

interpretive codes and racial meanings which operate in the interactions

of daily life… Such diverse questions as our confidence and trust in

others…, our sexual preferences and romantic images, our tastes in

music, films, dance, or sports, and our very ways of talking, walking,

eating, and dreaming are ineluctably shaped by notions of race (62-63).

As will be seen in the following chapters, different groups use race to determine

whether a specific place is attractive or not. They use racial categories to determine if

they think a place is safe or threatening, thus leading to avoidance or participation,

specifically at the coast. Since Los Angeles is substantively segregated, despite its

tremendous diversity (Holloway, Wright, and Ellis 2012),people rely on the media to do

the work of constructing "normative" racial categories for them (Sibley 1995). This is

particularly seen in television in which, "the necessity to define characters in the

briefest and most condensed manner has led to the perpetuation of racial caricatures,

as racial stereotypes serve as shorthand for scriptwriters, directors and actors, in

commercials, etc" (Omi and Winant 1986: 63).

These processes of racial segregation, and the construction of racial identities,

help to substantiate my claim that the Los Angeles urban coast is a racialized space. I

understand the term racialization to "signify the extension of racial meaning to a

previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group" (Omi and Winant

1986: 64). Goldberg (1993) also offers that 'racialized' is meant to "include any and all

significance extended both explicitly and silently by racial reference over discursive

expression and practice" (2).

In addition to the everyday experience and construction of race and racialization

of place, race also plays a key structural role in the formation of the state - a racial

formation - claims Goldberg (2002). It is important to recognize this because it helps us

understand how attitudes about race are not primarily constructed through individuals,

but through dominant ideologies that help to create structural inequalities based in

large part on race, another claim that I make throughout this research. To understand

this relationship between race and the state, Goldberg (1993) explains that race is

ultimately a product of modernity. With modernity, the "basic human condition – and

so economic, political, scientific, and cultural positions – was taken naturally to be race

determined" (6). Race is used to construct a "cohesive identity" and "define who may be

excluded and to confine the terms of social inclusion and cohesion" (4).

Goldberg (1993) argues that liberalism is a tenet of modernity representing a

commitment to individualism, universal principles, reason, reform, equality, and a claim

that race is "morally irrelevant" (5). History demonstrates that during this time a racist

culture emerges materially, contradicting claims to equality (Goldberg 1993:6). Here we

see the development of color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2006); the assumption that if

the dominant group claims that race does not matter, as indicated by hegemonic

ideology, then it doesn't, and any inequality experienced by an individual is an outcome

of their lacking merit rather than their race. Goldberg (1993) says that "[r]acist

expressions are generally reduced to personal prejudices of individuals, to irrational

appeals to irrelevant categories, to distinctions that delimit universal liberal ideals" (7).

Racism in general, by the 1930s was assumed by social scientists to be a vestige of

premodern history that has since been overcome through Reason (Goldberg 1993: 7).

Today, he says that this meliorism both celebrates "multicultural diversity just as it

rationalizes hegemonic control of difference, access, and prevailing power" (8). I found

this contradictory relationship to be common among homeowners in Manhattan Beach.

There is a national discourse to embrace multiculturalism, yet such claims refuse to

recognize the inherent, structural inequalities that exist in non-dominant races and

cultures, nor the everyday role that whites play in these inequalities.

Moreover, Goldberg (2002)recognizes that racial inequalities are not only

perpetuated by the state holding back earned resources for people of color, but also for

granting unearned privileges to whites; a practice known as white privilege (Macintosh

1988). Lipsitz (2006) also echoes this perspective by claiming that whites have a

"possessive investment in whiteness." This means that whites, consciously or not,

attempt to maintain racial inequality to capitalize on the privilege of whiteness. This is a

perspective that I try to bring into my research because often, literature on race fails to

see how whites are implicated beyond basic racism and/or prejudices in racial

inequalities. Below Goldberg (2002) outlines this process:

> State apparatuses sew the variety of modern social exclusions into the
>
> seams of the social fabric normalizing them through naturalization. So
>
> social exclusion in terms of race (complexly knotted with class and
>
> gender…) become the mark of social belonging, the measure of standing
>
> in the nation-state, the badge of social subjection and citizenship (9-10).

Similarly, Omi (2001) also explains that the "distribution of power - and its expression in structures, ideologies, and practices at various institutional and individual levels - is significantly racialized in our society" (244). One of the things I want to highlight here is how he acknowledges that the distribution of power is reflected in a variety of ways. This is clear in my dissertation, particularly in terms of transportation, which is one of the greatest material limitations in terms of access to the coast for low-income communities. Transportation is not the only limitation, as I will demonstrate; there are more implicit deterrents at play which have to do with social exclusion. But for now, I will focus on some of the institutional inequalities. Omi (2001) explains that

domestic economic restructuring and the transnational flow of capital

and labor have created a new economic context for situating race and

racism. The federal government's ability to expand social programs,

redistribute resources, and ensure social justice has been dramatically

curtailed by fiscal constraints and rejection of liberal social reforms of the

1960s (245).

As mentioned earlier, the development of Los Angeles has been largely influenced, or more aptly, driven, by competition in the global economy, and as such, the city has invested money and resources into institutions and infrastructure that supports this competition. Social equality has taken a back seat, if not completely forgotten altogether. This shift then demonstrates what Omi (2001) is saying above, that the distribution of power is evident in the institutions that get attention. That being the

case, we can also say that low-income communities of color are actively devalued and marginalized in Los Angeles.

In terms of solutions to these disparities, which are easily unnoticed by dominant society because the infrastructure allows for disparate communities to remain hidden, Omi suggests that there has been a trend towards self-help and private intervention. The organization, Surf Bus, that I worked with for this dissertation demonstrates this need. At the same time, private programs serve as safety nets for communities that are neglected by the state. Unfortunately, this reinforces the state's perspective that social assistance should be handled privately. Furthermore, this sentiment was articulated explicitly by the main funder of the Surf Bus program, who valued programs like Surf Bus, but wanted me to be certain that he did not support the government taking on the role of these programs, which should be funded privately.

Finally, I want to reflect on Bonilla-Silva's (2006) thesis on *Racism without Racists*, because this also informs how I see race and racism implicated in the everyday practices and perspectives of the actors involved in this dissertation. Bonilla-Silva (2006) argues that whites use a variety of discourses to hide their racist ideologies. A very common discourse that whites use is that of individualism, for example, whites think the reason why people of color live in the inner city is because they don't work hard enough to get out of poverty. This perspective completely ignores and is blind to structural inequalities that make it nearly impossible to change one's lot in life when they start out with nothing and whites start out privileged. Another discourse is that whites are responding to the practices people of color perform, not their race. This comes up later

in the dissertation as well.   Whites also claim that they don't see color, but in doing so they deny that racial difference exists and that racial inequality results.

The Latino/a population plays a leading role in this dissertation, thus it is important to understand how they are racialized in society. Bonilla-Silva (2006) suggests that there are three main racial categories in the U.S. as of 2006 which include Whites, Honorary Whites and Collective Blacks. Most Asians, Light-skinned Latino/as, and "multiracials" fall under the Honorary White category, but assimilated white Latino/as fall under the white category. Class is also tied up with these categories in which whites and Honorary Whites are doing better in terms of income and education than blacks. In fact, the mean income of some Latino/as and Asians is higher than that of whites, while the mean income of Mexicans is lower than whites and blacks in 2000 (Bonilla-Silva 2006: 186).   These racial divisions are important because building off of Bonilla-Silva's argument, whites can look at these racially internal class divisions and make the argument that since some people of color do "well" in society, then everyone can and it is an individual's fault if he/she is poor and socially excluded. They are simply not working hard enough, which is what Bonilla-Silva (2005) refers to as abstract liberalism (30).

Another aspect of race is the process of assimilation. Vasquez (2011) looks at how Mexicans assimilate into American society in different ways, generationally and in terms of social class. These processes of assimilation become a major theme in this dissertation particularly when I discuss how Latino/a kids negotiate their identity through practice in a hegemonic, white space. Through their experience we are able to

see how racialized the coastal landscape is, as well as, how the process of racialization occurs.

Critical Geographies of Race

Now that I have discussed how I am theorizing race, I want to turn to ways in which I employ these concepts to social-spatial relations more specifically. Often geographers use Critical Race Theory (CRT) or Critical Race Studies to identify their theoretical perspective surrounding race. I argue that Critical Geographies of Race is the best label for this work. Critical Geographies of Race (CGR) is informed by CRT, but focuses more on social-spatial relationships, while CRT emphasizes how the law upholds a racialized society (Price 2010). Price reminds us that geographers recognize that racial processes are always spatialized (Jackson 1987; Kobayashi 1994b; Dwyer 1997; Pulido 2000; Anderson 2002). This assertion comes from another geographic perspective that identity/subjectivities and space are mutually constructed and constituted (Dwyer and Jones 2000; Kobayashi 2003; Mohanty 2006; Pratt and Hanson 1994). These assertions provide the framework in which I understand the social processes within my research. Specifically, I look at how beaches become racialized sites and what effects that racialization has.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has informed Critical Geographies of Race (CGR) in many ways, not only has CRT stimulated examination of extraordinary instances of race relations, like apartheid South Africa and Nazi Germany, it has also highlighted the "ordinary" instances of racialization (Price 2010), which I locate in the everyday experiences of and on the beach. This is a very important reflection, because these

historical mass social movements and events involving race (e.g., Jim Crow South, apartheid), act as a baseline in which all other racism is compared, misleading people to think that racism no longer exists. Indeed, it is the everyday reproduction of racism that is problematic and must be engaged with. This helps supports Bonilla-Silva's position on *Racism Without Racists*, that people use the excuse that because we no longer live in the Jim Crow era, racism and discrimination do not exist anymore. In the case of Los Angeles, it is the ignorance that race and class play a role in the uneven distribution of resources and access that perpetuates these inequalities.

Furthermore, Price (2010) touches on another theme in CGR that is prevalent in my research, which is inclusion and exclusion (Sibley 1995; Cresswell 1996; Kobayashi and Peake 2000). This perspective flows through the entire dissertation and is one of the more dominant ways in which I seek to understand the socio-spatial phenomena of access to Malibu and for the kids of South Central.

Price (2010) also reflects on the formation of whiteness. Kobayashi and Peake (2000) do this in their discussion of shooting in a predominantly white suburban high school in Columbine, CO. The media portrayed the town as "normal" where "bad" these things don't happen, meaning violence is a socio-spatial characteristic of black or Latino/a communities, not white suburbs. This is also the implicit perspective that I discovered in the South Bay, and the way that people singled out Dockweiler Beach as a beach out of place, not like the 'normal' white beaches. I turn to the relationship between race and the city.

Race and the City

I am now going to talk about race and the city since racial formations of the city directly affect coastal areas from a perspective of critical geographies of race. There has been a large volume of scholarship devoted to race and cities and it is not my purpose to challenge these theories, rather, I present the literature that substantiates my claims as I analyze my own data. Therefore, I introduce the most relevant scholarship that rounds out my theoretical perspective on race. To begin, I look at the seminal work of Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton (1993) and William Julius Wilson (1978). These two perspectives seek to understand why low-income Blacks are segregated in disenfranchised urban neighborhoods. These two perspectives deviate in terms of what causes this outcome. Wilson (2009; 1978) claims that culture and class stratification should also be implicated. Massey and Denton offer a more structural perspective, while Wilsons is more agentic implicating internal culture and class stratification.

According to Massey and Denton (1993) the low-income black urban spaces today are a result of structural inequalities. Several structures were put in place that created poor black neighborhoods in the inner city starting in the early 1930s, though racist structures of slavery and lack of social and political freedom predated this. In many ways, poor, all black neighborhoods were a result of advantages given to whites that were denied to blacks, this is seen in discriminatory housing practices such as redlining. Predominantly lower-income, black neighborhoods were literally outlined in red on city maps, so that anyone who lived in that area would not qualify for a loan because they came from a "high-risk" area, regardless of their individual credentials

(Massey and Denton 1993). Therefore, blacks were trapped in the inner city by racist institutional practices. Then, in the 1940s and 1950s, the housing market drastically changed with government backed loans from the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and Veterans Administration (VA). However, these loans were only granted to whites at the time allowing them to purchase homes in newly fabricated suburbs. As whites left the city, so did most of the investment and tax base, so inner-cities started to experience a fiscal squeeze resulting in an overall neglected space.

There were other structures that assisted in the making of the ghettos including the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 (Wilson 1978). Highways were strategically routed through impoverished black inner-cities or routed between black and white communities producing a barrier that isolated poor black neighborhoods even more (Wilson 2009:29). These highways play a very important role in Los Angeles because they continue to isolate low-income black and Latino/a communities in the inner city, which I discuss in more detail in chapter four. These highways also represent the dominant value of privately owned automobiles over public transportation upon which low-income communities rely. Highways make it possible for middle-class whites to completely avoid these inner-cities altogether thus creating not only an isolated, but invisible inner city. Furthermore, whites stood in the way of public housing projects for low-income people of color in suburbs, so high-occupancy residential communities were built within the already overcrowded, poor, neglected, and black inner-cities (Wilson 2009).

The above instances are examples of structural inequalities that can be seen by a critical analysis of the landscape. Therefore in my own research, I use my understanding of race relations to interpret the landscape and identify these inequalities and how they relate to and are often constructed by power relations involving race.

The processes that Massey, Denton, and Wilson discuss can be generally applied to most urban areas in the United States including Los Angeles; however in L.A., there is the added layer of the Latino/a population which is not included in their overall thesis. I talk about the development of the Los Angeles inner city for both blacks and Latino/as in more detail in chapter four. For now, I will use a quote from Almaguer's *Racial Faultlines* to sum up the process of racialization for Latino/as in Los Angeles:

… neither the material interests of class actors alone nor the ideological process pertaining to racial formation ultimately determined the way hierarchies of group inequality were constructed. Rather, it was the simultaneous interaction of both structural and ideological factors that ultimately shaped the trajectory of the historical experiences (Almaguer 2009: 3).

Race and the Landscape

The last area of this section looks at the relationship between race and the landscape.

Schien (2006) explains that "*all* [italics in original] of American landscapes can be seen through a lens of race, *all* [italics in original] American landscapes are racialized" (4). Schein (2006) goes on to say that race is obvious in some landscapes, yet "it is harder in

the everyday, taken-for-granted scenes in the vernacular landscapes, especially when the work of race often is seemingly invisible, hidden or even overwritten in the landscape's palimpsest appearance" (8). Because whiteness is invisible to white, dominant society (Macintosh 1988; Schein 2006), white landscapes are seen as the norm, thus only spaces with people of color are seen as racialized. This phenomenon is seen played out in the South Bay in which whites see Dockweiler is seen as a 'ghetto' beach (ghetto being a racialized term), and Manhattan Beach is seen as normal even though it is distinctively racialized as white.

I understand the landscape to be a material thing and a set of ideas; this is quite similar to how Sewell (1999) describes culture as being both concrete and abstract. I demonstrate this tension in my dissertation. For example, Malibu and South Central are both material things but also an idea and image. I operate with the assertion that "[c]ultural landscapes are not innocent" (Schein 2006:5) and, as Schien (2006) says:

> their very presence as both material 'things' and conceptual framings of
> the world, makes cultural landscapes constitutive of the processes that
> created them in the first place – whether through the materiality of the
> tangible, visible scene or through the symbolic qualities they embed that
> make them inescapably normative (5).

Therefore, my intention in this dissertation is to interrogate landscapes in this way to better understand the social processes that they represent and reproduce, bringing together social struggles and theories that have not been done before – specifically nature, race, and cities. One thing I have found is that the material representation of

social processes within the landscape don't line up with the ideal representation of that place, and this is where the real tension actually lies. We can't take the material artifacts of a landscape at face value, because often times they seem to deflect social relations while at other times they mirror those relations perfectly. Whites avoid Dockweiler Beach, even though it physically looks like any other beach in Los Angeles. Whites are deterred from that space based on the bodies that occupy it and the racialized reputation held among whites and the middle class.

This can be related to how black students at the University of Georgia (UGA) felt excluded from the sociogeographic history of the school in Inwood and Martin's (2008) work on the campus landscape of UGA. They found that historical plaques glorified a White South and ignored African Americans. African Americans helped to build the campus through slave labor, but there is no identification of this in the memorialized history of the university. Indeed one plaque calls the Civil War, the War for Southern Independence – a discursive trick that attempts to reframe the war away from slavery. The one memorial honoring the first two black students to enroll in the university diminishes and ignores much of the intense conflict, violence, and racism that accompanied them to school. Another memorial is located inside one of the dorms which is not visible to most students. The University of Georgia is a predominantly white school in that most of the bodies that attend are white, yet the whitewashed history that Inwood and Martin (2008) reveal contributes to UGA as a white place. The 'collective' memory that gives meaning to places has been whitewashed.

While landscapes are discursive, they can also be contested, reclaimed, and remade. Furthermore, the mere presence of historical markers does not necessarily elicit the meaning intended or engender inclusivity to the intended group of people. Inwood and Martin (2008) demonstrate this when they locate two token historical markers meant to honor the first African American students at UGA. These plaques are seen as an afterthought, and provide a watered-down history of what really happened at best. There are a couple of things to consider here. First, the presence of exclusionary landmarks does not always deter excluded people from feeling welcome at that space. For example, Stone Mountain Park near Atlanta, GA is a confederate memorial, complete with three prominent confederate soldiers carved into the face of the of 825 ft high granite monolith (stonemountainpark.com). During summer nights, these soldiers come to life with a laser show. Stone Mountain was also a dominant southern headquarters for the Klu Klux Klan. It was not uncommon to see kids cruising around the mountain flying their Rebel flags well into the new millennium. Today, you'll find significant if not predominantly African American and immigrant populations visiting Stone Mountain, and having family reunions there. The fact that people of color visit Stone Mountain may be out of convenience more than anything, but it does reflect the fact that landscapes have different meanings for different people. Even if Stone Mountain is still a confederate memorial, it is being actively contested by people who go there who may not have before.

The same can be seen in Manhattan Beach as well. The kids in Surf Bus actually surfed at a slice of beach called Bruce's Beach, there is a plaque explaining the name of

the beach as well, but like the plaques at the UGA campus, it glosses over the actual events that occurred there. Suffice it to say that this portion of land was once owned by a black family but they were pushed out and their home burned down by racist whites in the 1940s. This is done in Malibu, quite explicitly with the use of illegal "private property" signs. However, in the South Bay, it is less obvious. In this case, the most obvious clues of belonging are the bodies occupying the landscapes/ indeed creating the landscapes. Landscapes can make some people feel like they belong, and either purposely or inadvertently, make others feel like they don't belong (Schien 2006; Inwood and Martin 2008).

Much of Schien's understanding of race and the landscape reflects the work of Kobayashi and Peake (2000) who explain that "no geography is complete, no understanding of place or landscape comprehensive, without recognizing that American geography, both as discipline and as the spatial expression of American life, is racialized" (392). There are many obvious racial landscapes particularly in urban spaces for example, ethnic enclaves and ghettos (which are coded as black). Kobayashi and Peake (2000) take issue with the assumption that the only racialized spaces are those occupied predominantly by persons of color. This is highly problematic and illustrates the assumption that whiteness is held as the norm in American society. Indeed whiteness is seen as raceless, but if we interrogate landscapes and place we will see that they actually help to (re)produce this hegemonic discourse of American society. Whiteness, according to Kobayashi and Peake (2000), "occurs as the normative, ordinary power to enjoy social privilege by controlling dominant values and institutions and, in particular,

by occupying space within a segregated social landscape" (393). They are using the events surrounding the student shootings at Columbine High School in 1999 to illustrate their point. Kobayashi and Peake (2000) explain that the media portrays "normal", "safe" neighborhoods as "white" neighborhoods with "good," "functional" families. They explain that "such representations of space and place, involving metaphors that reflect dominant ideologies, reinforce difference and by default, devalue places associated with racialized people" (396). When bad, violent things happen in "normal, white" landscapes the events are seen as "out of place," (Kobayashi and Peake 2000). This is because these spaces have been constructed as the norm, thus anything in a negative light is out of the ordinary. That normalization translates into whiteness. Also inherent in these landscapes is a moralization of whiteness and white places. Hooks (1997), points out that white people cannot conceive that black people see them in a negative light, let alone as terrorizing, which is how she has described some black representations of whiteness. What is more, white people do not have to confront that representation because it doesn't dominate society.

Thus landscapes can naturalize race in very powerful ways. Again, the most obvious case of this is the inner city, often called "the ghetto" which is coded as black; this particular landscape naturalizes "blackness" such that all black people are "ghettoized." The same occurs with whiteness, although we must be careful not to disregard representations of whiteness that occur outside of white people (hooks 1997). Thus far, I have placed the term "ghetto I n quotes to point out that it is a problematic and contentious term in the mainstream as well as critical race studies. When I use the

term, it is in reference to how the mainstream and on some occasions critical race

theorists use it. It was common for people participating in my research, who lived in the

inner city to call it the ghetto with a sense of pride or ownership. Yet it was also used by

outsiders as a negative connotation describing a place, practice, or person of color who

is low-income, but even more, it served as a negative binary and generalized large

groups of people.   Therefore, I use the term throughout this dissertation either to draw

attention to its power of racialization or because that was how my participants referred

to the inner city.

Conclusion

My main purpose for this research is to apply a critical cultural geographic

perspective of race and landscape to understand the construction of urban nature

through a study of access.   In this chapter I introduced my theoretical framework to

understand landscape and race which includes material discursive formations (Davis

2005), 'race and landscape' (Schein 2006) and practice (Cresswell 2003).   As I illustrated,

there are multiple ways to study race and the landscape, therefore I outlined how I am

specifically interpreting these processes in this dissertation.

While it is difficult to talk about landscape and race separately (Schein 2006), I

organized this chapter along these two processes because while I argue, that they are

mutually constituted, they have been studied in isolation of each other for some time.

Thus my review of this literature and theory followed the existing structure of these

theories as, for the most part. I first talked about how geographers have studied the

landscape. I then looked at landscapes of exclusion because ultimately this study looks

at how the landscape is constructed and works to include or exclude bodies through practice. Then, I looked at landscape and nature because I empirically focused on an urban nature and thus engage with how geographers have studied such places. I then focused on race which I divided into three sections, starting out with conceptions of race. This was important to introduce how I am using/understanding/defining racial concepts throughout this dissertation including race, racism, and racialization. I then looked at how critical geographers have studied race by explaining the theory that I use called critical geographies of race which is informed by critical race theory. Lastly, I looked at how race and cities have been studied since I argue that the coast is also an urban space subject to urban theory as well.

Finally, I looked at Schien's (2006) work on race and landscape in the last section of this chapter, I could have put it in either the race of landscape section; however, I wanted to honor the work of seeing these concepts mutually constructed.   Schien (2006) remarks that the end point for the book he edited on race and the landscape is to understand that "[r]acial processes take place and racial categories are made, in part, through cultural landscapes" (6), he then encourages geographers to "ask questions about how landscapes work in reproducing everyday life and all of its social relations" (10). I take his endpoint as my starting point. Schien explains that "additions to the fledgling literature on race and landscape in the United States, contributions to the ongoing conversation and argument about the interrelations of race and landscape" (13).

These are the literatures and theories that I hope to contribute to. My main

contribution is to follow Schien's call to consider race and the landscape together from a

critical perspective. Race has been studied through a variety of vehicles including the

city, and through place, but it has been less implicated in the natural, urban landscapes.

Furthermore, there has not been much research on the landscape from a critical cultural

perspective in the last several years ; therefore, by applying complimentary theory to

this concept helps to breathe new life into an inherent geographic concept.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I go over my methods and methodology. To be clear, methods

are "the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data" and methodology is

the "strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of

particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes"

(Crotty 2005: 3). I use qualitative methodolgies which is informed by a social

constructionist epistemology. And my methodology informs the methods that I

employ. After defining my methodology and methods, I will discuss the role of

positionality in my research.

While researchers may use the same or similar methods, it is the methodology

that determines how they analyze and interpret data (Esterberg 2002). My research is

informed by qualitative methodology which is "intended to elucidate human

environments, individual experiences, and social processes" (Winchester 2005: 3). While

qualitative methodology can include a vast amount of methods, hesitate to narrow it

too much as I find some more specific methodologies too confining or rigid. For

example, I am influenced by phenomenology in the sense that I look at the everyday

experiences of my participants to get an understanding of how identities and social

relations emerge. However, I don't come from a hard phenomenological perspective

which posits that the researcher can and should 'bracket' what we know about a

phenomena and allow meaning to emerge from the experience alone (Crotty 2005). I

conduct an ethnography, which is categorized as a qualitative methodology, of the

urban coast to gain an understanding of the everyday construction and experience of this place. Ethnography generally involves long-term engagement with a community or society (Hart 2009).

Theoretically, geographers practicing qualitative research are often concerned with social structures and/or individual experience or agency (Winchester 2005). Winchester explains that "qualitative geographers balance a fine line between the examination of structures and processes on the one hand and of individuals and their experiences on the other" (5). This is a balance that I attempt to find in my own research. I recognize the structures that affect people's everyday experiences, but at the same time realize that people have the power to transgress and reconstruct landscapes and structures. I am able to engage with structures and agency in society through my methods of participant observation, interviews and critical archival analysis.

One key aspect of qualitative research is the role of the researcher as part of the research rather than "the disembodied, neutral and detached observer" (DeLyser et al 2010). Denizin and Lincoln (2005) explain that qualitative researchers "stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry" (10). The role of the researcher can be dealt with more in depth through critical self-awareness or critical reflexivity (Dowling 2005). In the next section I do this through exploring the implications of my positionality.

Methods

The methods that I used, informed by qualitative methodology, are participant observation, semi-structured interviews, internet research and archival research. I conducted this research in three phases. The first phase involved archival research, the second phase was my fieldwork in Los Angeles and the third phase was data analysis. These phases were dynamic and didn't necessarily occur linearly. For example, I conducted archival research throughout the entire research and writing period. Below, I go into more detail on my methods for each phase.

Phase I: In the first phase, I identified and collected archival data and internet data that pertained to each research area. The archival sources that I used included news media, public documents, online social networking, propaganda, and film. I focused on how these sources discursively portrayed access and the coast as well as factual historical data on the material construction of these places. Much of this research is explored in chapter four, in which I provide a contextual look at my study area, and try to understand how these spaces are represented and imagined in order to get a sense of how they are then later lived and reproduced or transgressed. I looked for themes of access like feelings of belonging or exclusivity. I also tried to locate a connection between access and landscape including the construction, deconstruction, and transgression of boundaries.

I also conducted internet research which "documents posted on the Internet on listservs and electronic bulletin boards may be treated in ways similar to other documents and material artifacts" (Esterberg 2002: 125). I found very rich data from

people posting reviews of places on websites such as Yelp.com. I also used Ask.com in which someone posts a question and users offer responses. These websites gave me access to a wide range of perspectives of place and practices. There are strengths and weaknesses to Internet research. One of the strengths was that the "Internet can encourage open expression of thoughts and feelings because it does not involve face-to-face communication" (Esterberg 2002: 125-126). I found that people were quite candid with their responses which likely had to do with their anonymity.

The objective of this phase was to firmly situate this project within the broader academic literature and to collect information to guide the collection of empirical data in Phase II and analysis in Phase III. However, I considered my Internet data from review and answer sites to be part of my empirical work as well. I succeeded in meeting two main objectives for Phase I. *Objective 1:* Conduct a historical analysis of the material-discursive formations of the Los Angeles coastal landscape and access to it. Collecting these data allowed me to build a genealogy of construction of these spaces. It also helped me situate and inform the analysis of contemporary notions of the coastal landscape, as well as identify possible future outcomes. In keeping with my broad research focus on the material- discursive constructions of the beach and access, I examined how the beach was materially constructed, for example bringing in sand to extend beaches in Malibu[1]. I also evaluated how ideas of this space and access changed over time by identifying common themes and patterns in the discourse of news media, propaganda, and the degree of social activism. *Objective 2:* I identified and analyzed

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[1] See Chapter Seven: Malibu

current issues of access within the study area including lawsuits, the development of social movements, and current discourse of media and propaganda. I identified contradictions and similarities between the media discourse and the everyday narratives of users today and when possible, narratives of users during previous times in history[2].

Phase II took place in Los Angeles, CA. The main objective for this phase was to conduct participant observation and semi-structured interviews which was analyzed in Phase III. A secondary objective was to collect spatial data using photo documentation.

Objective 1 of Phase II was participant observation. Participant observation is a form of research in which "the researcher observes and to some degree participates in the action being studied, as the action is happening" (Lichterman 2002:120). Herbert (2000) explains that through participant observation, the "ethnographer gains unreplicable insight through an analysis of everyday activities and symbolic constructions" (551). I conducted participant observation in several different ways. First, I attended weekly beach clean-ups with the Surfrider Foundation. This allowed me to talk to people within the Surfrider Foundation to get an idea of their perspectives of the coastal landscape and access to it. I was also able to observe everyday practices of other beachgoers. I also volunteered to set up and work the Surfrider Foundation information table at various weekly events. These events included a concert series on the Santa Monica Pier, an Ecofestival in Venice Beach, International Surf Day in Santa Monica, 'Hands Across the Sand' in Malibu against off-shore oil drilling, and local surf

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[2] See Chapter Four: Context

competitions in Malibu. These activities allowed me to meet a variety of people who were not necessarily connected to the Surfrider Foundation but had some reason to be at the beach. That said, most of the people who attended these events supported the notion of increasing public access to the beach. I also learned about their struggles with gaining access to the beach, and what kinds of things they typically did at the beach. Most of the people at these events were white, and described normative beach practices of lying in the sand, surfing, or playing volleyball.

The other main form of participant observation I did was volunteering as a surfing instructor with the Surf Bus Foundation. I learned about this organization while conducting internet research on the beach and access. I found several newspaper articles about the program, as well as a segment on a local news show (in fact another news station did a segment on the program the summer that I volunteered there). The Surf Bus program partners with an inner-city recreation centers to get kids to the beach and teaches them to surf. Surf Bus is a nonprofit organization that is owned and operated by the owners of the for-profit Surf Academy that offers surf lessons to the general public at Santa Monica, one of the most centrally located beaches in L.A. I contacted the director, Marion Clark and she invited me to become a volunteer instructor in exchange for my permission to conduct research. I picked up the kids in a van several times a week and brought them to the beach then back to the recreation center. At the beach, I led them in a variety of beach games and activities including yoga and beach clean-ups. I also taught them how to play safe and smart in the ocean and the principles of surfing.

Another area of participant observation was attending Malibu City Hall meetings one to two times per week. This allowed me to stay up to date on what was going on in Malibu and to meet some homeowners who might be willing to talk to me. This proved very successful and I was able to meet people who later gave me more contacts.

Participant observation allowed me to serve and build rapport with the community (Anderson 2004: 257), talk to people informally about their coastal experiences, and observe practices that represent and construct landscapes. I asked people about their experiences at the coast, why they went there, how accessible it was, their perception of coastal access and what they might be doing to confront issues of access.   Participant observation allowed me to explore the everyday experiences of those involved in issues of access to coastal space. I was able to compare these lived experiences to the archival data on representations of the coast to understand how they help construct the coast.

In tandem with participant observation, I used Anderson's (2004) socio-spatial method called "talking whilst walking." Anderson (2004) explains that this method enables the researcher to engage in discussions with participants without "disrupting the site itself" while using the "practice and the place to prompt the recall of…knowledge" (257). The more relaxed nature of the conversation elicited more reflective dialogue from the participants, generating an ease in the ability to come up with life experiences and reflections (Anderson 2004: 257). I used this method frequently during beach clean-ups and while volunteering with Surfrider.

With UGA IRB approval, I waived informed consent with participants at beach clean-ups for the following reasons: Whenever possible, I let people know that I was conducting research on beach use. I only struck up conversations with participants in a casual manner not unlike any other person there. Many of the conversations were very brief; the lay population may have been taken aback by the formality of consent for such an informal interaction. Furthermore, it was unpractical to obtain consent from each individual with whom I conversed since many of these conversations were spontaneous and brief. Being a participant involved an understanding of how my own positionality affected the research (Priessle and Grant 2004), which I discuss in more detail below.   For now it will suffice to say that my position as a researcher was made known to all those involved. As mentioned earlier, this research serves a dual purpose of furthering knowledge both inside and out of academia, but also to actively help to share knowledge and work with local communities to improve access and sustainability.

I documented my research using field notes and voice recordings (Hoggart, Lees, and Davies 2002: 295). Daily field notes were crucial to the success of my participant observation. Field notes are "inscriptions of social life and social discourse" that Emerson et al (1995) say provide the researcher with an "active process of interpretation and sense-making" (8). The most frequent form of documentation I used was recording verbal field notes.   Because I was usually too busy participating and could not keep notes throughout the day, I had to wait until my participation ended for that day.   I chose to record my thoughts verbally because after having spent very long days with the kids at the beach, I was too exhausted to come home and write notes. My

days working as a surf instructor for kids were incredibly tiring, and while I reflected on

each day through recorded field notes, I mostly only reflected on the empirics of what

happened that day, so I wasn't constantly placing these events into a theoretical

framework. I was already aware of these racialized processes, but I did not have the

physical or mental capacity to thoroughly analyze them at the time. I typically woke up

around 6am and was with the kids from about 8am to 3 or 4pm. I would get home

around 6:00 and sometimes go straight to bed after eating dinner and taking a shower.

Being in the ocean with four kids at a time hanging on you takes a lot of energy, as well

as spending the majority of the day in direct sun, hauling surf boards up and down the

beach, keeping track of 60 kids, pushing kids into waves and teaching them how to

actually play in the ocean. This physical and mental exhaustion was shared among the

other instructors who would also go straight to sleep when they got home every day as

well. When Surf Bus wasn't in session, these instructors worked for Surf Academy, and

they all said that a day at Surf Bus was exponentially more work than a day at Surf

Academy. The reason was that the kids at Surf Academy already knew how to swim and

play in the ocean (diving over and under waves, floating, etc...), they were also invested

in the idea that they were going to be surfers. Most of the kids at Surf Bus were just

attending because it was better than hanging out at their recreation center, A Place

Called Home (APCH) in South Central. Marion, the director of Surf Bus, insisted that the

kids actually ride three waves every day which was incredibly difficult to implement

because the kids were so scared of the water. We spent most of the time trying to calm

down kids who were kicking, screaming and crying that they didn't want to get in the

water. Also, because the kids were so scared of surfing, and they didn't listen to what

the instructors were telling them, there were many more wipeouts than at Surf

Academy. I was bruised and scratched from flailing arms, legs and surf boards on a daily

basis. The instructors would eventually get worn down emotionally and physically from

the kids. On more than one occasion I saw the instructors have to walk away from kids

because of frustration and tears of their own. The point of sharing this aspect of my

research is to explain that it isn't possible for researchers to be "researching" and

theorizing every second they are in the field or even as soon as they are out of the field.

During participant observation I also documented general public activities in

coastal landscapes. I identified themes and patterns in the activities I observed, paying

close attention to the location of activities, the perceived demographic of individuals,

and the kind of activities that were being performed[3]. This data was then analyzed in

Phase III.

Another element of *Objective 1* was semi-structured interviews with key actors

involved in the construction of coastal landscapes. In chapters four-seven I will detail

these participants more specifically, but in general, I formally interviewed 31 people

involved with organizations concerned about the access to the coast including: Surfrider

Foundation, California Coastal Commission, Los Angeles Urban Rangers, Surf Bus

Foundation, KidSurf, and A Place Called Home (APCH). I also interviewed residents in

Malibu, El Segundo, Manhattan Beach, and South Central, and Malibu city officials. I

relied on the snowball method (Yin 1994) to identify other actors who may be

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[3] See Chapter Six: Surf Bus

interested in talking to me about the issues related to my research. Elwood and Martin

(2001) acknowledge that place matters in terms of the interview sites. Thus the comfort

of the interviewee was my main priority in deciding where to conduct the interview.

Through the interviews I sought to understand the competing ideas about

access, public space, and natural space, as well as gain insight into how different people

imagine and experience the landscape. I interviewed the people who had direct interest

or involvement in issues of access, which allowed me to gain a better understanding of

how multiple actors, framed their position around different discourses, for example,

using the law to justify claims of access, or using an environmental discourse to

discourage public access.

Objective 2: I used spatial data collection for photo-documenting spaces of

access and blocked access. There has been a resurgence of visual research, which has

long been practiced by anthropologists (Pink 2003). The purpose of photo-

documentation was to enrich and substantiate claims made by myself and participants

on access and coastal practices. The importance and connection of this method to this

research is that people were often deterred from certain beaches largely because of

visual cues; by documenting these forms in the landscape, I was better able to analyze

their material-discursive nature. Photos also help to tell the story and contextualize

what was happening in these different spaces for the readers of this dissertation.   Thus

photo-documentation helped me answer the question of how the landscape is

materially (through signage, and gates) and discursively (what these signs symbolize and

say to the public and how they represent the person who posted the sign) constructed.

The third and final phase of this project, **Phase III**, involved analyzing data and

drawing conclusions. I followed Bernard and Ryan's (2010) model for analyzing text:

"(1) discovering themes and subthemes; (2) describing the core and peripheral elements

of themes; (3) building hierarchies of themes; (4) applying themes; (5) linking themes

into theoretical models" (54). This was an inductive and deductive process in that while

I looked for themes to emerge from the data, I also had some a priori theoretical

knowledge that helped me determine what was significant to my research (Bernard and

Ryan 2010).

To begin this process I first transcribed all of my interviews and field notes. I

then tried to use *NVivo* to help me identify and organize themes, but soon discovered

Scrivener, a computer software program for writers that had more capabilities and was

more user-friendly than *NVivo*. I made electronic note cards, bulletin boards,

highlighted, query, and organized my data more effectively. I analyzed how ideologies

about the coast are manifested, materially in the landscape and vice versa. I compared

contemporary discourses of the coast to historical archival data to understand how

current ideologies and practices have come into practice. I located contradictions

between the rhetoric and materiality of the landscape both historically and

contemporarily. I was able to see how perceptions of access related to my actual

documentation of access and how these perceptions compared to multiple discourses

(news and popular media, academic literature, local social movements).

Positionality

There are a host of issues that emerged from positional differences in qualitative research. I use the term positionality as defined by Mullings (1999): "perspective shaped by his/her unique mix of race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality, and other identifiers" (337). My own positionality at the time can be outlined as follows: I was single, straight, white, female, and in my early 30s. I was also educated to the graduate level, was brought up by working-class divorced parents in the U.S. South. I lived in Los Angeles for seven years in my 20s, during which time I became very familiar with the Pacific coast. I started surfing my last year in California and have some personal experience with L.A. surf culture. I had experience working with kids through previous jobs in child care from which I drew from when working with the kids from Surf Bus. Taking positionality seriously in research has been a major contribution of feminist and postmodern theories. These perspectives challenge the separation of subject and object which is inherent in positive science in the hope that the researcher maintains complete objectivity.

I derived various advantages and limitations from my positionality that played out in my research and influenced what kinds of 'knowledge' I could claim. In my case, I understand knowledge to be socially constructed, that there is not a single instance of pure objectivity, and that there is not one absolute truth behind social phenomena. Therefore, no matter how I conducted my research, I could never make absolute claims to what I was studying. Even so, I am not completely relativistic. I value the truths that people see for themselves, and I am interested in how these truths intersect to

construct social relations. Furthermore, I do not deny a 'real' reality; ontologically, I am

a realist, but our ways of knowing these realities are socially contingent. At the same

time, I am open to different ways of knowing that do not assume an absolute truth, for

example, knowing through embodiment. Therefore, my ability to 'know' other's

experience was limited; I could not ever truly "know", but got as close as possible to

understanding how people's experiences tied into broader social processes. While

there were limitations to this epistemology, it also allows me to say more about

individual experiences than other perspectives. Methodologically, I was able to speak to

individuals, to understand and convey their experience within the larger-scale social,

political and economic processes.

One other issue that a qualitative researcher must confront in terms of or

perhaps regardless of positionality, is the dilemma of "speaking for" another group

(Kobayashi 1994a; England 1994). Kim England (1994) explains that in an effort to offer

more inclusive research that accounts for difference, it is possible that some researchers

may be "guilty of appropriating the voices of 'others'" (81). Thus qualitative researchers

need to be conscious of this. Furthermore, Kobayashi (1994) explains that "' [w]ho

speaks for whom?' cannot be answered upon the slippery slope of what personal

attributes – what color, what gender, what sexuality – legitimize our existence, but on

the basis of our history of involvement, and on the basis of understanding how

difference is constructed and used as political tool" (78). Thus, in my research, I

followed Kobayashi's lead, and tred to understand how positionality worked, rather

than reacting to its mere presence.

Methodologically, one of the main issues I had was gaining access to various groups of people particularly wealthy beachfront homeowners in Malibu. My class position and the fact that I was not a Malibu resident limited my ability to interact with Malibu residents on a regular basis. With more regular interactions, I might have been able to establish more contact and trust among the community. I had to use creative means to gain access. For example, I went to the same coffee shop in Malibu on a daily basis because locals often hung out at coffee shops. After a while, I started to see recognizable faces and was able to strike up conversations with people. I also got to know the local business owners and employees. For some researchers this process could be long, for others who are more extroverted, it may only take a few days to start striking up conversations with people. This is why the time scale for qualitative fieldwork, is highly dependent on the researcher. It took me several weeks before I started talking to people at the coffee shop.

I attended City council meetings. I knew that people who attend these meetings usually had some general concern for their city and might be willing to talk to an outsider who was also concerned with the city. After several meetings, I started to see familiar faces and introduced myself to people who spoke about issues related to my research questions. Many people who were motivated to speak up to the council also took the opportunity to speak to a researcher about related issues. This proved to be the most effective way for me to find gatekeepers (Cook 1997:132). After conducting an interview and cultivating some trust and comfort with the interview participants, I asked if they would put me in contact with other people who might be interested in talking to

me; I explained that I was having a hard time meeting beachfront homeowners. One of my interviewees was particularly helpful in facilitating contact with some of her friends who were beachfront homeowners.

My class position limited access to an 'elite' group, but being in the right place at the right time helped me deal with that. Speaking of 'the right place in the right time', some would assume this was luck, and there is luck involved; however, I was strategic about where I was and what times I was there, thus qualitative researchers do not simply rely on luck, or just 'hanging out' (Madison 2005:17) until something happens. Being strategic about where you go can effectively lead to 'lucky' instances much faster.

Another aspect of my positionality that helped me gain access to the Malibu elite was my education. I presented myself as a PhD student conducting research for my dissertation. This position is seen as both 'qualified' and 'unintimidating.' People in Malibu likely saw me as upper middle class because of my pursuit of a higher degree.   I was also taken more seriously when I presented my business card that showed my affiliation with a university. My working on a dissertation was likely seen as less obtrusive than research with an advocacy organization. People felt that they were helping me out as an individual with my 'school project' in a way which made it easier for them to talk to me, rather than being concerned that what they said would end up in some government or environmental policy.

In other cases, I played down my positionality of a PhD student, particularly when I was talking to lower-income people who likely did not go to college or pursue a higher degree. Another aspect to this was my being white, while many of the

participants were Latino/a. It would have been very helpful for me to speak Spanish since most of the kids from Surf Bus spoke Spanish at home. The kids would often talk to each other in Spanish, in which case I felt like an outsider. The kids and their parents may have been more open to me if I could communicate in Spanish.

This brings me to another issue that qualitative researchers face in the field – connections with those involved in the research. For me, it was important to maintain relationships with my participants; I didn't want to build a false sense of trust that benefited me only when I needed it. My research involved participant observation (as discussed previously) in which I worked with social groups and organizations. They were helping me by participating in my research and I was helping them through volunteering. England (1994) explains that "those who are researched should be treated like people and not as mere mines of information to be exploited by the researcher as the neutral collector of 'facts'" (82). As mentioned earlier, there is a relationship between subject and object/researcher and researched that should not be taken for granted. You gain people's trust by recognizing that you are not there to simply take.

Gender was more of an issue than I anticipated. I found that men were more likely to talk to me but did so in a patronizing way; they seemed to want to educate me on matters, assuming that I didn't know what I was talking about. This happened in several interviews and informal interactions. This is not uncommon; Mullings (1999) explains that women confront difficulty accessing 'exclusively male' spaces, and that "elites are likely to direct the issues and direction of interviews" (340). Like other

subject positions, gender was both an advantage and limitation. While a few male interviewees were patronizing which was a limitation, others seemed to talk to me because of my femininity. It is likely that some people would not have talked to me had it not been for my femininity. According to England (1994), "this experience reflects Linda McDowell's assertion that because women may be perceived by men that they interview as 'unthreatening or not official,' confidential documents [are] often made accessible, or difficult issues broached relatively freely" (85). In addition to my gender, my race influenced one interview in particular. While interviewing a white man from Manhattan Beach, he used racist descriptions of Latino/as from the inner city. He assumed that I would share his perspective; he could be 'real' with me in a way that he would not have been in front of a person of color.

I would also like to address the insider/outsider debate and situate it within my research. Mullings (1990) explains that the insider/outsider perspective implies a binary that:

> ...seeks to freeze positionalities in place, and assumes that being an
> 'insider' or 'outsider' is a fixed attribute. The insider/outsider binary in
> reality is a boundary that is not only highly unstable but also one that
> ignores the dynamism of positionalities in time and through space. Can
> consistently remain an insider and few ever remain complete outsiders.
> Endeavors to be either one or the other reflect elements of the dualistic
> thinking that structures much of Western thought (340).

This is worth considering. While it is important to think about insider/outsider relations, I agree with Mullings, it seemed in my own research that I was often both. She is not suggesting that the perception of positionalities as insider or outsider does not exist; rather she is saying that this binary is too fixed to be ontologically relevant. Mullings (1999) suggests that the best way to deal with this is by seeking "positional spaces" which are "areas where the situated knowledges of both parties in the interview encounter engender a level of trust and co-operation" (340). She explains that we should be careful not to assume that people's positionality is based on their perceived identity, which is what John assumed with me – because I was white, I would agree with him about Latino/as. Finding "complimentary positional spaces" is a difficult task. Self-representation is an important component to creating a "shared positional space." Mullings explains that presenting oneself as impartial is often imperative to being granted access.

Furthermore, Mullings explains that "[i]mpartiality here is not a search for the sort of distance that is viewed as a sign of objectivity, it is instead a desire to create a space during interviews that allows interviewees to share information freely" (Mullings 1999: 340). This is something I did rather intuitively as a researcher and something that is done in everyday life – there is always an element of deception that we must admit is part of research, just as it is part of our everyday lives (Mullings 1999: 240). While I may be presenting myself as impartial, I as a researcher do not believe that my biases are isolated from my research. I attempted to be open-minded with what people were telling me in interviews; I did not attempt to negate or argue with what they were

saying. I sought to understand where the participants were coming from, what their perspective was and why.

Some practical ways of dealing with positionality include "bracketing"(Crotty 2005) which is informed by phenomenology and suggests that prior to fieldwork and interviews the researcher should debrief with a co-worker in order to get all their biases and preconceived notions out in the open, and then bracket them off so that they can proceed with a clear, open mind. I have tried this in previous research by having someone interview me on my thoughts and attitude going into the research. While this was helpful, I am not convinced that my biases, pervious experiences, and positionality didn't still influence my research and the relationship between myself and whoever is being researched.

Reflexivity, or as Rose (1997) puts it, "a strategy for marking geographical knowledge's as situated" offers another approach to deal with positionality dilemmas (305). England defines reflexivity as "self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious *analytical* scrutiny of the self as researcher" (243). Some researchers write subjectivity/positionality statements at the beginning of their research, as I did in the beginning of this section to let the readers consider how this positionality may have affected the research. Rose (1997) contented that while this is a worthy endeavor, we can never fully and completely know our own positionality or that of others. To assume that we can know everything about our own situated knowledges is as problematic as the assumed objectivity of positive science. Still, others write themselves into the research. Katz (1992) explains that "it is no longer possible to claim to represent

another cultural group without at least referring to the uneven power relationships that

bind it to global capitalism at a historically specific time and in a geographically specific

space" (498). Katz spotlights the recognition of power that exists between the

researcher and the researched. One of the main things I take away from these

perspectives is that we can't assume that even when we lay out all of our supposed

subjectivities, we are then a blank slate in our own eyes, or in the eyes of those whom

we are researching.

I don't claim to know more than I am capable of knowing after reflecting on my

positionality. Moreover, Mullings (1999) explains that uncertainty is often an outcome

of qualitative fieldwork. Doing good research involves "recognizing and naming these

uncertainties is an important step towards not only establishing rigor in the research

process, but also to displacing the indomitable authority of author" (337).

England (1994) speaks to this issue directly by contrasting it to "neopositivist

empiricism." She explains that:

Neopositivist empiricism specifies a strict dichotomy between object and

subject as a prerequisite for objectivity. Such an epistemology is

supported by methods that position the researcher as an omnipotent

expert in control of both passive research subjects and the research

process. Years of positivist-inspired training have taught us that

impersonal, neutral detachment is an important criterion for good

research. In these discussions of detachment, distance, and impartiality,

the personal is reduced to a mere nuisance or a possible threat to

objectivity (81).

The solution to this is to construct (or simply believe) that the researcher is an impartial, unbiased outsider who can view the situation objectively (England 1994: 81). England (1994) attempts to "dismantle" this "smokescreen" of neopostivistic research by putting more power in the hands of her subjects and acting as a supplicant "seeking reciprocal relationships based on empathy and mutual respect, and often sharing their knowledge with those they research. Supplication involves exposing and exploiting weaknesses regarding dependence on whoever is being researched for information and guidance." (82). Mullings advocates understanding the researched on her/his own terms while at the same time being careful not to colonize the subject, and assuming to completely "know" the subject's knowledge and experience.

Qualitative research offers the potential for a greater, deeper understanding of how individuals confront specific issues and how they affect broader social issues. There are limitations and advantages to all forms of research, and qualitative is no different. As long as researchers are conscious and reflexive; careful not to appropriate the voices of their participants; strive not to essentialize and generalize people's experiences; and basically maintain a commitment to good qualitative research, these issues pose no constraint for the overall practice of qualitative research.

CHAPTER 4

CONTEXT

In this chapter I provide socio-geographic history as context for my research.

This chapter builds a broad story about how landscapes are constructed, lived ,and

represented. Los Angeles has been referred to as the "world capital of popular culture"

(Avila 2004). This assertion is based on the wide reach that the images of Los Angeles

and people from there have had on the rest of the world (Valle and Torres 2000; Avilla

2004). While these are just images, helping to reproduce a collective geographic

imagination of the city, in many ways they reflect caricatures of the actually existing

landscape. These representations are also highly situated and selectively deployed by

those with power (Avila 2004). That said, these representations portray groups of

people and places as static, and powerfully deny deviation from these ideal images (Villa

and Torres 2000). People use these images to make judgments about social scenarios

which result in feelings of fear, disgust, desire, belonging, and exclusion (Sibley 1995).

Therefore, I emphasize the socio-geographic history of two very iconic landscapes in Los

Angeles, Malibu and the inner city, to help explain how these spaces are imagined

today, and what affect they have on the wider public. The geographic imagination of a

landscape plays a crucial role in whether or not someone is or feels materially or

symbolically excluded from a place (Sibley 1995, Cresswell 1996).

The inner-cities of Los Angeles, have become the quintessential "ghetto," and as

such, people who live there come to embody this place whether they choose to or not;

they are perceived as dangerous and "ghetto." This perceived identity results in

exclusionary practices among higher-income whites living at the beach. Meanwhile

Malibu has come to represent the quintessential American "beach" which is constructed

as a normative white space discouraging nonconformity.

To fully understand how the coast and access to it is constructed, it is necessary

to reflect on how some of these spaces came to be represented by different groups. I

examine the development of the inner cities of Los Angeles to understand where images

of the "ghetto" came from and how they permeate today. I then provide some history

of Malibu beginning in the late 1800s which involves a narrative of exclusivity and white

hegemonic imagery. I also introduce an area known as the South Bay, which is less

known to people outside of Los Angeles, but is the site for much of the empirics of this

dissertation and detailed in subsequent chapters. The representations of these spaces

play very important roles in understanding the construction of access. This history

shows that Malibu continues to be an exclusive, white space while the inner city and

people from it are racially identified with gangs and crime and are therefore kept out of

most coastal spaces.

Making the "Inner city"

The inner-cities of Los Angeles, often identified as South Central, East L.A. or

Compton represent the iconic mold of *the* "ghetto." These cities are seen as the

quintessential ghettos and therefore anyone from these areas are seen as "ghetto,"

meaning their identity is embodied by the place that they are from. This embodiment of

the inner city, and by extension, the construction of the "ghetto" becomes extremely

important when trying to understand why people from the inner city have such limited

access to the coast. In this section, I look at the construction of the city of Los Angeles,

and how the inner city came to be identified as the "ghetto." I then discuss how this

affects people living there. I emphasize the role of race throughout this section because

as Avila (2004) points out, "historically removed from the entrenched ethnic and class

hierarchies that defined social relations in older American cities, Los Angeles provides an

ideal setting for understanding the process of white racial formation" (xiv). This racial

formation is central to my overall argument, thus I attempt to draw out these processes

throughout this discussion of Los Angeles.

Los Angeles has been identified as a dystopia, an anti-city, and a sprawling

decentered metropolis that is the emblem of the postmodern city (Soja 1998, 1996; Soja

and Scott 1996; Dear 2000; Dear et al 1996). In the 1980s, The Los Angeles School of

Urbanism emerged, challenging traditional notions of urbanism by using Los Angeles as

the icon of the postmodern city (Dear 2000). L.A. was the ultimate exception to the

classical patterns of cities, established by the Chicago School, which were represented

by concentric rings or radial zones surrounding one central business district at the heart

of the city (Park et al 1925). Instead, Los Angeles emerged as a dynamic, fragmented,

diverse, sprawling city serving as "the epicenter of global image and fantasy" (LeGates

and Stout 2003).

Because of this there has been an urge to view L.A. as an exception that can't

be compared to any other places (Avila 2004). Avilla (2004) challenges this assumption

by placing Los Angeles within a larger set of social, political and economic developments

that "fundamentally altered the historic balance among cities and regions with the

United States after World War II" (xiv). Furthermore, the spatial processes of racialization are not unique to Los Angeles, especially with regard to Latino/a immigration, which is now becoming much more dominant in states other than California. Moreover, there are plenty of other cities that also confront contests over urban coastal landscapes, such as the Jersey Shore and the Rockaway Peninsula in New York (Perez-Pena 2011). Thus, while Los Angeles has many unique qualities which must be recognized, the socio-spatial processes that I explore can serve to better understand similar processes in other urban, natural spaces as well. After all, "Los Angeles *then* [first half of the twentieth century] was what most cities in the United States are *now*: a sprawling, multiracial place where the rules of the game and the hierarchies of power seemed always in flux" (Flamming 2005: 1).

While Los Angeles has had a long history of development, it is most pertinent to this dissertation to start the discussion in the early twentieth century when the metropolitan area of L.A. started growing exponentially faster than the rural, agricultural areas of the county. Jobs and economic opportunities were abundant at this time which attracted a wide range of people in the U.S. and abroad. The result was an unprecedented amount of racial diversity which has led to LA's current social structure (Modarres 1998). For a brief period of time, racial minorities flourished in Los Angeles, W.E.B. Du Bois commented on this when he wrote about California in 1913 reflecting on the abundant housing available for blacks (Davis 1998,). For the most part, blacks faced much less discrimination in terms of housing and access to public places than their counterparts back East (Flamming 2005; Hunt and Ramon 2010). While many blacks live

on Central Avenue today, in what is known as South Central, this was originally a predominantly occupied by whites, as was East L.A. where many Latino/as now live. However, that swiftly changed with the massive number of incoming Anglo Americans from the East Coast in the 1930s-50s (Escobar 1999; Flamming 2005). Jim Crow finally moved into California and most of the relative freedoms that people of color had in terms of access to public space and opportunities were taken away.

Segregation became institutionalized and forced blacks and Latino/as out of the life they had known. Blacks could no longer live wherever they wanted. Instead, they were relegated into segregated racial zones in South Los Angeles including Watts, Compton, and South Central and were denied any government assistance for housing or employment. Mexicans were steered towards East Los Angeles, where they were the dominant ethnic group (Escobar 1999). The means for accomplishing and enforcing segregation included restrictive covenants which were "added to the title of a piece of real estate, dictating that the property could only be sold or rented by whites" (Flamming 2005: 69). Flamming explains that "in order for covenants to be effective, every household in an exclusively Caucasian neighborhood had to cooperate. But not all white home owners wished to. And so, the neighborhood association was born, to rally and cajole these stubborn residents into cooperating" (69). Furthermore, during the Great Depressions, hundreds of thousands of Angelenos had their homes foreclosed upon because they couldn't pay the mortgages. The federal government created the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) in 1933 which offered low-interest, long term mortgages to people in threat of losing their homes. However, the HOLC wouldn't give

these mortgages to anyone who seemed at-risk of defaulting on their loans, so it

created a standardized system to determine the level of risk for each loan (Flamming

2005). The HOLC did this by constructing maps and addressing a rating to different

neighborhoods, anyone living in a grade D (the lowest rating) neighborhood would not

qualify for a loan regardless of their individual merit.   These maps were then used in

nearly every bank across the U.S. (Flamming 2005). These maps came with descriptive

files for each neighborhood that were made qualitatively by surveyors. The first section

of the file describes the population in the following way:

A) Population growth
B) Class and Occupation
C) % Foreign and Nationalities
D) % Negro
E) Shifting or Infiltration (Marciano et al 2012)

Any neighborhood with black residents was given the lowest rating regardless of any

other information. Neighborhoods with Mexicans, Jews, Italians and Japanese were also

given low if not the lowest rating. The maps were also color coded and the lowest

ranked neighborhoods were shaded or outlined in red, hence the term 'redlining.' This

is one of the clearest artifacts of structural inequality in the city of Los Angeles. It

institutionalized racial discrimination which forever affected the lives of those involved

as well as future generations. Whites who lived in neighborhoods with restrictive

covenants gained a leg up, while people of color were left behind.

White's racist fears of people of color also led to the institutional racism of the

Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) (Escobar 1999; Rodriguez 1997; Valle and Torres

2000). The LAPD developed a "racial theory of crime," suggesting that people of color

were predisposed to criminal activity, that supported racist law enforcement policies

and practices (Escobar 1999). This institutionalized racial discrimination allowed

merchants to charge people of color higher prices than whites for merchandise or

services (Modarres 1998), and restrict decent paying jobs for whites only (Escobar

1999). Hiring discrimination was not illegal in California (Flamming 2005).

Whites were able to improve their life chances by being granted privileges of

governmental assistance that were not available to racial minorities. In addition to

HOLC mortgages, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which started in 1934,

provided government assistance to purchasing a home through an extensive loan and

guarantee program. Whites had access to better paying jobs and they had assistance

moving into new, wealthier neighborhoods, while blacks and Latino/as, who had low-

wage jobs, had to stay in a deteriorating city that had lost its tax-base and government

assistance (Flamming 2005). Among people of color living in the inner city,

"employment discrimination, social segregation, and growing congestion and structural

deterioration caused by residential exclusion had created an environment that might be

justly termed a slum–ghetto" (Brown et al 2012: 220). Today Los Angeles is still heavily segregated along race with people of color living in the inner-cities and whites living west of the city (figure 4.1)
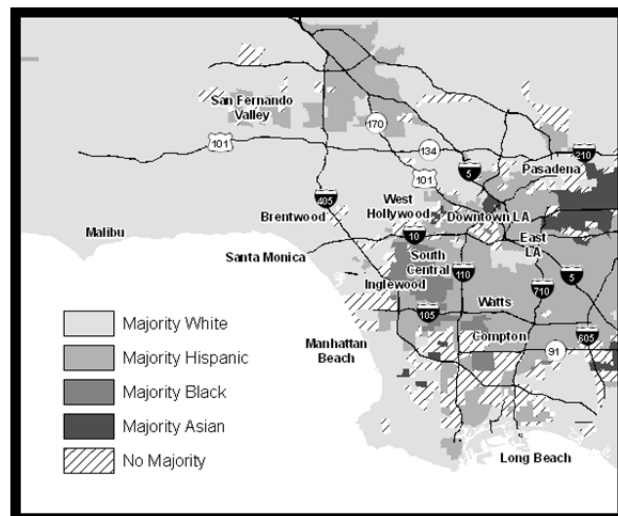
Figure 4.1 Map of Los Angeles areas with <50% of one race and freeways. Map by M.Palma

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While these structures had a devastating effect on people of color, they also

ignited predominantly young people to challenge these inequalities. By the late 1930s-

1940s, a new generation of Mexican Americans who were born or raised in California

emerged bringing a "more aggressive political orientation to the Mexican American [sic]

community" (Escobar 1999).   Many of these young people came to be known as zoot-

suiters[4] and pachucos (Escobar 1999). These Mexican-Americans felt "alienated from

American society, from which they were

generally excluded" and chose to

transgress dominant norms of society by

dressing ostentatiously (Escobar 1999:

156). Anti-Mexican racism came to a

head in what has come to be known as

the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943 when

hundreds of white military servicemen,

Figure 4.2 Arrested Zoot Suiters 1943.
Photo: L.A. Taco.com

who saw the zoot suiters as unpatriotic and extravagant with their fancy clothes,

charged into East Los Angeles assaulting anyone who looked like a zoot suiter. The LAPD

did not discourage this rampage and ended up arresting hundreds of Mexican-

Americans for 'being hoodlums' (Escobar 1999) (Figure 4.2).

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[4] Named because they often wore zoot suits which were high-waisted, baggy trowsers that tapered at the ankles with long coats with shoulder pads, often accessorized by hats and pocket watches on very long chains (Walker 1992).

The 1960s brought on a time of black and brown (Latino/a and yellow) liberation with the Chicano movement and Black Panthers in Los Angeles (Pulido 2006). Among blacks, a growing contempt for discrimination surfaced with the Watts Riots of 1965 (Modarres 1998) involving over 30,000 people. The riots lasted five days, sparked by an unlawful arrest and abuse of a black man from Watts. This incident ignited a reaction to years of oppression among blacks in Los Angeles. The LAPD managed to dismantle the Panthers, which left African–American youth "desperately searching for a new identity which they would quickly find in the mobilization of street gangs" (Brown et al 2012), and so emerged the notorious Crips followed by dozens of other gangs, many of whom aligned to become the Bloods.

Deindustrialization in the 1970s-1990s brought on a major economic shift for Los Angeles towards building an economy through global integration, essentially aiming to be a "global city" (Gottlieb 2007). Infrastructural improvements were made in ports and the financial district to support this global economy and when the city started seeing some return on its investment, it stayed within this circle of the economic elite, which was disconnected from the rest of L.A. (Davis 2006). There was no trickle down of returns to lower-income communities. So, for example, public transportation did very little to improve L.A.'s position in the global economy and was not required by people with cars, so it received little attention. Instead L.A. invested time and money into building a massive freeway system that displaced and sealed off low-income communities (Gottlieb 2007). Los Angeles started to increase development outside of the central business district and invest more money into suburbs, leaving the inner city

ignored and disenfranchised with limited access to state and federal assistance that was

available to the white middle-class occupying the growing suburbs. Responding to this,

Davis (2006) explained, the "specific genius of the Crips has been their ability to insert

themselves into a leading circuit of international trade. Through 'crack' [cocaine] they

have discovered a vocation for the ghetto in L.A.'s new 'world city' economy" (309).

By the late 1970s drug trafficking and the formal formation of gangs dominated

the inner city landscape, with Central Avenue in South Central being the heart of activity

(Brown et al 2012). By the mid-1990s, it was estimated that 350,000 people,

predominately blacks and Latino/as, were gang members throughout Los Angeles

(Brown et al 2012). As of 2006, the LAPD estimated there to be 230 black and Latino/a

gangs and 81 Asian gangs. Today, South Central is undergoing an "epochal (and

surprisingly peaceful) ethnic transition from black to new immigrant Latino" (Davis

2006: 315) and the gang activity still continues.

Over the last forty years, a representation of the L.A. inner city, most notably,

South Central, as a dangerous, lawless wasteland with dangerous black and brown

people has been solidifying, intensifying and becoming more entrenched with every

story on the evening news about some gang-related activity. But adding even more

cement to this representation is the romanticization and commodification of the inner

city through music, clothing, film and television which I turn to next.

"Straight Outta Compton"

The inner-cities of Los Angeles have become internationally iconic thanks to the

subculture of hip-hop and more specifically gangsta rap. They have been immortalized

Figure 4.3 N.W.A debut album, 1988

in rap songs, videos and movies. Some of the most infamous rappers have come from Los Angeles including Ice-T, Ice Cube, Snoop Doggy Dog, Easy E, Dr. Dre, Tupac, and N.W.A. (Image 4.2). Their songs often featured the cities that the rappers were from like Compton, Crenshaw, South Central, Watts, Inglewood, and Long Beach. Rappers, who recognized structural inequalities, racism, and discrimination, conveyed these themes in their lyrics which were socially and politically conscious often containing mistrust of the police and the state (Alridge and Stewart 2005). The police brutality that they rapped about materialized for example in 1992 when another riot broke out in Los Angeles, rivaling that of Watts, in response to the acquittal of four white police officers being tried for the beating of a non-resisting black man, Rodney King, who was pulled over at a traffic stop. The music videos that went along with gangsta rap songs glamorized the "ghetto" as a tough place of social hierarchies (Bennett, 2010). Both in the songs and videos there are clear images of asserting power and agency within the oppressive space of the inner city.

Figure 4.4 Boyz N The Hood Movie

Moreover, the success of "hood films" further depicted the inner city to main-stream US. These films (Figure 4.4) include *Boyz in the Hood, Menace II Society,*

Poetic Justice, Friday, Training Day, and Colors (Bennett 2010).   The movies and the

music were a mix of fact and fiction, but they depicted the inner city lifestyle that had

long been ignored by dominant society. With a backdrop of drugs and gang violence,

themes centered around the strong bonds between family, friends and gangs,

responsibility, loss, redemption and a hierarchical order of power. Scholars of gangsta

rap and hood films have opposing perspectives on these forms of media as to the

degree of harm or good they do. Bennett (2010) suggests that "media representations

of South Central have exaggerated, racialized, and distorted the social ills of the area

and constructed black Los Angeles as a site of grotesque cultural pathology" (216). She

says that the "two prevailing discourses" that come out of films about South Central are

> the 'glamorous ghetto,' a dangerous urban jungle, which is frightening
>
> and fascinating, pathological but preternaturally cool. The other is that of
>
> South-Central as 'hilarious home-place,' a close-knit black, working-class
>
> community where economic and social challenges can be cheerfully
>
> confronted with a combination of jokes and high jinks (Bennet 210:228)

Such TV shows included *Sanford and Sons*, and *What's Happening* from the 1970s.

Whether there was/is authenticity to these films, songs, and videos, the image that is

portrayed is "indelibly marked in the cultural imagination as the 'real' South Central"

(Bennett 2010: 228). By extension, all blacks and all neighborhoods are also then

marked by this imagination which serves to strengthen stereotypes and justify

discrimination. This directly affects people's ability to gain access to predominantly

white spaces. This is evident by some whites that I interviewed who indicated that they

didn't like people from the inner city going to the beach because people from the inner

city (people of color) brought the ghetto wherever they went.

Figure 4.3 Map of main L.A. beaches
Map: M.Palma

The L.A. Coast

I now offer a brief geographic context of the Los Angeles (Figure 4.3) coast

before discussing Malibu in more detail. Most of the coast is in a bay called the Santa

Monica Bay. The southern point of the bay is Palos Verdes (PV) sitting high above the

ocean on cliffs and bluffs. It rivals Malibu in terms of wealth, but lacks the iconic status.

Just south of the Santa Monica Bay and PV is Long Beach, the southernmost coastal city

in Los Angeles. Long Beach is made up of the U.S's busiest ports and harbors with more

than 40% of the nation's goods shipped through there (CCC 2009). Long Beach has been

referenced in rap songs as it has long been home to many working-class Latino/as and

has had its share of gangs.

Heading back north into the Santa Monica Bay is an area known as the South

Bay; this is basically the stretch of land from Marina del Rey in the center of the bay to

PV. The beaches included in the South Bay (from north to south) are Dockweiler, El

Segundo, North Manhattan Beach, Manhattan Beach, Redondo, Hermosa, and Torrance.

Manhattan Beach has a pier and has the most amenities. The Marina bifurcates the

Bay, so that you can't easily get from one side to the other. Additionally, just south of

the Marina is the LAX airport, an area that Angelinos avoid at all cost because traffic is

always at a standstill. So the South Bay is really seen as out of the way for the typical

white beachgoer living in the northwest cities of L.A. For the southeast and inner-cities

of L.A., however, the South Bay technically has the closest beaches. Even though the

South Bay, Manhattan Beach in particular, has had a long history of trying to keep

people of color from the inner city from visiting the beach. One beach where this is not

the case is Dockweiler State Beach, located just west of the LAX runways. There are no

homeowners or local businesses in this 3 mile stretch of beach which typically attracts

people of color from the inner city. Dockewieler and Manhattan Beach were major sites

of this research, so I engage them in much more detail in the next two chapters.

Moving north of the South Bay is a popular cluster of beaches including (south to

nouth) Marina del Rey, Venice, and Santa Monica. These beaches have lots of parking,

Santa Monica in particular, long bike paths, restrooms, and concession stands. Santa

Monica has a small amusement park on the pier where lots of events are held

throughout the year. Venice is more gritty and eclectic with head shops, fortune tellers,

street performers, a graffiti wall, and skate park. Marina del Rey has a few restaurants, and of course a large Marina for sail boats and fishing.

Past Santa Monica, heading northwest on the Pacific Coast Highway (PCH), you start to get into the more northern, smaller beaches that attract fewer crowds and more surfers. To get to these beaches, you basically have to park along the PCH and walk down the beach. These include Will Rogers State Beach and Topanga Beach. A little further north and you enter Malibu which is over twenty miles long, very little of which is visible or accessible because the coast is blocked by houses. Two beaches in Malibu, Surfrider and Zuma do provide amenities and parking spaces, which I discuss more in chapter seven. The northern point of the Santa Monica Bay is Point Dume in Malibu. Point Dume is a great surfing spot, but virtually impossible to get down to the ocean from the high cliffs unless you have a key to a gate leading to a path to get there. Only nearby home owners have a key. At the very northern edge of Malibu, near the Ventura County line, there are less developed stretches of beach that are more accessible including El Matador, La Piedra, El Pescador, and Leo Carrillo.

That is a brief overview of the Los Angeles coast. Many of the coastal cities and beaches that I discussed have a rich history and played a prominent role in shaping Los Angeles. But those stories are beyond the scope of this dissertation. I focus in much greater detail on Dockweiler, Manhattan Beach, and Malibu over the next three chapters to understand the role they play in the construction of landscape and access. Now, I introduce Malibu in more detail to better understand how it is constructed as an exclusive, iconic beach space influencing beach practices all over the world.

Malibu

> *"The seven million people within an hour's drive of Malibu got Beach Boys music and surfer movies, but the twenty thousand residents kept the beach"* - Mikkelson and Neuwirth (1987) quoted from Davis (1998)

Malibu is a ribbon of land that stretches about 20 miles from the city of Santa Monica to Ventura County and ranging from 1 to 2 miles of land from the Santa Monica Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. There are only two major routes to get to Malibu, either from the Pacific Coast Highway (PCH), which winds around the coast offering endless ocean views (until you reach Malibu because the view is mostly blocked by houses and privacy landscaping). The other way is to travel through the mountains from the San Fernando Valley. This canyon route is surprisingly never congested with traffic and is by far my favorite way to go to the beach. After spending miles of stop and go traffic slowly weaving back and forth between endless lanes lined in white, it feels so good to get off the freeway and drive continuously down a winding two-lane road amongst the hills, of grass, chaparral, oaks and eucalyptus trees. With the windows down, you can smell heather, jasmine, and sage. The crumbly mountains and signs cautioning falling rocks add a bit of excitement. This drive is the antithesis of the 101 freeway. After about 20 minutes or so, when you wind around the final bend in the road, you see a wedge of ocean revealing itself between the peaks of the mountain, just one more curve and then you see the whole ocean sparkling out in the distance just waiting for you. It never fails to excite the senses. This was my experience of Malibu for several years. My appreciation for this beach stems from this backdrop of mountains and ocean, but my initial interest in it, shared by many, was its iconic status. Malibu is

the emblem of what a beach is "supposed" to be in U.S. pop culture. Therefore, it

makes a perfect place to deconstruct what exactly that ideal entails. In the following

section, I look at the socio-geographic history of Malibu to see how it has been

constructed as both an iconic and exclusive landscape that directly affects access to this

space.

Queen of Malibu

Malibu's exclusivity can be traced back to the late 1880's when Boston

millionaire Fredrick Rindge purchased a Spanish Land Grant of 13,300 acres for $10 an

acre, which was later, expanded to 17,000 acres (Davis 1998, Pfeifer 2009). Rindge and

his wife found it to be the perfect country home, which they would visit on weekends

and in the summer with their three children (Pfeifer 2009). In 1905 Fredrick Rindge

passed away, leaving the management of Malibu to his widow May Rindge, who later

became known as the Queen of Malibu in the press (Davis 1998). Within a few years

there was intense pressure by developers for her to open up Malibu for development,

which she fought by closing all roads in the Ranch and having her cowboys keep out all

unwanted visitors (Davis 1998). By 1920, there was even more pressure to open up the

Ranch so that the Pacific Coast Highway could be built through her land. In 1928, the

court granted the state of California the right to build the road. Rindge continued to

fight, but not without cost. To help compensate for litigation fees, she rented out a few

plots of land to wealthy celebrities, which became the Malibu Colony, though at the

time it was often called the Malibu Movies Colony (Pfiefer 2009). By December of 1940,

Rindge, who was now bankrupt, had no other choice but to auction off the entire ranch. Two months later, she died at the age of 76 (Davis 1998; Pfiefer 2009).

After Rindge sold the land, it was parceled out for agricultural, commercial and residential development. In the 1940s, other than the Malibu Colony, development was pretty sparse, with only a handful of homes along the coast. But following WWII, Malibu (like the rest of Los Angeles) experienced substantial development. Of course, Malibu was not available to just anyone, least of all blacks. According to Mike Davis (1998) the head of the Malibu Colony Association said that if Nat King Cole tried to move into the colony '"he would personally head a vigilante group to burn him out"' (109).

Since then, thousands of homes have been built in Malibu, blocking most of the coastline and trees have been planted throughout which also block views. However, the western portion of Malibu near the Ventura County line has remained less developed and resembles the way Malibu looked 70 years ago; mainly chaparral, sage brush, and dry patches in between.

Malibu continues to be a homogeneous space with nearly 92% of the population being white and about 1% black in 2011 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). A recent advertisement for an expensive rental property in Malibu, reads "Thanks to the privacy created by Ms. Rindge, Malibu became a haven for movie stars and other wealthy individuals who wanted to live in a secluded setting far from the public eye. Although Malibu's beaches are all open to the public, beach access is limited to only a few areas along the Pacific Coast Highway, keeping Malibu a secluded and private city."

(malibubeachhouseforrent.com) It is in the interest of landowners to keep Malibu exclusive to maintain the high prices of homes and land. Thus, generations after the defeat of May Rindge's hold on Malibu it still remains an exclusive space.

Malibu Ecology

Malibu's image as an exclusive enclave for the wealthy is directly linked to its exceptional natural beauty (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6 Malibu at west Broad Beach. Photo: M.Palma

The same physical geography of Malibu that makes it so appealing is also incredibly destructive. The most dominant natural process in Malibu that people have tried to control is fire. Southern California is one of only 5 Mediterranean climates on earth and is characterized by warm, dry summers, and cool wet winters. Because Los Angeles can go months without a drop of rain, much of the native vegetation is chaparral which requires little water, and is extremely dry and shrubby. Malibu is particularly prone to fire because it lies in the foothills of the chaparral-covered Santa Monica Mountains.

Because million dollar homes sprinkle the coastal side of the mountains, all fires are aggressively suppressed this allows for a large buildup of fuel. The suppression of fire is extremely dangerous, and time after time a fire will inevitably take a home or two in Malibu. If people who have the wealth to buy land in Malibu want to build homes there, they are not going to let fires stop them. Indeed during the initial post-Rindge development when fires continued to destroy expensive homes, the homeowners were actually granted more land and low-interest loans to rebuild bigger homes as a form of fire relief to fire victims. Additionally, once the waterline connecting Malibu to the Metropolitan Water District reservoirs was constructed, development increased exponentially (Davis 1998). From 1960 to 1980, the population grew by 1,1400 percent (Davis 1998). Malibu has another identity that has come out of its natural ecology, which is surfing and hegemonic beach culture.

"Everybody's Surfin' Now"

In 2010, Malibu was the first to be named a world surfing reserve by the Save the Waves Coalition (Sullivan 2010). Malibu has a couple of point breaks which make for long clean rides on the board. On a good day, a surfer can catch a 1/4 mile ride (Pfiefer 2009). Hawaiian surfer and Olympic swimmer, Duke Kahanamoku[5] introduced surfing to Malibu in the 1920's.

Surfing's popularity and its association with Malibu is attributed to the 1957 novel, *Gidget*, by Fredrick Kohner (Pfiefer 2009, Lisanti 2005). Kohner was the father of

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[5] His image is now immortalized at the restaurant called Dukes in Malibu, but it didn't become commercially popular until the 1950s.

the real-life "Gidget," Kathy Kohner[6] (Pfiefer 2009, Lisanti). As a teenager from

Brentwood, Kathy started surfing and hanging out with a crew of Malibu surfers during

the summers of 1956 and 1957 because her mother wouldn't let her sit around indoors.

She surfed with guys who would eventually become legends, including the mysterious

Miki Dora. Once Kohner's novel was made into a movie starring Sandra Dee in 1959,

Malibu and surfing was officially on the map. The movie was a hit and was the impetus

for an entire genre of movies usually referred to as "beach party movies" or "surf and

sun movies" (Figure 4.7). For about ten years, these were box office hits and nearly all

of them took place in Malibu.
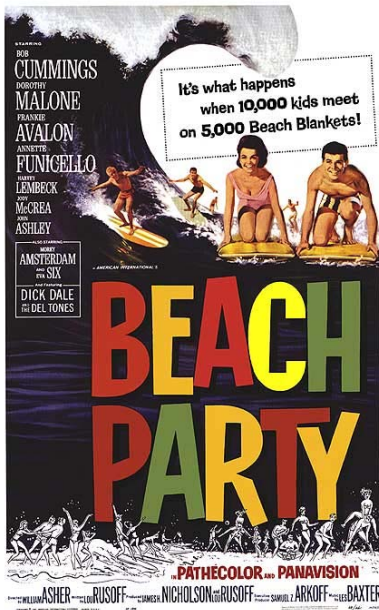
Figure 4.7 Beach Party Movie Poster

These movies were a hit with both adolescents and teens because although the characters wore nothing but bathing suits most of the time, they were still clean-cut, silly, wholesome and harmless (Lisanti 2005). No one ever "went all the way" in these movies, though there was non-stop flirting. Surfing provided the backdrop for a host of comedic misunderstandings, and romances, and of course a reason to show off the young, hot bodies of Hollywood (Lisanti 2005). The

Beach Party movies all followed this formula. American International Pictures (AIP) had

a series of five of the most popular movies including: *Beach Party*, *Muscle Beach Party*,

Bikini Beach, *Beach Blanket Bingo*, and *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini,* starring Annette

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[6]Kathy Kohner currently works a few days a week at Dukes acting as the "ambassador of aloha."

Funicello and Frankie Avalon. Between the years of 1959 and 1969, there were over thirty surf and sun movies, more than half of them being released in 1964 and 1965; that doesn't not include the six Gidget movies that were spin-offs of the original (Lisanti 2005).

The Beach Party movies, perhaps like Los Angeles in general, were a mix of reality and fiction. Several of the "original" Malibu surfers resented these movies, because they were portrayed as dumb, goofy boys who danced around on the beach chasing girls. That said, many of the Malibu surfers ended up as actors or surfing doubles in these movies and thus profited from the Hollywood interpretation of themselves. At the same time, many of the people involved in these movies claim that life was actually very similar to the movies. Regardless, the movies represented Malibu as a carefree, fun place, where a party was always just waiting to happen. Nothing was ever taken too seriously there, and this undoubtedly appealed to America's youth. But the yearning for this escape to the sun and surf dissipated with the onset of the civil rights and anti-war movements, hippies and LSD (Lisanti 26: 2005). That's not to say that surfing ended; however, just that the commercialization of it took a back seat for a while.

Today, Malibu is still associated with surfing because although the silly Beach Party genre is gone, surfers kept on doing what they had always done. Surfers have come to represent anti-establishment, freedom, and mystery. They stand outside of the boundaries of normative society. But unlike many groups who are on the fringes of dominant society, surfers are, for the most part, not marginalized, but romanticized.

They represent something that many people wish they could be, carefree. Over the

years, several mysterious and alluring personalities have emerged as icons of surfing

such as Dorian 'Doc' Paskowitz who, with his wife, kept their nine children out of school

so that they could surf and learn about the world from experience all the while living

together in a van and traveling the world throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Or like Miki

'da Cat' Dora (Figure 4.8), perhaps the most intriguing because he was a mystery even to

the people who knew him well.

Dora, one of the original Malibu surfing crew that is portrayed in *Gidget,* surfed

with the grace of cat, hence his nickname. An article following Dora's death seems to

grasp the popular representation of him as follows:

If you took James Dean's cool, Muhammad Ali's poetics, Harry Houdini's

slipperiness, James Bond's jet-setting, George Carlin's irony and Kwai

Chang Caine's Zen, and rolled them into one man with a longboard under

his arm, you'd come up with something like Miki

Dora, surfing's mythical antihero, otherwise

known as the Black Night of Malibu (Brisick

2006).

Young surfers idolized him. He was disgusted by

the commercialization of surfing, even though

he actively participated in it by appearing in a

host of Beach Party movies. He publicly pulled

Figure 4.8 Miki Dora. Photo: Grant Rohloff

off several stunts to let people know what he thought about the establishment. Almost

any Malibu surfer who was around when Dora was, has a story about him. Surfer Bob Fiegle writes in his memoirs about the time he asked Dora why he didn't live on the beach (Dora lived in Brentwood, about 20 miles away). Dora gave him three reasons: 1. Then everyone would know where he lived and barge in on him all the time or steal from him while he was out surfing, 2. He might take the ocean for granted if he was so close to it, he said "every time I drive down Sunset or Channel and see the beach for the first time each day, I want to fall in love all over again…" 3. He thought breathing in all the salt air all the time, was bad for the brain, "that's why so many surfers we know are so stupid". Dora loathed the surf media, surfing competitions, and kooks (inexperienced surfers) that had invaded Malibu. He fled the country in 1970 to evade arrest for credit card and check fraud (Lisanti 368, 2005). He surfed all over the world, which led to Miki Dora sightings like modern day Elvis sighting. A few years later he returned to the U.S. and served two stints of jail time. He passed away in 2006.

The stories and fascination of Dora are endless. Perhaps what is equally interesting as Dora, is the massive fascination people had with him. He had an essence that translated into an essence of surfing, and by association, an essence of Malibu. Malibu in a way came to be defined by the likes of Miki Dora. This brief look into the life of Miki Dora, and the fascinations surrounding him helps us to understand Malibu. If he was indeed the "Black Night of Malibu" then what does that say about Malibu. In part it defines the beach as a place of freedom, danger, mystery, escape, and potential.

Accompanying the beach party movies was the short-lived but extremely popular surf music of the Beach Boys and Ventures. So even if you weren't watching

Malibu on the big screen, you could hear about it all day long on the radio and records. These songs were a perfect soundtrack to the movies. The power of music cannot be underestimated, it has the ability to transport listeners to other places, and this undoubtedly was the case with the surf music. While the Beach Boys had a few comebacks in the late 1980s, surf music in general was rather short-lived because it was overshadowed by psychedelic rock in the mid-60s including the Doors, and then later country-rock with the Byrds, the Eagles, Emmylou Harris, and Linda Ronstadt. The country-rock genre captured Southern California's "paradoxical essence" of fast living with clubs and parties while at the same time was influenced by the quiet, open spaces of nature found throughout the Santa Monica Mountains, particularly Topanga Canyon, a hot-spot for musicians.

The late seventies in Southern California also made room for its own version of punk rock. Lyrical themes were often political, anti-establishment, rebellious, and laced with surfing metaphors. California punk, while having multiple sub-genres, has been long lasting as it still continues today. Influential bands include Black Flag, The Runaways, Wasted Youth, Bad Religion, Social Distortion, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Sublime, Green Day, No Doubt, and Blink 182. Today, California-influenced punk music is often the backdrop of surf and skateboarding documentaries as these subcultures are all linked.

Since the 1980s, Malibu has been referenced in countless songs, movies and television shows. Malibu has become a brand; the name decorates everything from clothes, juice drinks, liquor, cocktails, and perfume lines to automobiles and toys. Malibu Barbie (Figure 4.9) was one of the best-selling Barbie's of all time (malibucomplete 2012). Few other coasts in the world can rival the massive reach that Malibu has on pop culture.

The movies, legends, and music heavily construct Malibu creating a collective imagination of this space. People know who and what to put in this space when they imagine it. However, to fully understand Malibu, we have to look beyond the images that are on display, and look at who and what is missing (Sibley 1995). By and large, low-income people and people of color are missing from this space, and this is no accident. Never mentioned in Dora's surf crew from Malibu is Stanley Washington, who according to the Black Surfing Association was one of Malibu's elite who hung out with Miki Dora (Blocker 2012). There were surfers at the Ink Well (historically a beach for blacks in Santa Monica) in the 1940s, but they are never mentioned in surfing history either. The few black surfers who were part of the scene are left out of the history of this place, but the fact that people of color are not represented here has more to do with the fact that Malibu

Figure 4.9 Malibu Barbie representing the beach

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has had a history of being uninviting to people of color.

Regardless of this history of racial homogeneity, Malibu continues to intrigue masses of people around the world. It continues to represent both absolute freedom, evident in the surfing subculture, and absolute exclusion as seen in its history of development. In some ways Malibu is like those too-cool bars and clubs that never have a recognizable entrance, because only the people who belong actually know out how to get in. If it was easily accessible would it be nearly as famous and desirable?

Conclusion

The similarities between SoCal surf culture and SoCal gangsta rap are striking. They both have created a collective imagination of place. They are both complete packages (clothes, language, music, icons), identities to be tried on by America's youth, and while they can be imitated, they can never be replicated, they really only exist because of the social and political realities of these unique places. In so many ways they couldn't be any more different, and yet, they are so similar. Those involved in the original scenes have profited from the commercialization and caricaturization of their own lives (surfers and rappers). They have been called traitors and sell-outs. But there is one obvious difference that can't be ignored - most surfers are white, and if they choose they can join mainstream society with relative ease. The commercially successful rappers from the inner city may earn wealth, but it doesn't matter because they can't hide their race. For this reason, hip hop stars have gained such diverse empires by carving out their own industries including creating fashion lines (when white-owned fashion labels refused to give them endorsements), starting their own

record labels (Deff Jam, Death Row, etc…) and sports drinks. Because black artists have had to create their own industries, the dominant system itself hasn't changed, it simply has more competition. Indeed there have been the racial exceptions to these subcultures, which usually results in a sharing of similar class backgrounds. Kid Rock (white hip-hop/rock/country music artist) eloquently states this with his lyric "I ain't straight outta Compton; I'm straight out the trailer" referencing the first ever popular gangsta rap album from N.W.A called "Straight outta Compton." Finding black surfers is a bit more difficult.

Over the last 40 years, South Central and the other inner-cities of L.A. have been represented as a haven for gangs and dangerous people of color. The representation of South Central as a ghetto however, actually points to the long history of structural inequalities heavily based on race. This representation is not new; it has been going on now for close to a century in Los Angeles. These representations become more and more entrenched over time. And even with victories in civil rights, institutional racism is still alive and strong as I will show throughout this dissertation. The reason why it was necessary to go through this part of Los Angeles history is because it is precisely people from the inner city who are being excluded from the coast because, from an outsider perspective, they *are* the "ghetto." Therefore, understanding the development of the Los Angeles inner city is an understanding of the real and imagined identities of those who live there.

In this chapter I looked at the socio-geographic history of the inner-cities and beach cities of Los Angeles. This chapter gives context to the landscapes that I am

studying, but it also shows how these spaces have come to be represented both to the people that live there and to the rest of the world. Again, I use representations in the material sense, not 'landscape-as-text." These representations and geographic imaginations then directly influence how people conceptualize these spaces as inclusive or exclusive. These representations influence the practice of landscapes as well as the identities of those who live in and consume these spaces, which I explore in the next three chapters.

CHAPTER 5

SOUTH BAY

In this chapter, I use examples of Dockweiler State Beach and Manhattan Beach

(MB) to illustrate the relationship between race and the landscape. I argue that the

landscape is racialized through the presence of raced bodies and racialized practice. I

see bodies and practice as framings of race that are used by dominant society to control

access to the public beach. In the case of Dockweiler, the presence of blacks and

Latino/as from the inner city and the absence of white bodies has contributed to the

labeling of this beach as "ghetto," a highly racialized term. I look at why this beach is

the only beach in Los Angeles that is predominantly a space of color. In Manhattan

Beach, I reveal a shared exclusionary perspective of the beach when it comes to blacks

and Latino/as from the inner city, particularly with the case of a public park called Sand

Dune Park. I first offer a review of my theoretical framework for this chapter then

present the empirics of these spaces followed by an analysis of the role that bodies and

practice play in the construction of the landscape and access to it.

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I use critical geographies of race/identity informed by Bonilla-

Silva (2003, 2006); Goldberg (1993, 2002); Young (1990); and Butler (1990) to

understand how the landscape and practices are racialized and how this then leads to

the construction and maintenance of boundaries.

I focus on how alternative beach practices and non-white bodies challenge the

construction of beaches as normative white spaces. However, it is not the mere

presence of bodies of color that forces us to recognize that landscapes are indeed

racialized, but the practices and representations associated with these bodies. Because

whiteness is normalized, white people don't see the coastal landscape as racialized.

When we see these landscapes transgressed, the normative and naturalized landscape

is revealed (Kobayashi and Peak 2000).

Furthermore, I liken this to Butler's (1990) notion of performativity in which

identities (she is talking mostly about gender) are socially constructed and performed,

but called into question when people don't follow the socially constructed ideal identity.

I see landscapes operating the same way. The beach has been constructed and

reproduced as a white normative space where people engage in 'typical' beach practices

identified as white. When a person of color transgresses this landscape either through

their mere presence or by performing alternative practice, this causes a crisis for whites

who perceive bodies of difference as abject and thus try to distance themselves from

them. This helps to explain why Dockweiler Beach is considered a "ghetto" beach.

Additionally, the term "ghetto" is a racialized term standing in for poor people of color,

so Dockweiler may as well be called a "black" beach, because that is what whites are

actually saying when they call it a ghetto beach. This assessment represents the

inherent geographic understanding that place and identity are mutually constituted

(Pratt and Hanson). This is just one example of new racism that is much more covert

than it once was (Bonilla Silva 2006).

In terms of this moment of crisis, when whites are confronted by bodies out of

place, the reaction is aversion and avoidance (Sibley 1995, Young 1990). Avoidance is

easy to maintain at Dockweiler because it is not in a residential area. When this crisis of

bodies out of place occurs in a residential area like Manhattan Beach, and more

specifically, Sand Dune Park, the reaction is abjection and the construction of exclusive

boundaries. Sibley (1995) and Young (1990) argue that there is a symbolic investment

among whites in maintaining boundaries between themselves and racialized "other"

from a psychoanalytic standpoint. They argue that the self is very much tied to the

landscape, when the landscape is threatened by abject outsiders, their own sense of self

is threatened, and thus boundaries are strongly upheld.

<u>Dockweiler Beach</u>

Dockweiler (Figure 5.1) is a beach unknown to many whites in Los Angeles. Most

of the white people I talked to had never heard of this beach. It is hidden by the Los

Angeles International Airport, Los Angeles Hyperion Treatment Plant, Chevron Oil

Refinery, a marina (Marina del Rey), and a creek (Ballona Creek). If you've ever taken an

airplane out of Los Angeles, Dockweiler is the stretch of beach that you fly over as you

take off. To the south of the beach is the Chevron Refinery and the Hyperion TreatmentPlant, which treats wastewater for the city of Los Angeles. Even though it discharges treated water 5 miles away from shore into the ocean, some people still can't shake the feeling that they are swimming in raw

Figure 5.1 Dockweiler Beach. Photo: destination-
southern-california.com

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sewage. It's known as "shit pipe" among local surfers. To the north are Marina del Rey and the mouth of the Ballona Creek. The Ballona Creek drains most of the urban runoff and storm water from the Santa Monica Basin. Dockweiler looks like any other Los Angeles beach and is managed by the Los Angeles County. In fact it was recently renovated, with new bathrooms and a community center. One major attraction is that it is the only place in Los Angeles that still has fire pits on the beach. There are lifeguards on duty, plenty of paid and roadside parking, trash cans, and machines that clean the beach regularly. Toward the southern end of the beach, there is a small area for RV camping that is isolated by a vast parking lot and registration facility.

The first that I heard of Dockweiler was from my roommate in El Segundo, the coastal town adjacent to Dockweiler where I lived during my fieldwork. She sent me a news article about a shooting that occurred at Dockweiler a month before I was set to arrive; she wanted to let me know since I would be living so close to that area. When I arrived in El Segundo, my roommate introduced me to several members of the city government, all of whom were white. I told two of the women I met that I was going to visit Dockweiler Beach and they both seemed appalled. One said, "Oh no, you don't want to go to Dockweiler!" the other woman, chimed in "You're going to Dockweiler?" They didn't say it, but they clearly were thinking something along the lines of: "why on earth would this young white woman want to go to Dockweiler? She could get mugged, or shot, or raped!" They then told me that El Segundo specifically closes off Grand Avenue on the Fourth of July, the only entrance into the town from the coast, to keep "all of them" from coming into their neighborhoods.

As I met more people in EL Segundo, I got the same reaction over and over again;

Dockweiler it was often described as "the ghetto." After hearing all of these warnings

and negative images of Dockweiler, I was anxious to finally visit this beach and see what

it was all about. So I pedaled my beach cruiser down the winding paved strand to

Dockweiler on a weekday afternoon. I found nothing unusual. There were not many

people at the beach and few if any of them were white, the only major difference from

other beaches. I drove by this beach regularly and visited it on the weekend.

Dockweiler tended to be much busier on the weekends and later in the day, reflecting

the fact that most beachgoers were at work during the day. People mainly parked along

the road rather than the paid parking lots. I also road my bike down to Dockweiler on

the Fourth of July and it was one of the most crowded beaches I had ever seen. I don't

recall seeing many white people except for the ones passing through on their bikes

(Footnote: There is a bike bath that connects all the beaches in the South Bay, the bike

path splits at Marina del Rey but picks up again in Venice and terminates at Malibu.)

Most groups had set up multiple tents and canopies with grills and portable stereos

brought from home. Everybody seemed to be having a great time socializing and

hanging out on the sand. However, this beach was like none other in Los Angeles

because of *who* was there (bodies) and *what* they were doing (practice). It isn't until

someone misrepresents or misperforms their identity that we realize what the norm is

(Bhabha 1994; Butler 1990). The same can be said about this landscape – it isn't until

someone "misperforms" beach behavior that we realize what and who the norm is.

White people don't know that beaches are typically white until they see a beach that

isn't. Furthermore, normative beach etiquette is also coded as white, which I discuss

throughout this chapter. But first I want to look at the historical geography of

Dockweiler beach to better understand why most of the beach goers are black, Latino/a,

and from the inner city.

Ghost Town

Dockweiler is not only unique because of the people who do and do not go

there, but also because of the location of the landscape. As previously mentioned,

Dockweiler is rather hidden by the surrounding geography, which I argue plays a major

role in who has access to it and how it is constructed as a racialized space. Here, I go

into more detail about the significant geography of Dockweiler Beach.

When you drive along Vista del Mar, the seaside road next to Dockweiler, the

beach is on the west side, and on the other side is a long chain-link fence, behind which

lies a confounding landscape of curb-lined streets, sand dunes, overgrown woody

shrubs, but no actual building structures. This was once known as Palisades del Rey or

Surfridge, a colony of beach cottages back in the early 1920s. Residents included Cecil

B. DeMille and other artists and Hollywood industry people. In 1928 plans for an airport

were put in the works. Eventually this airport, now the Los Angeles International Airport

(LAX), would become one of the busiest airports in the world. On the way to this status,

the runways multiplied and grew bigger while the jets became larger and louder,

threatening hearing loss for anyone continually in their path. So in the mid-1960s, LAX

forced residents out of Pacific del Rey, paying them far below the value of their real

estate. Many people did not want to leave, but were eventually forced out. Over the

next decade, all structures were demolished or moved. Today, it is a relic of what was

once there. All that remains are the streets and lampposts. The streets are cracked,

giving way to weeds and shrubs reclaiming a lost ecosystem. Though there were plans

to convert this land into a golf course and park for watching planes take off and land, it

ultimately became a habitat preserve for the endangered El Segundo Blue Butterfly

which relies on the dune buckwheat for its complete lifecycle (Schoch 2007). As a

result, there is this strange, fenced-off landscape with random roads that disappear over

the dunes. You can't actually walk or drive through the preserve, but you can see the

entire footprint of a former neighborhood from areal images. One block of the old

neighborhood was converted into a small grassy park with a few picnic tables and palm

trees. The park sits in stark contrast to the gated-off ghost town behind it.

I believe this residual landscape (Cosgrove 1988) is directly related to why people

of color from the inner city feel comfortable at Dockweiler Beach. But before I get into

that, I want to finish discussing the physical geography surrounding Dockweiler Beach by

focusing on the 105 freeway. This freeway runs east-west through south Los Angeles

and joins the Imperial Highway near the airport which terminates at Dockweiler Beach.

The path of the 105 was conceived in the late-1960s, but wasn't completed until 1993.

The hold-up was a class action lawsuit demanding an assessment of and plan for the

environmental and social effects of the freeway which was bound to disproportionately

affect low-income people of color through displacement. In the end, a liberal-minded

judge required a host of social programs to be attached to the construction of the

freeway, as well as a reduction in the size of the freeway to accommodate

environmental concerns. One social program was that minorities (low-income people of

color and women) be considered first for employment for work on the freeway, and if

they were not qualified, then they were offered free training so that they could

eventually be employed. Low-income housing was also built to accommodate displaced

people (Weinstein 1993). In 1993, the 105 was complete, giving people living in south

Los Angeles a more direct route to the coast. The 105 runs through some of the most

high-crime, low-income, black and Latino/a neighborhoods in the city including:

Compton, South Central, Watts, and Inglewood (Weinstein 1993). It's no surprise then

that people from these neighborhoods use the freeway to get to the beach - Dockweiler

being the closest.

Dockweiler Beach is completely isolated from any residential or commercial

areas, and it is the most direct beach from the inner city. Together these processes

create a space that would appear attractive to low-income people of color who are or

feel excluded at most other beaches. The beachgoers at Dockweiler do not pose a

threat to anybody, since there is nobody around to feel threatened. People can go to

this beach and stay pretty late into the evening without anyone hassling them or

complaining. Thus, access is granted in the absence of private ownership of nearby

land. Disregarding the fact that people from the inner city still face significant

challenges getting to Dockweiler Beach, if and when they actually do get there, they do

not have to face the exclusivity of local homeowners. This landscape demonstrates how

public spaces are heavily mediated by those with power.

"The ghetto by the sea"

The geography of Dockweiler likely accounts for why low-income people of color go there, but now I want to discuss why few if any white people go there. As I mentioned earlier, the facilities are in very good condition and the beach itself is clean and well managed by the Los Angeles County Department of Beaches and Harbors. With no people at this beach, it fulfills the typical image of a Southern California. I argue that whites don't typically go to this beach because of the large number of people of color who do go there. This is obvious by online reviews for Dockweiler Beach. If you google "Dockweiler Beach," the first website in the list is Yelp.com. I looked at these reviews after I had returned from my last summer of fieldwork in L.A. I checked the review sites in September of 2011, and again in June of 2012. Dockweiler had some really scathing reviews, so I looked for reviews of other beaches to compare and found nothing close to what people were saying about Dockweiler. See some of the reviews below.

- "I'm surprised that fire pits are still offered here for recreational use, despite the amount of TRASH and disgusting people that pile up on this beach…I get it, it's right off the 105, but respect nature! Keep your rowdy activities away from our beaches ☹" – Lina J. 6/22/12

- "The crowds in the summer weekends are reminiscent of classic movies such as Menace II Society, American Me, Colors, Blood In Blood Out etc. …People get in the water for reasons I cannot fathom.   Perhaps wearing T-shirts in the water protects them from the bacterial crap coming from Hyperion's water ''refining' system. More power to them." – Rey L., 6/18/2010

- "Stay Away. If beaches had a ghetto, this would be it." – Nick D. 8/17/2011

- "Be advised the closer you get to Imperial Highway the closer you get to GHETTO'ness" – Rem R., 11/21/11

- "Ghetto. Not much to say about it." – Steve C., 7/20/2011

- "Dockweiler Beach. Where the Sewer Meets The Sea. Worst beach I've ever been to."   – Tom T., 8/1/11

- "I love the Pacific Ocean, and the coast of California, but this beach is filled with HOODstars. (Urban dictionary that term if you are unfamiliar). It's crowded, dirty, trashed by people, and just not a place I'd ever come again." – Nick G. 5/29/2011

- "It's a sketchy place to be at night! Ghettofied to the max!" – Art O. 1/4/2010

- "This is not your average beach with average beach goers. This is also not what you think of when you think party beach. it is just bad. bad bad bad bad bad."– Leigh M., 8/15/2011

In the above comments, no one ever explicitly says there are too many black people or Latino/as, but their language is still racist (Bonilla-Silva 2006). New racism, as Bonilla-Silva (2006) calls it, is not as explicit as it once was, in the form of name calling and hate crimes, instead it is much more subtle and therefore more dangerous. New racism is veiled behind a host of excuses and non-racist claims. For example, in the above quotes, commenters don't mention any specific race; however, they use other terms that stand in for race which allow the commenters to make racist claims without "being racist." The most obvious coded term is "ghetto." "Ghetto" is used to represent a high-crime inner city with predominantly black or Latino/a. As I have already established, this beach, minus the people there, looks like any other beach, not the "ghetto," so the

commenters are only calling this place a ghetto based on the people who go there.

There is a clearly negative view of the beachgoers, hence the last commenter who says

they make the beach "bad." These racist perspectives reproduce and strengthen

stereotypes that low-income black and Latino/a people are criminals. So what I am

trying to demonstrate is that the presence of low-income, people of color is a deterrent

to whites, and their presence actually changes the landscape to a "ghetto" from an

outside perspective.

However, not all commenters had such negative perspectives; indeed some people

seemed to value the racial diversity as indicated by the following review:

- "I went to this beach for July 4th; it was one of the most enjoyable
  summer days I can remember. Everyone was BBQing and we had a group
  of Asians about 10 strong, I think we were the only Asians there that day,
  we were camped next to a group of Mexicans who so generously shared
  their camarones y asada, there were countless minorities there, it was as
  if you took all of south LA and turned it upside down and shook
  everything out. I loved it, I feel a lot more comfortable about other
  minorities then if we had gone to Malibu." – Travis L. 7/10/2008

- "Ah yes, it is the ghetto peoples' beach!" – African American pictured

  female 2/4/2009

The first of the above two commenters demonstrates that not everybody feels

comfortable at all beaches, like Malibu, particularly people of color, and that not

everyone feels negatively about Dockweiler either. The last comment seems to indicate

some pride and ownership in the landscape, while she also uses the term "ghetto," it

seems to be more in a sense of ownership by coupling it as the "ghetto *people's* beach."

She is reclaiming the term ghetto as well as the landscape.

This is space does not fit the hegemonic idea of what a beach should be, and therefore creates a crisis for those who are expecting something else (Bhabha 1994). Whites are outnumbered in a place that doesn't make sense to them, so their initial reaction is fear. This perspective is shared among people living nearby, just as it was shared with me when I first came to the South Bay, thereby reproducing the idea that this is not a normal space, but a dangerous space that whites should avoid. The avoidance of whites helps to maintain this as a "black" or "ghetto" beach, just as low-income people of color who avoid white beaches (all but Dockweiler) also help to reproduce them as white spaces. In my examples in Manhattan Beach, we see how whites also seem to hope that low-income people of color avoid 'their' beaches as well.

One other point I want to make is that when any violent crime occurs near Dockweiler and is reported in the news, fearful white's perceptions of the place are confirmed. They "always knew it was ghetto" so to speak, however, when these crimes happen somewhere else, in more white, middleclass spaces, the crime is seen as "out of place" (Cresswell 1996). This is what Kobayashi and Peake (2000) refer to in their work on the white reactions to the high school shootings in Columbine, CO. In that case, the media consistently showed mystified locals claiming that "this kind of thing doesn't happen here," meaning it's understandable if it happens in the "ghetto" but not their safe, white middle-class neighborhood. In constructing Dockweiler as a ghetto, whites are also constructing whiteness as safe, normal, and crime-free. Were there to be a shooting in Manhattan Beach, it would be seen as out of place, however it is expected at Dockweiler; such a perspective is incredibly racist suggesting that low-income people of

color are more likely to be criminals. Such a perspective not only denies the fact that white people are capable of shootings too, but also "confirms" the perception that blacks and Latino/as are predisposed to commit crimes. This perspective is no doubt bolstered by the fact that blacks and Latino/as are disproportionately incarcerated and profiled by police, which makes it appear as though people of color are more likely to break the law than whites, not even accounting for the fact the law operates to favor whites over people of color in general. Many of the processes I have just examined are also prevalent in Manhattan Beach, which I turn to now.

Manhattan Beach

Just 2 miles south of Dockweiler is Manhattan Beach (MB) (figure 5.2), one of the wealthiest communities in the state of California where the median household income of $125,816 (in 2009) is over double that for California in general at $58,931 (City-Data). The median cost of a home at $845,757 nearly triples the state median of $384,200 (City-Data). I spent a l

ot of time here because it was close to where I lived in El Segundo and it was also where

Figure 5.2 Manhattan Beach South of the Pier.
Photo: City-Data Manhattan Beach

Surf Bus had their surf camp.

To ground the common exclusionary perspective that I found in Manhattan Beach, I turn to an interview and correspondence I had with a Manhattan Beach resident, John Smith, who also runs a non-

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profit organization called KidSurf, which I detail in the next chapter. While he certainly

does not speak for all, I have seen evidence through interactions with others that he

does represent a powerful voice in Manhattan Beach that directly affects non-residents

using the beach. After I set up an interview with John, he sent me an email describing

his feelings about Manhattan Beach. He said he didn't know how much help he could

be to me since he really didn't know that much about access in Manhattan Beach[7]. John

sent me this email and gave me what he thought was all I needed to know about his

perception of Manhattan Beach. I was surprised by how candid he was. He wrote:

> Since the city and, more importantly, downtown retailers were looking
>
> for increased revenue, multiple parking venues, against most of the
>
> resident's wishes, were created to allow an increase in 'beachgoers' and
>
> shoppers in the downtown area. What was not taken in to account is the
>
> new 'beachgoers' reflected the demographics and ethnic change in
>
> Southern California population and now the Pier area on the summer
>
> weekend reflects that change, as well as, I would assume, an increase in
>
> gangbangers, robberies, damage to the public facilities, etc…. I am not
>
> trying sound racist or prejudice, these are just my opinions, and many of
>
> my neighbors will probably agree, of what has happened.

---

[7] This was a common response, either from a failure on my part to adequately explain the nuance of my research or people's inability to conceive of why someone would talk or think about the beach in such a way as I did - I believe it is the latter - they don't understand my interrogation of something they see as common sense.

During our interview he elaborated on this saying that the pier has "turned into little

Tijuana[8]"on the weekends. He explained that the unfortunate outcome of the parking

spaces was that it didn't actually help local businesses, instead Latino/a families were

using the parking spaces to go to the beach, and instead of going to the nice restaurants

that Manhattan Beach offered, they were opting to, as John said "barbeque their goats

and chickens out on the beach." John highlights the racialized processes that I see

constructing the coast, and access to it. These include the relationship between

practice, race, and the landscape. Below I unpack these processes in more detail.

First, the language that John used is clearly racist, suggesting that Latino/as are

uncivilized, uncultured, dangerous, and unwanted. Latino/a bodies from the city disrupt

his space in many ways. They are not the color that belongs there, they don't act the

way he wants them to, and they represent seepage from the inner city, the very thing

that John wanted to escape by living in Manhattan Beach. He prefers it to remain a

bubble where outsiders can't easily penetrate. Perhaps this greatest frustration is that

the exclusivity is gone. What characterized Manhattan Beach is that it is relatively out

of the way from Los Angeles, closer to Orange County, so it doesn't tend to attract

people north of the 405 and the exclusive whiteness tends to deter people of color form

the inner city. The geography of its location helps maintain a fair degree of exclusivity

on its own.

John's comments demonstrate the connection between landscape and practice.

There are multiple ways to interpret these practices. From a CGR perspective, we see

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[8] Tijuana is known for being a crowded, impoverished city near the Mexico – California border
characterized by prostitution and drugs.

that John uses practice to stand in for race, which can be construed as cultural racism (Bonilla-Silva 2006), meaning that he is attributing one group's actions or practices to their race. This is a common form of racism in which someone says "I'm not trying to be racist but why do Mexicans always…" The person passing judgments assures him/herself that they are not racist; they just don't understand why an entire racial group does something. First of all, assuming that all black people or all Latino/as act the same way is racist in and of itself because it doesn't account for normal human variability. But then to describe disgust with what the group is said to have done reproduces white practices as normal and practices from people of color as not normal, and thus something to be feared. John then takes it a step further and suggests that because this race does not know how to act at the beach they do not belong. John's comments are not that veiled, except that he mentions in his email that he is not trying to sound racist, which means that he is cognizant that he is isolating a group of people based on their race. He is making a very exclusionary claim that people of color don't belong at the beach. His ex-wife shared his propensity to group people unequally by race. Carol told me that she thinks robberies increase when there are construction workers nearby the house. Carol had no actual evidence of this, but it didn't matter because she had already created the image of poor Latino/a construction workers as deviant thieves.

John and Carol's perspectives are not unique to this area. I found several examples of whites confused by how non-whites chose to spend their time at the beach. In Southern California, hegemonic practice consists of people sunbathing in bathing

suits, playing volleyball or other beach games, sitting under beach umbrellas, reading, having a small picnic or snack, surfing, body boarding, skim boarding, relaxing, building sand castles, walking or jogging. But not everybody does this. A survey on access from the California Coastal Commission (1999) indicates that the demographic of beach users is changing, and with that the ways in which people use the beach are changing as well. Increasingly, non-white, predominantly low-income Latino/a families choose to stay on the park-like grassy areas that are often maintained adjacent to beaches where they can play soccer and share more elaborate meals on a grill. Some people bring large tents to the beach to provide protection from the sun and wind. Some people come in large groups, having parties at the beach with music. These alternative uses of the beach not only transgress the hegemonic idea of "correct" beach behavior. There are unwritten rules that the hegemonic ideal maintained through hegemonic practices and representations of the beach and when anyone disregards or disobeys these rules (conscious or not) it creates a moment of crisis.

Furthermore, these differences in how people use the beach are attributed to their race leading to inaccurate stereotypes. This is what Omi and Winant (1986) are referring to in their discussion of "interpretive codes" and "racial etiquette." One prominent example of transgressing dominant beach practices that is misunderstood by whites is pejoratively referred to as the "Mexican bathing suit." This refers to some, assumingly low-income (immigrant) Latino/as often swim in the ocean wearing their street clothes rather than bathing suits. I discovered that this was a common question on the website Answers.yahoo.com in which anyone can ask a question and get

responses from users. I searched under the question "why do Mexican's where their clothes in the ocean?" Before I finished typing the question, the website offered several similar questions just restated in different ways. I purposefully generalized people by using the term "Mexicans" because I assumed that anyone asking this question online (who wasn't doing academic research on it) would generalize the population of people they thought they saw in the ocean. I found over 50 responses, many of which were offensive, but the most popular responses attributed it to Catholicism, lack of assimilation to American norms, or not enough money to spend on bathing suits. Gustavo Arellano, a columnist for LA Weekly and several other newspapers and magazines in the Southwestern U.S., has a column called "Ask a Mexican" that people write to asking about Latino/a and Mexican stereotypes, which he attempts to explain. In April of 2007 he said by far the most frequently asked question in the column's history was "Why do Mexicans swim with their clothes on?" He explained:

> …Mexicans respect the public when it comes to flashing our flabby
>
> *chichis*, *pompis* and *cerveza* guts — so when we're out near the pool or
>
> by the beach, we cover up. It ain't Catholicism, machismo or an homage
>
> to our swim across the Rio Grande. It's good manners (Arellano 2007).

Regardless of why people do this, the practice itself demonstrates that when people act outside of the boundaries of what is deemed normal, dominant society notes it and tries to reconcile it. What is more, the actions are attributed to the entire race, hence the "*Mexican* bathing suit." At the same time, this difference in practice also helps to create

boundaries between insiders and outsiders (Cresswell 1996). Anyone who is swimming

in their everyday clothes is seen as not belonging, and not cultured.

I have also heard grumblings about how Latino/as bring their own grills to the

beach or beach parking lots. I talked to one white male beachgoer in near-by Santa

Monica who was baffled by a couple of families who brought rented U-Haul trucks to

the beach parking lot with grills. They were cooking food and hanging out. This man

didn't understand why they would come to the beach, only to sit in the parking lot. This

is not so different from a widely accepted American, predominantly white practice

called tailgating. Tailgating has become so extreme that people bring flat screen TVs

and satellite dishes to watch games in the parking lots of the actual stadium of the event

rather than actually going to the sports event (Kersetter 2010). Given the great number

of people in Los Angeles who live in apartments and the restrictions that these places

have on outdoor grilling, it is not surprising that people are looking for a place to have a

barbeque, and why not at the public beach? There is resistance to this behavior for

several reasons because of who is doing it, it is not normative, and it complicates the

ideal image of the place.

Sibley (1995) explains that dominant society uses differences like the ones

mentioned above to exclude people from certain spaces. Dominant society also uses

these differences to support the assumption that some people (non-whites) don't know

how to use the beach correctly. If people of color in particular are seen using the beach

differently from dominant beachgoers, these actions are noted, attached to their color,

and therefore the entire race and the action is then seen as wrong, meaning "Mexicans"

don't know how to use the beach right. However, because the dominant discourse is on

how people use the beach, rather than *who*, the dominant group is able to maintain the

fiction that 'it' has nothing to do with race, and is only about the way people use the

beach that they are objecting to. This is a form of what Bonilla Silva calls "racism

without racists." (2006). Bonilla-Silva explains that whites use a "rhetorical maze of

color-blindness" to explain away their feelings and perspectives as being motivated by

anything but race. He says that "whites explain the product of racialized life (segregated

neighborhoods, schools, and friendship networks) as nonracial outcomes and rely on

the available stylistic elements of color blindness to produce such accounts" (63).

However, all people of the accused race are then judged according to the actions of a

few which ties into what Bonilla-Silva calls cultural racism, in which people of color act a

certain way because it is part of their collective culture. This is problematic in a variety

of ways. First, there is an assumption that all blacks or all Latino/as share a common

culture exclusively based on their race which is not the case. Additionally, whites are

never seen as having a common culture based on their race (hooks 1997) except in

recent comedic representations of whiteness (see Lander's (2008) *Stuff White People*

Like). Second, attributing someone's actions to their culture is just a modern day form

of biologism (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Furthermore, this assumed culture is seen as fixed and

unchanging (Bonilla-Silva 2006) which ultimately takes away the agency of the

individual.

The exception to this is seen with White Latino/as and Honorary Whites (Bonilla-

Silva 2006) in this area who appear to be equally or more wealthy than the whites at

Manhattan Beach and perform white, middle class, normative beach behavior.

Incidentally, this class stratification provides proof for whites that racism no longer

exists since there are token people of color who can afford to live in Manhattan Beach;

however, these people are essentially seen as assimilated whites (Vasquez 2011). This

complexity in assimilation among Latino/as further complicates whites' racist ideologies

on social justice. John's perspective is a kind of social liberalism which "plays a

foundational part in this process of normalizing and naturalizing racial dynamics and

racist exclusions" (Goldberg 1993:1). Goldberg (1993) explains that "as modernity's

definitive doctrine of self and society, of morality and politics, liberalism serves to

legitimate ideologically and to rationalize politico-economically prevailing sets of

racialized conditions and racist exclusions" (1). This perspective denies that structural

inequalities exist, thus it is up to the disenfranchised to work harder to achieve a better

life.

    While people use different practices to explain why they don't want to be

around certain groups, there are other times when the mere presence of bodies of

difference is the obvious source of exclusion or avoidance, as seen in both Dockweiler

and Manhattan Beach. When I asked people to describe their ideal beach day, one

thing that was never been mentioned was the *kind* of people they wanted to see or

didn't want to see at the beach. This was the case amongst multiple groups of people.

One African American man explained to me that "black people know not to go to

Manhattan Beach." I asked why and he said because "they (people at Manhattan Beach)

don't want us there." He then listed several other beaches where black people didn't

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feel comfortable, including Malibu. He indicated that this was an unspoken

understanding. His feelings are in line with bell hooks' reflection on feeling terrorized in

white spaces as she was growing up, and still today. Hooks (1997) explains that there

were a set of rules that she learned and places she knew she was supposed to avoid. I

recognized this practice of avoidance in my discussions with people of color. Not

everyone avoided white beaches, yet they recognized they were indeed transgressing

that place by being where they thought they were likely unwanted. These experiences

represent oppressions in society structured by reactions of aversion based on race,

among other subjectivities (Young 1990). Young (1990) explains that "Blacks, Latino/as,

Asians, gays and lesbians, old people, disabled people and often poor people,

experience nervousness or avoidance from others" (142). These groups of people

"represent what lies just beyond the borders of the self, the subject reacts with fear,

nervousness, and aversion to members of these groups because they represent a threat

to identity itself" (145). This argument is similar to Sibley's (1995) and informed by the

psychoanalytic theory of Kirsteva (1982).

The fact that white people don't outright tell me who they imagine at the beach

and that they probably don't even consciously think about it, demonstrates that these

assumptions about bodies belonging or not are matter-of-fact for much of the

population. In one interview with a Surfrider staff member, I asked her why she goes to

the beach and one of the reasons she gave had to do with boy watching and girl

watching; she said that the kids and teenagers and even adults go to look at the hot

surfers and cute girls in bikinis. This is a common perspective that is informed by years

of media representations of youthful tan, but white bodies at the beach. The woman

who I spoke to can practice this representation of the beach because as an attractive,

white, middle-class, able-bodied, straight female, she fits the part. However people of

color and poor people are rarely if ever included in this image. So when they are at the

beach their mere presence fractures the hegemonic representation and geographic

imagination of this space. Furthermore, the perception of "attractive" bodies is very

much influenced by race, as Omi and Winant (1986) point out, which means the practice

of looking at attractive people (one of the dominant pastimes at the beach) is taken

away if there are not enough people of one's own race. Thus bodies play a role in

whether a place is appealing or not, even if a beach has all of the physical characteristics

that most people value in their choice of beaches, if it doesn't have the right people

there, then it is not going to be visited.

Therefore, it is not enough to simply ask people about their imagination of ideal

beach landscapes because what they don't reveal is as important as what they do.

Again, it often trumps the physical landscape. Place can make people feel like they

belong, or that they want to belong, it can deter people either because they feel like

they are unwanted or because they don't see people like themselves there. This goes

back to the heart of human geography that bodies are constructed by place and place is

constructed by bodies (Dwyer and Jones 2000; Kobayashi 2003; Mohanty 2006; Pratt

and Hanson 1994). To neglect this when talking about landscape would be a mistake.

Sand Dune Park

One other place that I want to talk about is Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach. Just as the town of El Segundo blocks roads into the city to keep nearby Dockweiler beachgoers from entering the town, Manhattanites have also blocked-off parts of their city that attract outsiders. A case in point is the Manhattan Beach (MB) Sand Dune Park (Figure 5.3)

Sand Dune Park has been around since the early 1960s and is one of the last unpaved sand dunes in MB. A local resident even wrote a children's book about it called the Legend of Sand Dune Park, part fiction, and part nonfiction lamenting it as a staple of MB (Sharp 2009). The park has served as a challenging workout where people climb up to the top of the dune that is extremely steep and obviously covered in sand. Several years back, the coaching staff for the basketball team of an urban liberal arts college, Loyola Marymount University (LMU) discovered the dune and started having formal workouts there. Shortly after, word got around about this unique place to exercise for free and people started showing up from all parts of the city, including low-income people of color. Since this dune is located right in the middle of a neighborhood, the

residents immediately adopted a NIMBY (not in my backyard) (Hubbard 2009) response that eventually led to the temporary closing of the park until the city could figure out how to handle the situation.

Figure 5.3 Sand Dune Park. Photo: sanddunepark.com

In the late summer of 2009, MB city council held several meetings to discuss solutions to the problem of "overcrowding" at the dune. Many MB residents were disgruntled by the noise, number of cars in the neighborhood, and trash, according to Julie Sharp, the reporter of the local newspaper. Some of the suggested solutions were to close the park indefinitely or plant native or drought resistant plants on the dune and make it a nature preserve. Another option was to restrict parking by installing parking meters and make street parking available only to residents with parking passes. In other words, they would be pricing out people who couldn't afford to pay up to $5 an hour to park there. This is a typical way of controlling access (Blomley 1997). In several of the local news articles covering this story, while the general identity of the 'outsider' users was never identified, it was alluded to. The reporter did not report on the fact that more people of color were using this space, and playing hip-hop music. Even so, it was certainly a grievance among locals, as was articulated to me by a long-time MB resident from whom I initially heard about the conflict. He said "if you're interested in access, you should look into Sand Dune Park. I guess there were a lot of black people coming from the inner city so then it turned into this whole race thing because the people living near the park didn't want them there or something."

Furthermore, among the internet review boards, most people go into great detail about how amazing of a workout the dune is, but scattered amongst the high ratings are low ratings from residents and users who have had negative interactions with residents, for example:

- "My wife, a black woman, was told by a resident why they closed Sand Dune Park. Without blinking an eye and very matter-of-factly, this man

told my (black) wife that there were "too many coloreds." – Juan, Culver City 8/18/2010

- "The language and general behavior is loud and very disrespectful to the neighbors. Since it was discovered by the LMU basketball team some years ago, life has never been the same. The people are rude, loud, take care of bodily functions outdoors, and generally make the neighborhood hell." – Lyn F., MB 11/11/2008

- "Everyone wants their neighborhood back." (Sharp 2009)

Residents claim that the park costs over $100,000/year to maintain, which includes trash pickup and moving the sand that gets eroded to the bottom back to the top of the dune, as well as a park ranger. They claim that it is not about race, it is about the number of people going there. But their solution was to reduce numbers by charging people to park there. There was no disguise that parking meters would deter some people from going to the dune. The meters were not proposed as a means to help pay for the upkeep, rather it was strictly a deterrent. The residents were blatantly trying to keep out low-income people and thereby majority black and Latino/a people from coming to the park. They did not like to see or hear people acting different from them. This demonstrates how people can become quite reactionary when there is a spatial mismatch of bodies at a given place.

While some residents offer clearly racist perspectives and others articulate grievances of noise and trash, the fact is that with any other public park, anyone can use it but residents share a mutual understanding of what kind of people belong and how they should act. They have no tolerance for transgressions. Again, this demonstrates the processes of racialization that I discussed earlier.

As of May 2012, the city decided to open the park by using a reservation system and charging people a dollar. The website to register requires a username and password, and you have to print out your proof of registration. This is a tactic that deters much of the public from easily going to the park. It requires a computer, printer, and computer skills. It also requires a well-planned trip in advance. The city has made it incredibly inconvenient to gain access to this space, effectively excluding much of the public.

<u>Conclusion</u>

In this section I have tried to demonstrate how this coastal landscape and access to it is constructed. I found that race plays a major role in both processes, as well as the geographic location of the landscape which also relates to race. For Dockweiler Beach, it is easily accessible for people of color from the inner city if they have a car. It is also conducive to this group of people because there are no wealthy white homeowners trying to keep them out, as seen in Manhattan Beach. Dockweiler, dominated by people of color from the inner city, inspires fear among whites who then avoid this space and describe it as "the ghetto". This representation reproduces the idea that blacks and Latino/as are predisposed to be violent, criminals and should be feared.

With regard to Manhattan Beach, I used the example of John and Sand Dune Park to demonstrate how wealthy whites try to keep people of color out of their space. Their feelings toward people of color from the inner city are in concert with how people described Dockweiler Beach, thus they (John and company) want to keep this element out of their town. Sand Dune Park demonstrates strategies that have been used to

exclude the public from public spaces in a way that only people from Manhattan Beach are likely to adopt.

I used these examples to show how there are multiple ways in which the landscape is racialized. These frames are used to determine who belongs and who does not. Even if there are not obvious efforts to limit access, there is clearly some kind of unwelcome vibe that is given off and noted by people of color, which is an effective way to keep people out of a place. Therefore, this chapter further complicates how landscapes are constructed, reconstructed, lived, defended and transgressed; it also introduced the relationship between the construction of landscapes and access to it.

In the next chapter I look more closely at the individual experience of the beach from the perspective of predominantly low-income Latino/a kids from South Central. I look at how they negotiate access to the beach materially and discursively. I also demonstrate how access is tied to the racialized construction of the landscape, which I introduced in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6

SURF BUS

In the previous chapter, I looked at the material-discursive formation of Los

Angeles' South Bay beaches, arguing that they are highly racialized landscapes. I

emphasized how whites perceive low-income people of color from the inner city as

outsiders and try to exclude them from the beach. In this chapter I want to shift focus

to the material-discursive formation of access experienced by the excluded, in this case

kids from South Central. Access is multidirectional, and we must understand it from

different perspectives and angles. In the previous chapter, I looked at it from the

perspective of the endpoint – the beach; here I look at the process, both materially and

symbolically, of going to the beach from the starting point of the inner city. I argue that

access is limited for people of color living in the inner city due to a racist transit system

and exclusive whiteness at the beach. Through this research, I explore what it might

look like if kids from the inner city could overcome these obstacles of access to this

landscape. I do this through participant observation with an organization called Surf Bus

which teaches kids from the inner city how to surf. I found that inner city kids must

negotiate and/or transgress embodied norms of whiteness to gain symbolic access

(belonging) to the beach. They must also successfully negotiate a racist transportation

system to physically access the beach.

This chapter is outlined as follows: I first provide a framework of how I am

theorizing this issue. I then introduce the nexus of people involved in getting the kids

from the inner city to the beach. Then I explore the issue of public transportation to the

coast. After that, I provide a detailed look at how the kids responded to this program by first exploring a little bit of their everyday experience in South Central followed by their experiences at the beach.

Theoretical Framework

To make sense of the processes of access in this chapter, I draw on the work Cresswell's (2001) production of mobility and the process of racialization through whitewashing (Rietman 2006; Doane and Bonilla Silva 2003; Bonilla Silva 2006). This section also offers a more phenomenological approach by drawing on everyday practice (deCerteau 1983; Cresswell 2001) to understand the microgeographies of South Central and the beach as they pertain to the identity construction of the kids.

Cresswell (2001) differentiates between movement and mobility by suggesting that movement is a means of getting from point A to point B, while mobility is contextualized and produced. He explains that "mobility is to movement what place is to location. It is produced and given meaning within relations of power" (2001). Mobility, then, can be used in a variety of conceptual ways. At times mobility is demonized when it is juxtaposed with normalized dwelling, as is the case with gypsies (Cresswell 1999) and migrant laborers. Mobility can also be a privilege for example, study abroad for college students. In this chapter, I focus on the production of mobility from the inner city to the beach. This mobility is tied up with issues of power. Thus I am not concerned with the movement of people or looking at sterile frictions of distance. I am looking at how mobility is actively controlled by those with power operating under racist ideologies of progress for whites and exclusion for people of color. Mobility and

access are interrelated. Access can be controlled through mobility, which I will

demonstrate in this chapter by looking at how transit is controlled by those with power.

        The other way that I am looking at access is from a critical geography of race

perspective, specifically the process of whitewashing (Reitman 2006). As I explored in

the previous chapter, places are highly racialized (Kobayashi and Peake 2000; Delany

2002; Dwyer and Jones 2000). In this chapter I look more closely at the process of

constructing the beach as a white space by looking at how Surf Bus taught the kids to

act like surfers. Reitman (2006) explains that "a focus on oppressed places gives needed

voice to those facing daily material and psychological hardship, though it also turns

attention away from the detailed agency of privileged groups in creating and

reproducing dominant spaces" (267). While I do spend time discussing South Central

from the perspective of the kids who live there, I do so in an effort to understand the

social construction of place and identity so that I can connect it to the broader issue of

access to the beach. I then do what Reitman suggests and explore how the kids

negotiate the space of the beach, and how Surf Bus helps to reproduce the dominant

ideology of the beach through the process of 'whitewashing.' Reitman explains that

'whitewashing' is the "process of creating and maintaining a white space" (268). The

process of whitewashing is a dual process of attempting to strip away or deny racial and

ethnic differences and then replace them with dominant white practice or culture

(Reitman 2006). I explore how Surf Bus is implicated in this process of whitewashing

even as it strives to make the kids feel like insiders at the beach.

Surf Bus

     As I was conducting preliminary research on access to the coast, I came across an organization called Surf Bus that taught kids from the inner city how to surf. The fact that such an organization exists makes obvious the fact that not everyone has access to the beach. I was immediately intrigued and contacted the director of the program, Clark. When I told her that I was interested in researching access to the coast, she suggested that I volunteer with the program. We first spoke over the phone in March of 2010, and four months later I was on the beach in Santa Monica as a volunteer instructor meeting the first batch of kids for Surf Bus that summer (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1 Surf Bus. Photo: Surfbus.com

     There are several individuals and groups involved in making Surf Bus happen. First, the non-profit Surf Bus Foundation was founded in 2003 by Marion's mother, Mary Setterholm, a former U.S. Women's National Surfing Champion. To provide this program at no cost to the kids, Mary initially used capital from her for-profit surfing school in Santa Monica called Surf Academy. Upon learning that a 12 year-old girl from the inner city skipped school for a day at the beach, but later drowned when she got

into the ocean wearing her denim jeans, Setterholm made it her mission to do all she could to prevent such a tragedy from happening again, thus she started the Surf Bus Foundation. Originally, the Surf Bus picked up kids ages 8-17 in various low-income areas of L.A; took them (on a bus) to a beach in Santa Monica and led them in a host of activities meant to develop awareness of the ocean, beaches, and the environment. Importantly, they learned how to swim, surf, and boogie board in the ocean. Many of the kids dealt with family issues of domestic violence, drug abuse, and gang activity, yet their experiences were nothing new to Setterholm, who lived on the streets for several years as a teenager and young adult (Severson 2009). Her ability to relate to kids with similar experiences undoubtedly contributed to the success of the organization.

In 2011, it cost about $200.00 per child to participate for one week. This included transportation and the cost of the instructors, equipment, and permits. Surf Bus did receive some donated items that helped, like wetsuits and swim suits. In the summer of 2010, the cost of renting a bus and driver went up to a staggering $500/day. They couldn't afford to have a full summer of Surf Bus, so they only had two groups of kids. One group came from a church in Compton, and only participated for one day. The church paid for the transportation because they really wanted the kids to have this experience. The other group came from the Boys and Girls Club of Eagle Rock, just south of Pasadena, about 20 miles away. They came for two separate weeks. For the kids at Eagle Rock, Mary Setterholm paid for the transportation out of her own pocket.

In 2011, Marion took over ownership of Surf Bus from her mother, and I returned for another summer of volunteering. However, this year was much different

due to a serendipitous meeting of a few individuals trying to accomplish similar goals. A

man named John Smith (discussed in chapter five) overheard one of the Surf Bus

instructors, Dan, talking about the camp. John was the founder of an organization

called KidSurf. John had started the nonprofit in the hopes of helping 'underprivileged'

kids in the city get the chance to surf at the beach. While he had the money, he didn't

know how to go about making his vision actually happen. When he overheard Dan, he

introduced himself and basically said he has been looking for something like Surf Bus for

a while. Surf Bus and KidSurf partnered up for the summer. Surf Bus provided all the

organizing, administration, and running of the camp, and John funded most of it. John

purchased backpacks for the kids which were stuffed with a plush oversized beach

towel, T-shirt, sweatshirt, and ball cap all bearing the KidSurf logo. He also provided box

lunches from Subway every day, which he personally delivered and pizza on Fridays. All

that was left was finding some kids to participate. John had a friend who told him about

A Place Called Home.

A Place Called Home (APCH) is a non-profit youth center in South Central Los

Angeles that offers programs in education, the arts, health, well-being, and athletics to

children from mostly black or Latino/a low-income families. Many of the staff and

volunteers grew up in South Central. The center is open after school and all-day during

the summer. In the summer the kids go on a variety of field trips, some go on a trip

every day of the week. Because the center and all the field trips that are completely

free for parents; there is usually a waiting list to get in. A Place Called Home describes

itself as:

A safe haven in South Central Los Angeles where underserved youth are

empowered to take ownership of the quality and direction of their lives

through programs in education, arts, and well-being; and are inspired to

make a meaningful difference in their community and the world

(apch.org).

APCH has major celebrity and corporate donors, holds galas for fundraisers, and is one

of the most successful youth centers in the city (apch.org). However, many non-profit

youth centers do not have the means that APCH does, and are therefore not able to

offer as many programs or care for children. APCH is exceptional in that capacity.

Surf Bus, KidSurf, and APCH all worked together for three weeks bringing 90

kids to the beach. The kids were broken up into three groups of 30 and went to the

beach for a full week each. The most cost effective solution for transportation was to

rent two 15 passenger vans for the three weeks that the instructors would drive to pick

up and drop off the kids at APCH. I ended up driving a van 1-3 times a week. This was a

great opportunity to just casually talk to the kids. I also got to visit South Central, and

see where the kids lived and hung out.

Before going any further, I want to reflect on what this situation says about

access thus far. For one thing, there is large group of people (Surf Bus, KidSurf, and

APCH and all of their donors) who see the value that the beach has to offer children.

Second, they recognize that these specific kids do not readily have access to the coast

(otherwise there would be no need for this program), let alone surfing lessons. Third,

while the kids live less than 20 miles from the beach, it is an ordeal for them to get

there. It requires a well-orchestrated endeavor, money, and commitment from a host

of individuals. Fourth, access for these kids is mediated by third parties which is atypical

because most kids who go to the beach only have to rely on the permission or

supervision of their parents. All of these issues make getting to the beach an uphill

battle for the kids at APCH. I show below that this is not a matter of luck, and it is not

accidental. Indeed, their access is directly related to insufficient public transportation,

racial segregation, and the racialization of city and coast.

Transportation

South Central is about 18 miles from Manhattan Beach. In a car you would take

the 110 to the 105[9] freeway then park in a lot or on the street. Minus the time it takes

to find parking the trip is about 30 minutes. But many people living there use public

transportation, in which case the trip is as follows:

> 1) Walk to the bus stop,
> 2) Catch the #53 bus for a 33 minute ride: 41 stops
> 3) Get off at the 42nd stop and walk to the Metro station wait about 12
> minutes for the Green line train.
> 4) Catch the Green line for about 14 minutes: 6 stops.
> 5) Walk to another bus stop and wait about 10 minutes.
> 6) Catch the 232 bus for about 11 minutes: 9 stops.
> 7) Walk **1 mile** to the beach.
>
> Total time: **1 hour and 40 minutes one-way**[10]

It is difficult enough to bring all your beach gear on the bus, but to then carry it a

mile is even more cumbersome. Clearly, the public transportation route is less than

---

[9] In Southern California, people distinctively refer to freeways as *The* + freeway number. While it is a regional word choice, it also reflects the strong car culture in Los Angeles. Different freeways are so notorious that there is none other like it, hence, the use of the definitive article "the." The freeways are more imbued with more meaning than simply a road from point A to point B.

[10]Googlemaps: 2830 Central Avenue, Los Angeles, CA to Manhattan Beach – Tuesday at 9:30am

ideal, but more than that it is a deterrent. In no way is it constructed to conveniently

get to the beach, thus people who rely on public transportation are essentially excluded

from this space. Furthermore, research shows that people living in the inner city have

significantly less access to green space (Gottlieb 2007; Jossart-Marcelli 2012; Pulido

1996; Wolch and Wilson 2005) and thus stand to benefit the most by getting to the

beach.

The complex transportation network in L.A including the reliance on cars,

freeways, and public transit is no accident; it has been used as a way to segregate and

exclude "undesirable" people since the construction of the freeway system. Soja (2010)

claims that "distributional inequalities are the more visible outcome of individual

decisions made by many different, often competing actors Urban geographies have

been shaped by such decisions from the very beginnings of the industrial capitalist city ,

mostly to the advantage of the rich and power" (47-48). There is a reason why I had

never seen South Central or Compton prior to this research even though I lived in the

L.A. metro area for seven years – the freeway system allowed me to drive right through

it on an elevated 6-lane highway at 80 miles an hour. The freeway system has replaced

the metaphor of being on the "wrong side of the tracks." In L.A., status is all about being

on the west side of the 405, and south of the 101 (which runs through the San Fernando

Valley in the northern part of Los Angeles County), north of the 10, etc… L.A. has had a

history of suburbanization, NIMBYism, segregation, and sprawl that persists today (Soja

1996, Davis 1990). Access is still a huge problem in Los Angeles. And at the end of the

day, people living in this congested, sprawling city, should be able to take advantage of

the one place on the edge of it all where they can relax, be free to play, socialize and

laugh, and contemplate, and breath – the ocean.

This recognition of transit injustice came to a head in 1996 with the landmark

Bus Riders Union (BRU) case that resulted in Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority

(MTA) signing a consent decree with the plaintiffs, a grassroots organization called the

Labor/Community Strategy Center (L/CSC). MTA agreed to make it their highest priority

to improve the quality of bus service and guarantee equal access to all forms of public

transportation for at least ten years (Soja 2010: vii). Essentially, the plaintiffs argued

that the MTA was in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 because it was

operating under a separate but unequal system that was investing far more money and

resources into long distance rail transit, the metro link, that benefited the white

middleclass while allowing bus service to decline, which systematically subordinated

poor people of color who relied heavily on buses (Soja 2010: x). Costing over $2 billion

for these improvements, this was one of the largest civil rights settlements in the United

States (Garcia and Rubin 2004). During this time over 80% of MTA's passengers were

people of color who mostly rode busses rather than the metrolink; 69% of bus riders

had a household income of $15,000 with no car; and the typical bus rider was a Latina

woman in her 20s with two children (Garcia and Rubin 2004). Even though 94% of

MTA's passengers were bus riders, it spent 60-70% of its budget on the rails.

I spoke to Robert Garcia, one of the lead attorneys on the case about transit

injustice then and now. He said:

During the MTA matter [BRU case], that was some of the strongest

evidence we had of intentional discrimination. In the years preceding the

suit, there were messages from residents of Manhattan Beach to the Los

Angeles County MTA asking them to cut-off direct bus service from Watts

to the beach because that brought black people to Manhattan Beach and

they didn't want them there, and MTA responded by cutting off direct

service. So after that if you were in Watts and wanted to go to the

beach, you could no longer just get on one bus and stay on that till it

ended at the beach. You had to make several transfers and end up in

Santa Monica, and it didn't simply mean that it took longer to get to the

beach, that meant that people wouldn't *go* anymore because it became

more expensive and time consuming. So there was direct discrimination.

During the ten years of the consent decree, bus service radically improved in Los

Angeles (Ray 2005). MTA purchased more busses, reduced overcrowding, maintained

affordable fares, enhanced security on buses, and reduced crime at bus stops (Soja

2010). All of these services took up nearly the entire budget so that there was no

money left for massive subway or rail projects. But the consent decree expired in 2006,

so I asked Garcia if bus was still improved. He responded:

No. Transit is getting worse, not better in Los Angeles. During those ten

years [of the consent decree] buses improved, bus-ridership increased

until the agreement expired. MTA went back to its old ways, raising fares

and ignoring bus service, so the transit system continues to get worse in

L.A. These are also issues that the federal government should be

addressing, there are plenty of shovel ready projects, but one of the

benefits of busses compared to rail is that you don't need a shovel - the

streets are already ready for busses. Busses are a lot cheaper than rail,

they're more efficient and more fair, but since 2006 bus service is

declining.

Obviously, based on my own experience with the kids from Surf Bus, I knew that public

transit was lacking. I was curious about what Garcia said about MTA rerouting people

away from Manhattan Beach, so I looked at bus routes from Compton to Manhattan

Beach. I chose Compton over Watts because Compton is a straight shot to Manhattan

Beach, whereas Watts is actually closer to Dockweiler, not that that should matter since

people should be able to go to whichever beach they want, but I assumed that Compton

would show a direct route to because it was only about 10 miles exactly east on

Rosecrans Blvd from Manhattan Beach. The fastest way to get there was taking a bus

north to the rail station which ended up being a little over an hour. The most direct

route however, via Rosecrans took 2 hours and cost $3.00 one way because there were

so many stops, transfers and walking involved. However, you could get a bus to drop

you off directly at Dockweiler Beach (see Chapter 5). MTA is doing the same thing it did

prior to the consent decree.

Over the past several years, MTA has been raising bus fares, as opposed to rail

fares which serve predominantly higher-income white people, cutting bus routes, and

removing benches at bus stops (Romann 2011). Free transfers are no longer issued and

the current base rate every time you board is $1.50. Because there are fewer buses and

routes, you have to transfer more often, which means paying multiple times a trip. A

day pass is $5.00 and a 30 day pass is $75.00. Even though there are discounts for K-12

students, seniors, and people on medicare the cost of travel for an entire family every

month gets to be very expensive. The L/CSC is currently challenging the MTA once again

finding them in violation of the Civil Rights Act. MTA's actions have been called 'transit

racism' (Claremont Progressive 2010; Ray 2005), which seems like an applicable

description since their actions favor higher-income whites at the great expense of low-

income people of color. Cresswell (2001: 331) explains that the "mobility of some can

immobilise others" which is exactly the case here. The MTA is paying for the metrolink

by increasing the budget for the rail and reducing the budget for the busses, indeed

taking away existing bus services to pay for rail expansion.

By looking at the Los Angeles transit system, through the perspective of

Cresswell's production of mobility, we can see that this issue is more than a problem of

getting from point A to point B or improving bus service, rather it is "imbued with

power-relations and meanings" (2001: 331). Those with power get to control the

mobility of those living in the inner city. Furthermore, the transit system is only one

part, and a symptom of much larger structural inequalities in Los Angeles including

residential segregation, a discriminatory criminal justice system, and discriminatory

education and job opportunities.

The racist transit system of Los Angeles is a material formation directly affecting

access to the beach for low-income people of color. Access to the beach is doubly

difficult in terms of transportation not only because of a racist transit system, but also

because people living at the beach have influenced the MTA to cut off direct routes to

the beach from the inner city, as indicated above. Even so, transportation is not the

only factor limiting access to people from the inner city; there are more symbolic forces

of belonging and normative practice which I now turn to in the next section.

Journey to the Beach

The intention of this section is to look at how the kids from South Central

experienced the beach without the usual blocks in access. I critically examine Surf Bus'

role as a conduit of access for the kids by providing transportation and lessons on being

an insider. But first I want to situate where the kids are coming from by reflecting on

my description of APCH and the conversations I had with the kids throughout my

participation. It is necessary to look at where the kids are from, because place and

identity are mutually constituted and thus play a major role in how the kids are

perceived as outsiders at the beach which plays a role in access. The kids were

incredibly street wise, tapped into a code of the inner city (Anderson 1990, 1999), very

distinctive from the dominant 'beach code,' which I referred to in chapter five. While

this section deals with material differences between the inner city and beach, and the

bodies that typically occupy these spaces, I focus more on the discursive and symbolic

meaning behind these differences as they contribute to access.

South Central

APCH is located on the corner of Central Ave and 29th St, right in the heart of

South Central. Central Ave is a major road through this area (see chapter 4 for more

detail). Generally there are small grocery stores and convenience stores where you can buy cheap generic home supplies like batteries (Figure 6.2). There is an abundance of tire, auto repair, and auto detailing shops, liquidators, and many informal financial assistance businesses that advertise assistance with taxes and check cashing.

Most of the houses have bars on the windows and almost every house displays a blue tarp that can serve a variety of functions from weatherproofing a leaky roof to creating a makeshift porch. Cement walls and abandoned building displays colorful tagging and graffiti. Trash and debris seems to gather in most corners of the streets.

Figure 6.2 South Central store fronts. Photo: M.Palma

29th street is filled by nondescript industrial buildings or warehouses with no widows or signs, surrounded by gates and circular barbed wire. A pile-up of garbage always sat at the end of the street as if someone had just emptied out five large bags of trash on the sidewalk and street (Figures 6.3 and 6.4). A mattress was always there on which you could often find someone sleeping. This neighborhood is predominantly Latino/a, but there are some black families there as well.

Figure 6.3 29th Street, same block as APCH. Photo: M.Palma

When I first saw APCH, I honestly thought it looked like a prison. The only way to enter was through a wrought iron fence and gate. You had to push a button that would signal the security guard on the inside who would look at you on his monitor of the video camera set up at the door and buzz you in if you didn't appear threatening. The

Figure 6.4 29th Street, same block as APCH. Photo: M.Palma

two security guards were in all likelihood purposefully intimidating at first. They were each over six feet tall and looked to be about 300 pounds. Al never smiled and basically dismissed me whenever I tried to strike up a conversation. Eventually, he told me he felt that the streets

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were really not safe for the kids, and in previous years he had to stand up to gangs that chased kids all the way to APCH. So it's no wonder he keeps up the "don't mess with me" image.

Inside APCH there is a dance studio, classrooms, and a small cafeteria which is the central node of the building. In the cafeteria, there's a worn out sofa and arm chair where kids can relax. Outside in the back of the building, there is a basketball court, and small green soccer field covered by Astroturf where most of the kids hang out.

The kids waited for me behind the gates in a little courtyard area in front of the building. The kids were ages 8-13. There was usually a mix of boys and girls, but near the end it was mainly girls[11]. Half the kids would get in one van and the other half in another. We would pull out onto South Central Blvd and head west to the beach. The kids liked to point out landmarks that meant something to them and informed stories of their life. The small mom and pop donut shop called "Sexy Donuts" tickled the girls. Their fascination with this place has much to do with the fact that they find anything referring to sex amusing, especially something as unsexy as donuts. Several of the girls talked about sex, and asked me if I had "tried it" yet. Part of being streetwise is knowing something about sex at a young age. The boys made up a name for a prostitute that they commonly see on the street. They call each other her name as a put down. When I asked them about this, they laughed and said she's this "gross old lady who sells sex." They said she's always messing with them but they just laugh at her.

---

[11]I really don't know why this is. Maybe because it was always female instructors going to pick up the kids and therefore the boys didn't seem to identify with them or want to go even though there were male instructors at the beach.

The kids also loved to joke around about homelessness since it was such a part of the everyday landscape in South Central. The kids called homeless people hobos. I once asked a van of boys what they wanted to be when they grew up and they collectively decided that they wanted to be hobos. They told me about specific hobos who they conversed with or noticed on a regular basis. The girls too liked to point out hobos. They would often laugh at hobos, pointing out where a hobo lived on the street. When I was their age, the sight of a homeless person would have been out of the ordinary, and my mom would have to explain why someone looked and lived the way they did. There would be a lesson in it as well, to not judge, to be tolerant. But living amongst such visible homelessness is different, it is not out of the ordinary, but it is still seen as abnormal. The kids use humor to deal with this part of the city and their lives.

In addition to speaking ill of homelessness and prostitution, the boys also talked negatively about their fathers. One day, in the van, they were trying to top each other by claiming their dad had the worst job which included working in a hospital, making shoes, being a janitor, or "being lazy." They were not proud of their dads, and they clearly did not want to follow in their footsteps except for one boy who told me that his dad liked to watch documentaries and listen to the same news radio station that I listened to. The boy was pointing out his dad's exceptionalism, and was proud of it. I would often have the radio tuned to NPR when the boys loaded the van, so I suspect this boy was attempting to make some connection between me and his family. He was letting me know that he was not like most kids in the neighborhood. He could have shared anything with me, and that is what he chose to tell me, even before the boys

started talking about their own fathers. Perhaps he wanted me to know that his family wasn't like the other kids from South Central. In this sense he was trying to distance himself from the stereotypical "ghetto" image of the other kids.

The kids liked to point out their favorite fast food restaurants; this is where many of them would hang out after school. One girl pointed out a restaurant multiple times that got closed down because there was a shooting. I asked her if she worried about things like that. She said:

> Well yeah, cause like they say that like around Adams St. there's like this
>
> gang called like Red or something like that. And like if they see you
>
> wearing red they like might attack you or something like that. And that's
>
> why I always go through this other street.

The gang that Eva calls Red is most likely the "Bloods" who wear red. At eleven, she knows to avoid certain streets and to not wear certain colors. All of the kids know not to wear blue or red, in fact they're not allowed to wear those colors at APCH or school.

Another kid, Omar, pointed out that he hated King Taco and that he wouldn't go there even though his friends hang out there. He later told me he hated it so much because it reminds him of a frightening experience. He was at the park, just watching people play basketball when it was getting late and the sun was going down. He's a good storyteller and painted a vivid picture of the events. He's sitting on the fence, the orange sun is setting behind him, like a scene in The Outsiders[12], the next thing he

---

[12] The 1967 novel by S.E. Hinton which was adapted to film in 1983 by Francis Ford Coppola about class-difference among working-class "greasers" and socio-economically privileged "Socs"

knows a Latino guy in his early 20's is right next to him and says, "Eh ese[13]" and swings his arm proprietarily around Omar's bony shoulders. Omar stiffens, he knows this isn't good. The "G"[14] says hey man you with us? Omar says "no man" as he jumps down from the fence and starts to run. Behind him the gangsters are calling out to him "hey where you goin'?" They start to chase him; he hides behind cars and buildings, but they're driving around looking for him. He makes his way to the safety of a public place – King Taco. But Omar is scared for his sister, who is supposed to come pick him up at the park; he has to get in touch with her before she runs into the bad guys at the park. He gets her on the phone and tells her not to go to the park. She asks why; he says just don't go there; come pick me up at King Taco. She does and they both make it home safe and sound. Omar laughs about it, he thinks its funny; he outsmarted the bad guys, just like in some game, yet his laughter is an effort to cover up an event so frightening that he avoids the place that reminds him of the ordeal.

> Omar spends his free time after school hanging out in the streets. He told me:
>
> I just kick it like in the front [of the school] until the cops kick us out.
>
> Yeah, like we be bugging the neighbors and like the teachers that come
>
> out and go to their cars, yeah and they'll tell the police and the school
>
> police will come and kick us out and then after that we go to Dino's [a
>
> restaurant across the street]. We just chill there and when the cops leave
>
> we just go back to the school. Then around 5:30, I go home.

---

[13] "ese" is Mexican-American slang for 'dude' or 'homeboy'
[14] "G" stands for Gangster; OG = Original Gangster

I ask him if his mom knows he does this and he says no because he lies to her and tells

her he's hanging out with an older kid named Jason at the park. Jason covers for him. I

asked about Jason and he said:

He was the same as me. He told me about it like 'I had a friend… I could

be that friend, just be like you can kick it with your hommies and I'll cover

for you' Yeah, no cost, and I was like why not? Cuz usually they're like 'I'll

cover for you but you have to pay me this much a month.' Yeah, hustlin'

that's what it's called. They'll [kids] pay up to 10 bucks a month or more.

I asked him why he didn't have to pay Jason, and he said, "Cuz he da hommie," like that

explains everything.

Omar has knowledge of how things work on the streets about which I have no

clue, and he's known these things since he was about 10 years old. The city really is his

playground. I asked him why he doesn't just go home after school and he said because

it was boring, he'd just lay around watching TV, texting and eating chips and he'd get

out of shape. So I asked him how he got exercise and he said: "at the park, we go to the

top of the building and [acts out throwing something down] clang at the cars. One time

we hit a cop car and we just got chased and we like to go through this alley, and then

some gangsters stopped us and we threw rocks at them and they chased us through the

cars."

These practices help to shape the landscape of South Central and the identities

of the kids who live there. The streets are a playground for the kids: a place to laugh,

get exercise, and challenge authority. The seemingly mundane practice of hanging-out

is a spatial process of identity and place construction (Thrift 1997; Nash 2000). They

become street-wise through hanging out. The play and everyday navigation of the

streets demonstrate how these kids actively shape their landscape, mapping out where

they belong and where they do not. These kids have an excellent geographic mastery of

South Central and have actively shaped it into their own space. If we look at South

Central from a purely representational perspective, we might miss the

microgeographies of this place. That said, we also can't ignore the power that

representations of South Central have on the construction of real and imagined

identities of the people who live there.

On to the Beach

Once we got on the 105 highway, we were flying to the beach. I let the kids pick

out the radio station we'd listen to because I liked to hear them sing along to their

favorite songs. By day three, they would start to talk about what they wanted to do at

the beach and what they liked and didn't like. They would say "I hope it's not foggy" or,

"I hope we can play that game again." They wondered which instructors would be

there; which ones they hoped would be there. They were becoming experienced beach

goers noticing the physical conditions of the weather and water that affect their

enjoyment of the day. They wondered what kind of sandwiches they would have for

lunch and so on. They noticed that even if it was foggy at 9:00 in the morning it would

burn off by lunch. They commented on forgetting their coveted sweatshirts, realizing by

now their necessity on foggy mornings on the cool Pacific coast. They were gaining

knowledge of the beach, they were feeling comfortable there and they liked it. This talk

would usually happen once the freeway turned into a 2 lane road, soon to reveal the ocean and the weather conditions there. We would turn left onto Vista del Mar and the kids would all look at the beach. We then headed into the heart of Manhattan Beach.

Finally, the kids would jump out of the vans and gather on a grassy patch near the strand (a paved walkway next to the beach). The strand was always crowded in the morning with people getting exercise, walking their dogs and babies in strollers. All along the strand were huge three story homes with tiny, perfectly landscaped patches of a yard. The kids didn't really comment on the difference between South Central and Manhattan Beach. They knew that rich people lived at the beach.

On Mondays when it was the kids' first day at the beach, John would be waiting to pass out backpacks to each kid. He never explained to them what KidSurf was though. One time a girl asked me why they got all of this free stuff, but before I could answer her friend said to me "no offense, but this is why" and she pointed to my arm and I said "you mean because we're white?" and she said "that's what they [white people] do." She had realized that it was usually white people who donated money and offered these kinds of programs to her. She seemed to question their sincerity, though, hence her prefacing the comment with "no offense, but…" For her white people had money and were always trying to "save" people from the inner city.

If the kids needed bathing suits (and most of them did) we would dig around two baskets of brand-new donated bathing suits and try to find the kids' sizes. The problem for the girls was that the suits were mostly bikinis, which they were totally uncomfortable wearing. Most of them didn't own bathing suits and just got in the

water with shorts and a t-shirt most of the time. Once they put on their new bathing

suits, we noticed that all the girls were wearing bras and underwear under their suits.

When we told them they couldn't do this, they all panicked. This took the kids out of

their comfort zone. This was their first lesson of the white normative beach code. They

would try to sneak away with their underwear under their suits all the time, but it was

so obvious and we would make them change. This took a lot of explaining on both ends.

We told them the main reason why they couldn't do this was because cotton would

cause a horrendous rash, it also wouldn't dry fast enough under the suit which would

become a breeding ground for bacteria. The girls however felt completely naked

without their under clothes. They never wanted to walk around in just their bathing

suits. They wanted to be covered up, and preferred to have a long t-shirt covering them

to their knees. They said they were self-conscious especially when clearly none of their

friends and family were walking around sporting bikinis on a regular basis. We called

this their first surfing lesson. We said that surfers don't wear underwear under their

bathing suit or wet suit. What's more, surfers don't care about walking around in

nothing but a bikini or board shorts. The girls had a hard time with this. We also told

them that surfers never match. The reason being is that if you are a female surfer, you

probably have tons of bikinis in various stages of being washed so you just grab a

random top and bottom and then get out to the water. The girls had to learn this lesson

because the donated bikinis were all mixed up and most girls didn't have the same size

top and bottom, so we just had to give them whatever fit instead of what matched.

None of the instructors' bikinis matched which set an example for the girls.

The instructors were trying to teach them to embody true surfer identity. The thing is though, that surfers are predominantly white (Endo 2012). Surfers are also widely accepted, even an attraction, at the beaches in Los Angeles because they help draw people to the beach. Surf Bus was trying to make the kids into surfers, but in doing so, they were also whitewashing them; trying to erase cultural practices that would make them standout as outsiders and replace them with white normative beach behavior. This points to how the beach is continuously reinscribed and practiced as a white space. To be accepted into this racialized space, it is necessary to embody these racialized practices.

Once we got the kids got into their bathing suits they had to carry long, foam surfboards down to the water, another laborious task that involved lots of complaining about the boards being too heavy. We told them if they wanted to surf then they had to carry a board. Once we got down to the tent the kids would drop their boards and then dig through a basket of wet rash guards (a spandex t-shirt that goes over the bathing suit to prevent a rash from lying on a surfboard). The kids wore bright green rash guards so that we could easily keep track of all of them in the ocean and on the beach. I cringed for the kids who had to put on a wet, freezing cold, smelly rash guard on a cold morning. They actually didn't seem to complain all that much though because it meant that they could finally cover up their bodies. The female instructors all wore uncovered bikinis on the sand since this was typically what young white women wore at the beach, especially surfers. In the water we would wear red rash guards so the kids could easily see us.

The day would then start out with a quick game of dodge ball and then the girls would get in a group with the female instructors and the boys would get into groups with the male instructors. This was an important part to just check in and see how we were all feeling. We had the kids tell us how they felt waking up and what their goal for the day was. The first day we spent a lot of time getting to know each other. We broke up into pairs and interviewed each other then told the rest of the group all about our partner. I really liked this part because of the connections I was able to make with a few of the girls. Rosa told me her family just got a divorce and that things were better now that her dad was gone. Later on it became apparent that a lot of the kids had single parent homes.

Most mornings we did a variety of activities on the beach while we waited for the tide to come in providing surfable waves for the kids. During this time we would visit the lifeguard tower and ask the lifeguard all sorts of questions. We taught the kids the rules of the beach, like no littering etc. We taught the kids about what kinds of things lived in the ocean and on the sand. We taught them about rip currents, the parts of the ocean where you could and could not surf. We taught them about how to check for sting rays in the sand of the ocean. When they seemed to have learned all of that, and if the surf was still too rough or nonexistent, we would do a bunch of other activities like yoga, burying someone in the sand, building human pyramids, teaching the kids 'dude-speak', or having surfing lessons on land. These times were pretty unstructured and we usually just let the kids ask a bunch of questions about the ocean. The kids were really into the dude-speak, they thought it was weird and strange, but

also fun. We would go over the surfer code with the kids as well. This was a list,

created by world renowned surfer Shaun Tomson[15] of 12 things that should guide

surfers both in the ocean and on the land through their everyday life. The code is as

follows (table 1):

1. I will never turn my back on the ocean	7. There will always be another wave
2. I will paddle around the impact zone	8. I will always ride into the shore
3. I will take the drop with commitment	9. I will pass along my stoke
4. I will never fight a rip tide	10. I will catch a wave every day
5. I will paddle back out	11. All surfers are joined by one ocean
6. I will watch out for other surfers	12. I will honor the sport of kings

Table 1: Surfer's Code

For Marion, this was probably the most important lesson for the kids, she wanted them

to be able to ride out the conflicts, fears, and doubts of their life and end up better for

it. She saw surfing as a way to do that. Surfing is a great metaphor for almost any

aspect of life, but the metaphor really only resonates to surfers who have actually

experienced all 12 themes on the list. Only about 4 kids actually experienced a rip tide,

paddling past the impact zone, and dropping into a wave. Still Marion wanted them to

keep a copy of the Surfer's Code. The Surfer's Code is a natural inclusion to a surf camp

because surfing certainly can help put life into perspective. Even so, I'm not sure how

relevant it was for these kids. Navigating life using surfing metaphors is a white,

privileged practice which is what the kids were being taught.

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[15] Shaun Tomson, originally from South Africa, is known for being a former world champion surfer and environmentalist who wrote the book, *Surfer's Code – 12 Simple lessons for riding through life.*

By 10:30am the kids would be begging us to get in the ocean, so whether or not the waves were good, we would take them to the water. We taught the kids to just run into the ocean, regardless of how cold it was - usually around 65 degrees I then realized that most of the kids couldn't actually swim. I had assumed that was some sort of prerequisite. But then I realized that lots of people play in the ocean even if they can't swim and that these kids, the ones who can't swim, need this more than anyone because it is probably more likely that their families will take them to the ocean than to a pool. The kids needed to learn how to play safely in the ocean. We had a bunch of games to help them get acclimated with the water. What inevitably happened was that I would end up with one kid on my back practically choking me, and a kid hanging on to each of my arms, sometimes two kids to an arm. The instructors were careful not to make this a habit, otherwise the kids would never get used to being in the water. I generally stayed with a bunch of the younger girls who were not ready to surf while the other instructors took out one kid at a time to push them into waves giving them a chance to feel what it's like to catch a wave and stand up on the board. I tried to get the kids used to the water, but they spent the first 20 minutes screaming with delight and fear of the water just lapping up at their ankles.

We would then have Subway lunches brought to us by either John Smith or his ex-wife, Carol who was also active with KidSurf. I also really liked this time because it was so fun to watch the kids joke around with each other. While we were finishing up our lunches and letting our food settle, we taught the kids all kinds of fun things to do on the beach, like how to lure in and catch seagulls. We would then do a beach clean-

up for about 20 minutes. At first the kids hated this and were really resistant, they

didn't want to pick up trash on the beach. But after a couple of days it became the

norm.   We explained to the kids how trash got into the ocean. In addition to beach

goers leaving behind litter, the trash also came out of the storm drains. This part was

really important to the program. Marion and John wanted the kids to understand how

to take care of the ocean and beach.

After lunch and the beach clean-up, we went back into the water for another

couple of hours before it was time to start getting ready to go back to APCH. The kids

had to carry the boards back up to the parking lot, which they hated. And once again,

this involved an even longer ordeal of changing in the bathroom. We tried to teach the

kids how to towel change, which is what surfers do, as we told them, but most of them

wanted none of it. They also wanted to shower off the sand, which was not an option

with so many kids. We tried to get them used to the feeling of having sand in their hair,

clothes, and toes. We tried to get them to embrace it, but it was not easy. Our

response to every complaint seemed to be "well, that's what real surfers do." It was the

excuse for wearing a mismatched bathing suit, walking around in just your bathing suit,

peeing in the ocean, towel changing, walking barefoot in the hot sand, carrying your

own board, running into freezing cold ocean water, surfing, putting on cold, wet rash

guards, bathing suits, and wet suits, getting tons of water up your nose, getting knocked

down by waves, getting bee stings, pricked by loads of tiny sand crabs, bloody noses,

getting sand in your eyes, ears and scalp, putting on clothes when you are not

completely dry and still have a layer of sand clinging to your body, getting tan,

sunburned, and peeling noses. Needless to say, our go-to response lost its efficacy by

the end of the week as the novelty of being a surfer started to wear off on several of the

kids. The day would finish off with a mellow van ride back to APCH. The kids had gotten

out all of their energy at the beach, and by the time we got on the 105, most of them

would drift asleep to the rhythmic flow of stop and go traffic.

This section reveals the everyday experiences of the kids in South Central and

while they had access to the beach. The kids started to pick up on certain normative

everyday aspects of the beach, like bringing a sweatshirt because it would be cold, and

how the daily pattern of weather affects their enjoyment of the space, but that was not

enough for them to become real insiders. As I mentioned earlier, whitewashing is the

process of muting out racial and ethnic difference and replacing it with normative white

practices and ideologies (Reitman 2006; Bonilla-Silva 2006). I believe that Surf Bus'

motivations were to teach the kids how to surf and feel more comfortable at the beach;

but in doing so, we were reproducing the beach as a white space stripping away the

kids' atypical beach behavior and replacing it with whiteness even though it was under

the guise of surf etiquette. Surfing is a predominantly white activity (Endo 2012), it is

also one of the most iconic expressions of accepted beach behavior, thus surfing and

whiteness go hand-in-hand in reproducing the beach as a dominant white landscape.

The practice of wearing mismatched bikini's with no cover up, talking like a surfer by

using words like 'dude', 'bro', 'dominate', 'totally' to describe scenarios both related and

unrelated to surfing, doing yoga on the beach, eating fresh, low-calorie food as opposed

to the 'junk' food, towel changing in public, getting tan, and getting their hair wet and

sandy, all of these were things that made the kids feel very uncomfortable because it was the dominant, white norm, not their norm. The instructors, including me, didn't tolerate deviation from this code of beach behavior.

I also want to draw attention to the internal struggles that Mexican Americans have had with identity, because certainly this is not the only space where the kids have confronted with identity construction. This can also be understood as just one step along the "bumpy-line" of assimilation (Vasquez 2011). Vasquez explains that assimilation, particularly for Mexican Americans is not a linear process (Park et al 1925) and does not culminate into strict whiteness. While there are moments in which Mexican Americans have to face social repercussions from their ethnic community for "acting white" (Portes and Zhou 1993), assimilation is a dynamic process of comfort and discomfort that Mexican Americans constantly negotiate. The kids, who have been raised if not born in the U.S., started to experience this negotiation at the beach. The laid-back lifestyle of hanging out at the beach, and all that entailed was uncomfortable for the kids, who eventually got used to it, but had a hard time explaining it to their parents. For example, the girls' would tell me that their moms didn't want them to get sand in their hair, or get too dark from the sun. I couldn't understand how their parents could separate sand and sun from the beach, but this just shows again how we see and practice things differently based on our own subjectivities. But the girls looked up to the white instructors, they could see themselves looking and acting like us, they constantly told us that they liked our hair, bathing suits, wet suits, towels, etc. They knew that they could be accepted into this white landscape if they wanted, but doing so

would require moving further from their Mexican identity. Such considerations of identity are still race specific. This kind of assimilation is more possible for Latino/as because they fall within some "shade of whiteness" (Murguia and Forman 2003) more than blacks do (Massey and Denton 1992). Furthermore, assimilation is often less seen as a rejection of one's own ethnic identity and more seen as moving on with the times (Vasquez 2011). In Melissa Hyams' (2002) article *'Over there and back then'* Latina teens see Mexican culture as something that is antiquated. I could tell the girls at Surf Bus had similar feelings.

Moving on, Surf Bus helped the kids gain access to the beach for one week, but the program itself did nothing to challenge existing inequalities, though in fairness, that was not its intent. Instead, it worked within the unequal system of access and reproduced the beach as a white, exclusive landscape. This program taught the kids that you must have money and 'act white' to be accepted at the beach. It's likely that none of these kids are going to be surfers. I sat down with one 13 year old girl, who seemed to like surfing and was really good at it; I wanted to discuss the logistics of getting her to the beach to surf after the camp was over. I told her she could get a cheap used board for about $100 and she immediately said her family couldn't afford that. I asked if there was anyone who could take her to the beach, and she said maybe her aunt could once in a while. She knew how inconvenient it would be for her family to take her surfing, so she's wasn't going to suggest it to them.

Furthermore, when the Surf Bus program ended, I talked to John Smith. I asked him what motivated him to get involved with a program like this, and he said it was to

show the kids that there "was something else." He then told me about one of his

wealthy friends who funds a program where inner-city kids learn how to fence and play

chess rather than the more typical "urban" games, "no basketball or any of that kind of

thing," he said. Fencing is an individual sport that entails expensive gear; a basketball

court serves multiple people at one time and only requires several people to share a

ball, hence basketball makes more sense for kids living in the inner city. Even so, John

seemed to think that exposure to white elite activities would help the kids see that life is

better for white people, and if the kids want a better life, they should give up their

"urban" sports and learn to do what white people do. This is the process of

whitewashing.

Given that John had mentioned earlier that he didn't approve of low-income

people of color hanging out at Manhattan Beach, I asked if he would like to see more

programs like Surf Bus that "teach" kids how to use the beach "properly." He said

'sure', but that they would have to be conducted through private non-profit

organizations, he did not want tax payers to be responsible for getting the kids to the

beach.

The process of whitewashing does harm to the kids because it teaches them that

they are not accepted as they are (Reitman 2006, Makalani 2003). They must change

and try to assimilate if they want access to basic rights, like the right to free open spaces

(Frasier 1997) such as the beach. Moreover, as whitewashing attempts to neutralize

difference and replace it with whiteness, it not only denies racial and ethnic difference,

but also denies the fact that these differences result in social inequalities (Bonilla-Silva

and Doane 2003; Bonilla-Silva 1997). John's neoliberal discourse that if the kids had access to white elite sports, they would be able to lift themselves out of poverty puts the burden of change on the kids and denies the presence of structural processes of racist institutions and infrastructure.

Conclusion

In this chapter I looked at the material and symbolic process of access from the perspective of kids living in the inner city. I first outlined all the actors involved with getting the kids to the beach to provide context but to also demonstrate that it takes an enormous effort to get kids from the inner city to the beach. I then looked at the material process of getting from South Central to the beach using public transportation and found this to be a highly unjust process. The public transit system diverted funds away from buses that the kids from Surf Bus and their families rely on and invested in building railways that benefit predominantly higher-income whites. Combined with racist attitudes in beach communities, this has made it impossible to get to the beach within an acceptable amount of time, money, and effort. This significantly reduces access for the kids from South Central, as well as other people living in the inner-cities.

I then looked more closely at how living in South Central helped to construct the identities of the kids participating in Surf Bus so that I could then compare it to their experience at the beach. I found that the lived experience of inaccessibility among other things, like their race and family income, rendered the kids from South Central out of place. The Surf Bus program provided the kids with an opportunity that they would otherwise not have had. They had transportation to the coast for free and learned the

'code of the beach' from insiders. While granting access to the coast, Surf Bus also

helped to reproduce the beach as an exclusive, white landscape. Through the process of

whitewashing, we can see how strong racial identity is constructed by and constructs

the landscape. Teasing that out more, we can see how the landscape can serve as a

place to negotiate identity. This played a major role in the experience of the Mexican

American kids. They were forced to confront their own identities and choose if they

wanted to change or not, which often is seen more as a process of moving with the

times, rather than moving towards whiteness.

In many ways, programs like Surf Bus inadvertently help perpetuate the

neoliberal process of the state by acting as a social safety net. Access to free and open

spaces is a social right that is denied to people of color living in the inner city. A Place

Called Home and Surf Bus are ameliorating these structural inequalities that the city and

state should actually be taking care of from a social and environmental justice

perspective. Because non-profits exist, the state does not have to deal with these

problems. That said, programs like Surf Bus, while offering a fun experience for kids,

cannot create access in a lasting, meaningful way for kids from the inner-cities.

Ultimately, the kids were tourists in a white, middleclass, normative, everyday, taken-

for-granted experience.

CHAPTER 7

MALIBU

In this chapter I explore how the material and discursive formation of boundaries

within the landscape contributes to the construction of access. I do this by looking at

how the Malibu coast has been constructed and contested by the state of California, the

City of Malibu, beachfront homeowners, and organizations who promote public access.

I argue that people construct access through the enforcement of boundaries within the

landscape.

While there is an abundant literature on the social construction and production

of the landscape (Cosgrove 1988; Rose 1993; Mitchell 1996; Gold and Revill 2000;

Daniels et al 2011), there has been less research linking it to access. Trudeau (2006) and

Phillips (2000) do a nice job of linking the landscape to exclusion which is intertwined

with access, though neither specifically extended their argument to access. Therefore,

in this chapter I make a direct link between boundary-making/enforcing/patrolling in

the landscape and access. The key process is boundary making as an exclusionary

practice. I also hope to convey that the assumingly banal practice of exclusion among

the wealthy is highly complex and can be untangled using a critical cultural geographic

understanding of identity and the active construction and maintenance of boundaries.

To further understand the discursive and material formations of boundaries in

the landscape I draw on Sibley's (1995) work on bodies and spaces of exclusion.   I use

Malibu as an example of how the construction of the landscape relates to access. I am

specifically interested in the different strategies that people use to gain, or thwart,

access to the coast. In chapter four, I described Malibu's socio-geographic history to demonstrate how it has come to be represented both as an exclusionary space as well as an icon of Los Angeles. I continue with Malibu in this chapter by closely examining how individuals have become invested in constructing access to this landscape. Specifically, I locate the material formation of boundaries in the landscape (i.e., signs, landscaping, break walls, homes) that construct it as an exclusive space. I then explore the discourses (i.e., environmental, wealth, privacy) that are used to justify claims of inclusion and exclusion. The main actors involved in this story are Malibu residents and the City of Malibu, as well as a host of organizations attempting to contest the privatization of public land including the California Coastal Commission, Los Angeles Urban Rangers, and Surfrider Foundation. Looking at Malibu at this microscale illuminates the everyday practices and challenges that go into making, policing, and contesting boundaries and bodies as well as how people attempt to transgress the actually existing landscape.

This chapter is organized as follows: first, I provide a brief review of the theoretical perspectives that I am using to understand the construction of boundaries and landscape. I then locate the specific laws that explain coastal access and set up the players who are involved in the shaping of this landscape. I then draw on my experience in the field, interviews and archival data to understand how the landscape, boundaries and access are being actively constructed and contested. Then I discuss how certain groups try to contest these boundaries followed by an overall discussion of the material-discursive construction of boundaries, landscape, and access.

Theoretical Framework

I am interested in understanding how the construction of Malibu, materially and discursively contributes to the public's ability to access it. I draw on Sasha Davis' work on material-discursive formations as a frame. Davis explains that:

> given that a particular material landscape gives rise to multiple
> conceptualizations, there are almost inevitably different opinions about
> how the material landscape should be maintained, changed, and
> governed…between the imagined landscape and the material landscape,
> is power. While everyone may have a unique version of what a place
> ought to be, there is only one site. Power then dictates which version of
> place gets to be produced (612).

I am particularly interested in seeing how power is manifested through the landscape in Malibu. What is interesting in the case of Malibu is that the beach front homeowners use their power to create an imagined landscape that contradicts the real, legally designated space – usually the law is on the side of the privileged and wealthy. The homeowners have more social and economic power, so their version of the landscape is the one that gets produced. They do this materially by creating physical boundaries around the landscape to exclude the public (Blakely and Snyder 1997; Fraser 1997; Low 2003; Davis 2006).

While the Malibu coast is not a private beach, the homeowners treat it as if it is by employing practices typical in private communities. Phillips (2000) explains that private communities have only a few restricted entry points, and often make use of

"natural" barriers like hillsides or water, which is precisely what the homeowners in Malibu do. Therefore another way of understanding the construction of Malibu is by applying theory on private spaces or what Phillips calls landscapes of defence.

To further understand the discourse behind these boundaries, for the individual, I turn to David Sibley (1995) who has carefully examined exclusionary spaces. Sibley draws on psychoanalysis theory (Perin 1988; Kristeva 1982) to interrogate the "relationships between the self and the social and material world" (5). Informed by Julia Kristeva, Sibley (1995) explains that in western society, the sense of borders is a social construct developed in infancy when the child learns that the inner self is pure and the outer self (bodily residues) is defiled. The child's distaste for the defiled outer self "assumes wider cultural significance" in which he/she learns to defile "dirt, oil, ugliness, and imperfection" (7) and eventually social difference. This "urge to make separations, between clean and dirty, ordered and disordered, 'us' and 'them'… is encouraged in western cultures, creating feelings of anxiety because such separations can never be fully achieved" (Sibley 1995: 8). This is reminiscent of Said's (1978) thesis of Orientalism, on the construction of the self and other. This perspective can also be used to understand the construction of "pure" landscapes which the home owners of Malibu try to maintain, but never really can. People try as hard as they can to maintain these separations, which, if combined with power manifests in exclusion which limits access by design.

While Sibley argues that these "exclusions in social space…may be unnoticed features of urban life," it is "the fact that exclusions take place routinely, without people

noticing which is a particularly important aspect of the problem" (xiv). This is particularly the case in Malibu. The exclusionary practices of boundary making by homeowners is seen as routine, normal, and appropriate which go unquestioned by the majority of society. This is where it is useful to think about the relationship between exclusion and access. While Sibley talks extensively about exclusion, access is more or less an assumed externality. I find this problematic because when talking about access, the narrative places the problem on the person(s) who doesn't have access without interrogating the reason *why* they don't have access; whereas, discussions of exclusion tend to trace the point source of the person(s) doing the excluding.   Therefore, I attempt to shift the anonymity of access to a purposeful act of exclusion.

Finally, while Malibu is often represented as an essential form[16] in the mainstream, it is actually a landscape that is always in the process of being made, destroyed, and challenged both literally and symbolically. This perspective of a dynamic landscape is informed by Cresswell (2003) who argues that a common critique of existing (landscape) research is that scholars treat landscapes as fixed and purely visual. Cresswell (2003) cautions geographers not to approach the landscape as if it were static or a "text already written" (270), but to see it in relation to practice and challenges cultural geographers of landscape to "produce geographies that are lived, embodied, practiced; landscapes which are never finished or complete, not easily framed or read" (280). Therefore, I look at the practices involved in the making and remaking of this landscape.

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[16] See Chapter 4 on Malibu's iconic representation of the beach

To summarize, I am looking at the material and discursive construction of the Malibu coastal landscape to better understand how it translates into access. I argue that these boundaries are made and transgressed through material-discursive practices. I draw on the Sibley's psychoanalytic perspective to understand the deep rooted motivation behind boundary construction as well as Phillips (2000) work on landscapes of defence. I use these theoretical perspectives to not only understand the process of exclusion, but access as well which has been understudied as an active process of power and social-relations. This rich theoretical work on exclusion can be used to politicize access.

The Players

The first group of people involved in this study are beachfront homeowners in Malibu, particularly those who have houses along Broad Beach and Carbon Beach, two of the most exclusive stretches of beach in Malibu and home to handfuls of celebrities. These parts of Malibu have a history of illegal, exclusionary practices of boundary making to control public access (Garcia 2005). The City of Malibu is also implicated in this discussion because they are the ones who are responsible for regulating land use, and maintaining the existing boundaries.

The next group involved in this story is the California Coastal Commission who is the governing body on coastal development. The city of Malibu has to go through the Commission first if they want to plan any development along the coast. The Commission ensures that the California Constitution and the Coastal Act of 1976 are upheld in all circumstances.

The last two groups represent the public and contest the illegal boundaries set uby homeowners. The first of these two is the Surfrider Foundation, a nonprofit environmental organization established in 1984 at Surfrider beach in Malibu (Figure 7.1). It claims to be "dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans, waves and beaches for all people, through conservation, activism, research and education" (Surfrider 2010). This organization has chapters all around the U.S. coast with 50,000 members as well as many international chapters (surfrider.org). While the size and scope of this organization has grown since its founding, it has maintained local grassroots efforts. Surfrider has had multiple achievements in taking on institutions that threaten the environment and public access of coastal spaces. For example, in 1991, Surfrider won the second largest Clean Water Act lawsuit in American history against pulp mills in Humboldt County that had over 40,000 law violations (Surfrider 2010). They led major projects and campaigns at the national level, while at the same time organizing beach cleanups and local activities to spread coastal environmental awareness locally. The Malibu/West Los Angeles chapter has been particularly vigilant in maintaining access to the coast in areas that have historically been accessible.

Figure 7.1 Surfrider Beach Clean-up. Photo: Surfrider.com

The second of these two groups is the Los Angeles Urban Rangers, founded in

2004. They develop field guides, kits, hikes, and interpretive tools to help the public

explore every day urban spaces including beaches (LA Urban Rangers 2010). In 2007

they began leading field trips to Malibu called Malibu Safaris in which they guided

people to hidden yet public access points to Malibu beaches. They constructed a map of

these points that can be accessed for free online in both English and Spanish (Figure
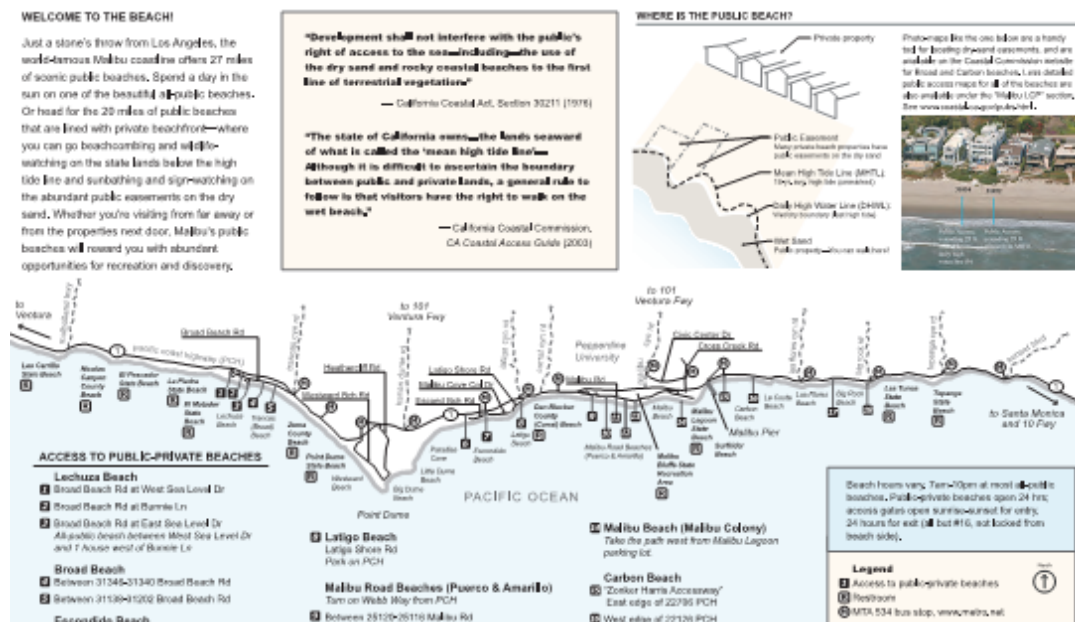
7.2).

Figure 7.2 Map of beach access from LA Urban Rangers. Map:
laurbanrangers.com

Some of their other field sites include Hollywood Boulevard, the LA County Fair, and the

concrete LA River. The Rangers are made up of 5 women and 2 men with diverse

backgrounds in geography, architecture, environmental education, history, biology,

performance art, and national park management.

The Rangers are dressed like park rangers, complete with khaki colored ranger hats which give them a more credible looking image though they are not actually affiliated with any park ranger service or city office (Figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3 LA Urban Rangers. Photo: laurbanrangers.com

These are the main players involved in this story, though there are others who have been involved as well. There are different agendas between them and moments of conflict as they contest the construction of boundaries as a way to control access to the coast. Now, I want to turn to the California Coastal Act which defines where the public beaches are and how they can be accessed.

California Coastal Act

As described in chapter four, Malibu has a long socio-geographic history of exclusion and desire. It is one of the most aesthetically pleasing and iconic landscapes in Los Angeles. It has a couple of obviously public beaches, but has many more hidden low-occupancy beaches that would be appealing to a variety of people, yet are predominantly inaccessible. While the law is on the side of the public, beachfront homeowners have constructed the landscape to be exclusionary to the public by manipulating legal boundaries. Below is a review of the coastal law that is being pushed by beachfront homeowners and homeowners' associations.

Under California law, public use of the beach between the low and mean high tide line known as the tidelands is protected under the public trust doctrine (Duncan 2004). According to the California Coastal Act of 1976 ("Coastal Act"), in addition to carrying out Article X, Section four of the California Constitution[17] ("Constitution"):

> …maximum access, which shall be conspicuously posted, and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse (Article 2, Section 30210).

Furthermore, most homes are required to have either a vertical (from the public roadway to the beach) or lateral (dry sand along the width of their property) easement. The condition for a lateral easement generally occurs when a homeowner would like to add an addition to the home, in which case, the Coastal Commission allows for the development if it results in improving public access in some way. As of 1983, new developments must include a vertical easement, with a few exceptions (Article 2, Section 30212).

The Coastal Act not only sees access as the ability to get to and walk on the beach, it also recognizes that the simply looking at the ocean while driving along the coast or pulling off the road is also a public right as indicated in Article 2, Section 30251:

> The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development

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[17] See Chapter One.

shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and

scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to

be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and,

where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded

areas. New development in highly scenic areas … shall be subordinate to

the character of its setting.

Finally, Article 2 Section 30213 explains that, "lower cost visitor and recreational

facilities shall be protected, encouraged, and, where feasible, provided. Developments

providing public recreational opportunities are preferred."

These sections in the Coastal Act are the most ignored by homeowners and the

city. Below I discuss in detail how homeowners have strategically manipulated the state

delineated boundaries to control the access of the public. These bounding practices are

inscribed on and construct the landscape in a way that deters and confounds the public

from knowing about access ways. Below I first detail material practices, followed by a

section on the discursive implications of these practices. I then look at how the public

has attempted to contest the actually existing landscape to promote access. I borrow

the phrase "actually existing" from the literature on neoliberalism (Brenner and

Theodore 2002) to emphasize that the landscape exists in a different form than has

been established by the State of California, and it is this actually existing manifestation

that the players are dealing with, not the ideal articulated by California law.

Material Practices of Exclusion

While living in Los Angeles between the years of 1999 and 2005, I regularly went to Surfrider Beach in Malibu. In L.A., when you tell someone you went to the beach in Malibu, the typical response is "did you go to Zuma or Surfrider?" These are the two main beaches that the public goes to. Both spaces have parking lots and parking along the PCH. Zuma, the larger of the two, has numerous restrooms, several parking lots and concession stands that have been operating for years, as can be seen in the iconic 1980's film, Valley Girl (Figure 7.4 and 7.5). This beach is usually pretty crowded during the summer, with several beach camps for kids.

Figure 7.4 Concession stand at Zuma Beach. Photo: M.Palma

These are the beaches that I would always go to since they were the easiest to get to from the San Fernando Valley, where I lived. I never knew that I could actually go to any of the other beaches in Malibu; I thought they were all private beaches until I heard about the David Geffen case, which provided my initial interest in this research topic.

In 2005 David Geffen, music executive, film producer and co-founder of DreamWorks film studio,

Figure 7.5 Zuma Beach. Photo: M.Palma

opened up the gates to a vertical easement along the side of his Carbon Beach home from the road to the beach to allow the public to access the beach. This access way was thirty years in the making. In 1983, Geffen received permission from the Coastal Commission to extend his beachfront home, under the condition that he provides a vertical easement for the public to get to the beach (Davidson 2005). He never followed through on the easement and as Malibu beaches became more and more exclusive, Geffen became the target of a lawsuit brought on by the non-profit organization Access for All.

During the years leading up to the Geffen case, beachfront homeowners started putting up signs to deter the public from getting to the beach. These signs would be posted all along the roads where the public usually parked to get to the beach. The most common signs read: No Parking, No Trespassing, Private Drive, and Private Property: Keep Out. Along the beach, there were similar signs posted on the public beach warning people to stay away. Additionally, some homeowners associations hired security guards to patrol the beach on ATVs (all-terrain vehicles). The guards would force the public off of the public beach. In 2003, Sara Wan, a Malibu resident and Coastal Commissioner exercised her right to sit on the public sand in Broad Beach, but was soon approached by a security guard demanding that she leave. When she refused, he called the police. Five sheriffs showed up and she had to educate them on the public's legal right to be on the beach. She also had with her a map of the various lateral easements that she was permitted to be on (Davidson 2005).

In 2005, the Coastal Commission demanded that the homeowners remove the illegal signs and stop the prowling security guards. This was in direct violation of Article 2, Section 30210. Most homeowners complied, but have since put the signs up again. It is nearly

impossible to find the access ways because of these confusing signs. While I was in the field, I noticed several streets would have a sign reading 'Beach Access', and right below it, there would be another sign that says 'private drive', as well as 'no parking,' so it was a mystery as to how to get to the beach (Figure 7.6). After finally locating the access ways, I found them to be locked most of the time (Figure 7.7).

Figure 7.6 Confusing signs in Malibu. Photo: M.Palma

Figure 7.7 Locked and gated public access way. Photo: M.Palma

In 2006, the homeowners found another way to thwart the public from accessing the public beach. A windsurfer at Broad Beach contacted the Surfrider Foundation because he saw land moving machines dredging the sand from the public beach and piling up onto the home owners' private property creating artificial dunes (Figure 7.8).

This was far worse than the use of illegal signs and even security guards because it dramatically changed the landscape and was directly stealing from the public. Broad Beach got its name because of its vastly broad shoreline. Today, it is virtually nonexistent. Surfrider got the Coastal Commission involved and had the homeowners stop creating artificial dunes immediately, but much of the

Figure 7.8 Artificial sand dunes in Broad Beach. Photo: cityprojectca.org

damage was already done. Taking sand away from the tidelands and building up sand dunes increased erosion and shrunk the shoreline. The shore line naturally changes, but done mechanically, the result was increased scouring of the shore.

Then, in 2008, homeowners reconstructed the landscape once again. It is plausible but unclear if their previous manipulation of the landscape influenced their most recent dilemma. The tide not only changes daily, but seasonally as well, such that the mean high tide line tends to be further inland during the winter. Combined with anticipated above average rainfall, this caused Broad Beach homeowners to be

concerned about possible flooding. So they built a seawall made of massive sand bags, many of them the size of tires you find on tractors (Figure 7.9).

Figure 7.9 Large sand bags in Broad Beach. Photo: M.Palma

During this time, the Coastal Commission took a "wait and see" approach since the homeowners were supposedly shipping in sand for the sandbags rather than using the public sand, and it

Figure 7.10 Sand bags coming apart in Broad Beach. Photo: M.Palma

was true that their homes were being threatened. Unfortunately, the sandbags could not withstand the power of the waves constantly crashing into them and tearing them apart (Figure 7.10). The sandbags proved to be useless and the waves scoured the beach even more, increasing erosion.

In 2010, the homeowners of Broad Beach received an emergency permit from the Coastal Commission to put up a temporary rock revetment. Massive boulders were brought in and piled in front and on top of the sand bags (Figure 7.11)

While this wall is supposed to be a temporary solution, it is already having a major effect on the shore line. As the waves crash into the wall, they scour away the

Figure 7.11 Rock revetments in Broad Beach, 2011. Photo: M.Palma

sand in front of it quickly eroding the entire shoreline. According to several people I interviewed, including people with the Surfrider, this has started to change the pattern of the waves causing more erosion further down the shoreline into Zuma.

While in the field, I attempted to access Broad Beach on several occasions. Approaching it from Zuma is the easiest way to get there, since there are very few access points along the road. However, I never got very far down the beach because there was too little space between the crashing waves and the rock revetment (Figure7.12).

Figure 7.12 Rock revetments in Broad Beach, 2011. Photo: M.Palma

One time, as the tide came in, I ran out of sand to walk along and was forced to scamper along the rocks until I found a makeshift sandbag staircase that led to higher and safer ground that was also private property (Figure 7.13).

Figure 7.13 Sandbag stairs in Broad Beach, 2011. Photo: M.Palma

The residents also installed a concrete path along one of the vertical easements with steps leading down to the beach (Figure 7.14), which, like the rock revetment, is supposed to be temporary.

Figure 7.14 Concrete steps. Photo: M.Palma

It is only effective during low tide, because during high tide the bottom three steps are submerged under water and there was slippery algae growing on them within the first few months that it was constructed (Figure 7.15a and b).

Figure 7.15a Water covering bottom steps of access way. Photo: M.Palma

Figure 7.15b Algae growing on bottom platform. Photo: M.Palma

Neither the rock revetment, nor the concrete walkway, appears temporary at all. I discussed this rock revetment with Nancy Hastings the regional representative for Surfrider and she had this to say:

> since it's not safe [the rock revetment] they're [Broad Beach
>
> homeowners] gonna have to now build this massive concrete step
>
> structure up and over the revetment including like rebar and handle bars
>
> for the public because they have to by law provide public access. So they
>
> create this monstrosity and how can we as human beings just look at that
>
> and go no no no, you have to take it now? We know that the people
>
> involved in getting that emergency rock wall put in there know that the

bigger, badder, more permanent looking it is the harder it's going to be to convince the decision makers to take it out.

Furthermore, the use of vegetation along the rock revetment also helps to make the new structure of the coast look permanent, and even natural. Many homes have put in ice plant which is a non-native species from South Africa brought in to reduce erosion. This plant spreads out and grows very quickly, making it look like it has been there for a long time (Figure 7.16a and b).

Figure 7.16a Ice plant on dunes. Photo: M.Palma

Figure 7.16b Ice plant and sandbags. Photo: M.Palma

This also makes the dunes appear natural. Atop the bluff of the rock revetment, people have significant investments in substantial new landscaping, which in no way looks temporary. It is going to be very difficult to change this landscape back to what it was. Moreover, according to the Coastal Act, there are several easements that are dictated by vegetation, meaning the public has access to dry sand up to the vegetation. So the home owners plant vegetation that then encroaches on public land, pushing the public further back into the tidelands.

While I was walking along the beach, I encountered one sign that said "environmentally sensitive area" (Figure 7.17 a and b). The sign stands behind two beach chairs and a rusty radio nestled in a plot of ice plant.

Figure 7.17a "environmentally sensitive area" sign. Photo: M.Palma

The sign suggests that this is a nature preserve, yet the fact that the homeowners clearly recreate in this area, and the fact that ice plant is a non-native species, contradict the intentions of the sign, it is simply another way of deterring people from the public beach. What is more, this sign was sitting on a dune that was created using sandbags that were falling apart, leaving strings of plastic along the sand and in the ocean which is hazardous to sea birds and marine life.

Figure 7.17b "environmentally sensitive area" sign. Photo: M.Palma

Broad Beach's conflicts with access will likely finally be taken care of when the beach is completely drowned. The homeowners claim that they are going to bring in sand to replenish the beach, but that will have to be done every few years and will cost thousands of dollars (msnbc 2005). It is unlikely that the replenishment will ever even happen.

Discourses of Exclusion

The above material practices of exclusion are supported by three major discourses including 1) a right to privacy, given the amount of money that people pay to live there 2) The homeowners are better stewards of the landscape 3) The public can use the other beaches. These material and discursive representations result in the (re)construction of boundaries that are meant to exclude the public.

With reference to the first discourse, I interviewed a Malibu real estate agent who said that one of his clients just rented a house out for $90,000.00/month, which he admitted was outrageous, but then he added:

> You know, if you pay 10 million dollars for a 30 foot strip of beach, would
>
> you want someone sitting in your back yard? I mean it's the same thing,
>
> sitting in your backyard at the beach or sitting in your back yard up in the
>
> canyon. And you only have a 30 foot stretch of beach, your lot is 30 feet
>
> wide 100 feet deep, and you pay 10 million bucks, you would like to enjoy
>
> your privacy.

I then asked him why homeowners would purchase land that shares a boundary with a public beach and he responded: "It isn't. It isn't a public beach. It's a private beach. It is a private beach. They [homeowners] own up to the mean high tide and the mean high tide is as far as the water runs up. They [the public] can laterally cross it, they can't sit on it; it is a private beach."

I later asked Sara Wan, a Coastal Commissioner if this was an accurate, legal representation of the beach and she said, "there is no truth to that, and if you not only look at the California Constitution but look at the Coastal Act, it does not allow for private beaches, that's not what we have." She went on to mock the claim "'well, I've paid all this money to be here and therefore I don't want the public near my house.' 'Excuse me, this is public land!' And it's very important that the public have the right to be there, that's the place that the public can go to recreate that is not expensive."

In a news article, Linda Locklin, a Coastal Commissioner is quoted as saying: "Most of us live in cities and most of us have a sidewalk in front of our houses, and the public goes on that sidewalk at all hours of the day… the rest of us have all come up with mechanisms to cope" (msnbc 2005). Locklin gets a the fact people who live in Malibu are trying to avoid the interaction with the public, and are therefore trying to control who is welcome and who is not.

With the discourse of privacy, there is an assumption that everyone and everything has a price, and they have paid it to get to see the ocean every day without having to see any city people. In response to this Fraser (1997) explains that 'privacy'

has too often been used to "delimit the boundaries of the public sphere in ways that disadvantage subordinate groups" (88).

The second discourse linked to the material reconstruction of the beach landscape is that the homeowners are better stewards of the coast that the "public". One beachfront homeowner claimed that the "public is not always respectful of keeping the beach clean, most of the residents are. And they (public) are also not respectful of following the rules about game fishing, scuba diving." In response, Jenny Price, explained:

> First of all these people live next to public land. It would be as if people
>
> living near Griffith Park said 'people are leaving trash along the trails
>
> across the street so we need to cut off those trails.' Or me saying, 'oh
>
> people are using the public sidewalk in front of my house and
>
> occasionally end up in my courtyard, so we need to close off those
>
> sidewalks.' People live next to public land down there and there are
>
> costs. There are huge advantages living next to these beautiful beaches
>
> and there are also costs and some tiny minority of the visitors are going
>
> to behave badly as are some of the people who live right next door to the
>
> public beaches.

Other residents have said that the public leaves behind trash and defecates on the beach (msnbc 2005). When I shared this argument with Price she then said:

> As far as destroying the environment, which is what I have heard a lot,
>
> well these are people who live 100 yards or less from the high tide line,

and they're telling us thats whats really destroying the environment

down there is people walking back and forth through their enormous

estates, so I find that hard to sympathize with. Often Dune restoration

means they are re-vegetating the public land. Basically what it boils

down to is they don't want to share the public lands.

This claim justifies the bounding of space to protect it and the homeowners from the

unwanted other (Sibley 1995; Said), which I discuss in more detail below.

The third discourse related to the material (re)making of the exclusionary beach

is that there are plenty of other beaches for the public, so leave the rest of the beaches

alone. One home owner said that the beaches are "very plentiful in Malibu including

Surfrider all the way up to Zuma beach, there are many miles of beach for the public to

enjoy. You don't have to intrude on the private neighborhood beaches."

In response to this, Sara Wan said

To say 'well you can go to the big public beaches' Yes, you can go to the

big public beaches but as population increases those beaches get more

and more crowded and that's a limiting factor in terms of the ability to

get to them. There's no reason why they can't have the same experience

walking on a beach that's not crowded and the fact that it's in front of

somebody's home I liken to the fact that, like I said if you buy next to a

park you're going to have the public there.

Robert Garcia, attorney and Executive Director, Counsel, and founder of The City

Project, a non-profit legal and policy advocacy organization based in Los Angeles,

California, had a similar response:

> First of all people have a right to go to any public place they want to.
>
> Two, people who live in coveted areas like along the beach have no right
>
> to exclude others, so there's absolutely no basis for someone who lives at
>
> the beach in Malibu saying 'why do those people have to come here, why
>
> can't they go to their own beach or Santa Monica which is closer to
>
> them?' The short answer is that the entire coast of California is public and
>
> it's a condition of the California joining the union that the beaches
>
> remain public so if somebody living at the beach doesn't like the folks
>
> coming to the beach, they can move.

When I interviewed the Mayor, he admitted that he prefers not to go to the larger

beaches himself. He said:

> You have to have those spread out, hard to get to beaches because when
>
> you finally get to one of those beaches the reward is a clean, uncluttered
>
> beach without a 1000 towels and beer cans and baby diapers and all the
>
> things that get left on the more urban beaches... you go to Surfrider
>
> beach, you have the pier you have 3 lifeguard towers, you have the
>
> bathrooms, shower facilities, I mean it's like Waikiki there. So I
>
> personally like the more open beaches, I don't need to see a ton of
>
> people there. I can make it into the water and out of the water without a

lifeguard, but some of these conveniences that people are accustomed to

in the urban settings of Venice or Santa Monica, we do provide them in

Malibu, but we also have some that they don't have in Santa Monica or

Venice and these are these secluded, pocket beaches up and down the

coast that you have access to, legally you can go play in them.

The trouble is that these pocket beaches are easily accessible for the people who live

next to them and a complete mystery to everyone else. Of the 27 miles of coastline in

Malibu, which accounts for a quarter of the entire Los Angeles coast, 20 miles are

completely blocked off to the public. The public doesn't have access to these less

populated beaches because they are unknown and far away. Additionally, these

"pocket beaches" are all up and down the coast in Malibu, but the public can't get to

those even though they technically have "access" to them, so they have to drive all the way to the Ventura County if they want to go to a less populated beach (Figure7.18). When the Mayor says that the public has access to these "pocket

Figure 7.18 Leo Carillo Beach, Malibu. Photo: M.Palma

beaches" he doesn't see the relational aspect of access at all. Meaning, access is not

some disembodied thing that the public can take or not. Access is mediated by those

who have power over that which is trying to be accessed. Thus I argue that the

homeowners actually are participating in/practicing "anti-access."

These material-discursive exclusionary practices are new forms of destroying (and remaking) access while at the same time making (and destroying) urban nature. The homeowners use their socio-economic power, which has clearly influenced the City of Malibu, as indicated by the mayor's comments to relegate the public to a few parceled out spaces through the destruction of public access ways and the public land. In doing this, the home owners are able to design their own urban nature through the destruction of the actual natural landscape, as indicated with the construction of a breakwall, and the building of homes and extensions to existing homes. Moreover, the making of nature is also symbolized by the desire to be away from the city. The mayor implies this when he juxtaposes the excluded "pocket beaches" of Malibu to the "urban beaches" with baby diapers. He sees Malibu as a more "natural" place because it is doesn't have people from the city there. Furthermore, his mention of "baby diapers" is in all likelihood a reference to low-income Latinas who are stereotyped as having "too many babies" in Los Angeles. The reference also describes someone who "doesn't know how to use the beach "correctly" which as I have suggested in previous chapters is code for low-income people of color.

The Mayor and other residents who use the discourse that the public can drive out to the beaches near the county line if they really want to go to a less crowded beach, despite the fact that the public has the right to any beach, are completely disconnected from the everyday experience of people who do not have the luxury to drive 40 or 50 miles out of the city to go to a less crowded beach.

Contesting Space

Combatting these exclusionary strategies is difficult. Both of the groups

discussed below attempt to maintain and/or improve access in Malibu using a variety of

strategies that contest the landscape as it is being constructed by homeowners. They

are also actively contesting the three material-discursive practices that the home

owners deploy. I'll first discuss Surfrider's approach. Because of the limited resources

and staff afforded to the Surfrider Foundation, they really rely on the public to contact

them if there is a problem with access. They don't have the means to monitor the

coast. Once they do realize that there is a limitation on access, they will report the

problem to the Coastal Commission, but their most powerful response is to raise

awareness through campaigns that reach the public, and when necessary get involved in

legal litigation. They will do this usually at their weekly beach clean-ups or other events,

getting the media involved, and making campaign-themed merchandise to give away or

sell at their weekly events. For example, one of their successful campaigns in Malibu

was called "No Poo in the Bu," to encourage the clean water reforms in Malibu. There

were several stickers and T-shirts made to spread awareness. They also keep all of their

members informed through email, social/web media, and paper bulletins.

Surfrider is actively involved with the issue of access at Broad Beach since they

realize that this is a place where the public has long had access, and no longer does.

Their strategy to improve access is through having volunteers take pictures of the

blocked off access ways and sharing them with the Coastal Commission. Like Surfrider,

the Coastal Commission does not have the resources to monitor beach access, so if

Surfrider was not constantly reporting these issues to the Coastal Commission, they would probably go on without any penalty. Surfrider is often the first to address these issues because they have a direct link to surfers and beachgoers who experience the beach regularly and know when something is not quite right.

When I interviewed Nancy Hastings, director of the Los Angeles Surfrider chapters, she explained the difficulties they've had over the years challenging issues of access in Malibu. Latigo Beach is one in particular that she regrets. This was an excellent surf spot, but started getting blocked by signs and gates. Hastings spent more than a decade trying to fight the homeowner's association and the City of Malibu. During that time use of this beach significantly dropped off to the point that many of the incoming members of Surfrider never actually surfed there and thus didn't have the same kind of investment in that space. Hastings eventually had to let that fight go and move on to other projects with Surfrider.

One surf spot that is extremely difficult to get to in Malibu is Point Dume because there are only five parking spaces located high on a bluff to access this beach. There are other ways to get to the beach, but they have been blocked off by gates for years. Only homeowners living in this area have a key to the gates.   When I asked Hastings about what Surfrider has tried to do about Point Dume, she said Surfrider "decided not to touch that one with a 10 foot pole. It is private property, you can get to the beach, but you have to get there by way of Paradise Cove and pay 20 dollars or like Laird Hamilton park at Zuma and stand-up paddle all the way in so no it's not fair for people." Hastings said that Surfrider only takes on issues of access in areas where access

has historically been established but is not being threatened, and unfortunately, Point

Dume has always been unreachable by the public. It would be a long, arduous battle to

gain more direct access from Point Dume, when the Mayor himself is invested in

keeping it off limits. He told me that while he does not have a key to the gates, he does

have friends that do who live there and give him the key which he said he has "earned."

Furthermore, the founder of Surfrider was very critical of how exclusionary Point

Dume was and as a result, he doesn't surf there. He explained:

> People who got the keys to the gate for Point Dume, they all know each
>
> other and they're very specific about their attitudes towards outsiders
>
> and the idea of going to a surf spot, given my accomplishments with
>
> surfing and the things I've been able to do to the benefit of the surf
>
> experience, to paddle out to that place and have people give me that
>
> outsider look. That happened several years ago.

In this sense, Point Dume is a fortress that has been so heavily guarded for years, that it

is impenetrable even by the founder of the Surfrider Foundation. The city is no help

given the fact that the Mayor actively participates in this exclusion as well.

Furthermore, because the oceanfront homes on Point Dume are actually on sea cliffs,

buried deep in a gated community, there are no public easements, so it is much more

difficult to use the law to gain to access here.

The Los Angeles Urban Rangers are another group trying to increase public

access to the beach. The Rangers came up with one of the most creative strategies to

develop public awareness through the Malibu Safari. Price, co-founding member of the

Rangers, explained that "there's been tons of legal battles and opinion pieces on this, but what people haven't done is just take people to the beaches and show them, so that's just a slot that we walked into." This material transgression of space is a direct response to the material practices of the home owners who try to camouflage the public land.

The Urban Rangers put together field guides, and maps in English and Spanish that illustrated the boundaries between public and private property. Keeping with the safari theme, they had a host of activities including "Trailblazing the Public Private Boundary, Access Way Hunt, and Public Easement Potluck." They said that they regularly were confronted by security guards who would tell them that they were trespassing on private property even though they were not.

When I asked Price where the idea for this came from she said that the Malibu Safari came out of a real desire from the public to see and experience these spaces. Price said that the Safari was intended to be a "quirky little two week program" to show people how to get to the beach in Malibu, but they ended up with 450 people on their waiting list and quickly realized:

> There was this incredible craving, people knew these beaches were here,
>
> but they weren't really sure where they were or how to find them and
>
> they were timid about what to do once they were down there… we took
>
> ultimately hundreds and hundreds of people on these safaris and what
>
> we got was people who were just really really hungry to know where
>
> these beaches were.

The Rangers claim that they are not activists. Price explained "I think that says a lot about Malibu the fact that showing people where the public beach is considered activism." The focus of the Malibu Safaris was to show people how to get to the public beach, not confront homeowners, who the Rangers referred to as "the people who live next to the public beach." This was a discursive effort to shift focus away from the home owners. The Rangers wanted the experience to be about the beach. They insisted that they were not there to confront the home owners. However, two-thirds of the time, the Rangers were confronted by homeowners who didn't approve of what they were doing. At times, the Rangers were even screamed at by homeowners. Price's point is significant; the simple act of going to a public beach is controversial in Malibu because of the decades of exclusion, it is seen as activism.

The efforts among these two groups demonstrate the public desire to have access to the coast, but the difficulty they confront in trying to capture that access. These efforts also demonstrate how access is literally and symbolically articulated in the landscape. The Surfrider Foundation has a more discursive tactic of contesting space through verbally speaking out against the practice of the home owners, while the Urban Ranges have a much more material form of transgressing the coast by literally crossing the artificial boundaries constructed by home owners. Furthermore, Davis explains that "groups working to make changes to places need to recognize that the social practices affecting place reproduction can be redirected by changing the discursive construction of what a place is and what can legitimately be done to it" (612). Clearly, this is a difficult challenge when the discursive landscape is so materially bound.

Discussion

The material and discursive formation of boundaries and practices within the landscape contributes to the construction of access. Transgressing this exclusive landscape materially and discursively is met with resistance from the beachfront homeowners and City of Malibu. The homeowners use a variety of material practices that discursively exclude the public, and in doing so they are actively determining the public's access. These practices demonstrate that the homeowners are collectively invested in constructing the coast as a "private community," a landscape of defence separating themselves from the public who represent the urban space which they are trying to escape (Phillips 2000). To maintain this boundary, the home owners actively destroy nature (i.e., building on the bluffs, taking sand from the public), remake it (creating sand dunes, planting vegetation) in a way that hides or removes public space. This process then relegates the public to other, more populated beaches. These are incredibly strategic practices.

Davis (2005) reminds us that "given that a particular material landscape gives rise to multiple conceptualizations, there are almost inevitably different opinions about how the material landscape should be maintained, changed, and governed" (612). This is clearly at play in Malibu where the homeowners see the beach as a "private beach" and the Rangers and Surfriders see it as a public beach that people live next to. These multiple conceptualizations are seen in the effort to construct boundaries as well as the effort to contest them through transgression. Furthermore, "while everyone may have a unique version of what a place ought to be, there is only one site. Power then dictates

which version of place gets to be produced" (Davis 2005: 612). This is also apparent in the landscape which is what makes contesting it so difficult. The homeowners clearly have social, economic, and political power to maintain their version of the landscape. Because the homeowners see the beach as a "private community" they feel justified in aggressively shaping the landscape in a way that reflects this image. For the actually existing landscape, we can see that landscape has been manipulated through the construction of boundaries to legitimize the assumption that the homeowners have a "right" to privacy and all the other discourses they use.

The material-discursive formation of the landscape is one of exclusion; of anti-access. The use of signs, landscaping, manipulation of the sand, security guards, ignoring laws on providing public easements are all material ways of creating boundaries. These material formations are discursive in that they are manifestations of how the homeowners imagine the landscape should be, which is private and exclusionary. There is a sense of entitlement that pervades all of the homeowners' practices, especially when they are physically altering the beach by creating artificial dunes. Fraser (1997) helps to explain these actions in the following quote:

> unequally empowered social groups tend to develop unequally valued cultural styles. The result is the development of powerful informal pressures that marginalize the contributions of members of subordinated groups both in everyday life contexts and in official public spheres…. Consequently, subordinated social groups usually lack equal access to the material means of equal participation (79).

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Additionally, beachfront homeowners rely on a variety of discourses to defend and legitimize their actions. These arguments include the assumption that because they paid so much for their homes, they deserve privacy; they take better care of the beach than the public; and the public can go to the high-occupancy beaches if they want to be near the ocean. These are all thinly veiled discourses of exclusion that directly limit access. Another way to think about these discourses is through a 'politics of belonging' (Trudeau 2006). Trudeau (2006) explains politics of belonging refers to the "discourses and practices that establish and maintain material-discursive boundaries that correspond to the imagined geographies of a polity and the spaces that normatively embody the polity" (422). I think this is an excellent extension of Davis (2005) argument on material discursive formations by bringing in the formation of boundaries and belonging. To this I add that the end result of these boundaries speaks directly to access. Just as someone practices exclusion, like in Malibu, someone must then be excluded or made to feel like they don't belong. This was obvious when the Urban Rangers were confronted by homeowners reprimanding them for trespassing, or when Sara Wan was asked to leave the public beach.

I also want to point out the significance of the liminal space between public space and private home in Malibu. The legal boundary line is always moving depending on the tide, time of day, and time of year. Duncan and Duncan explain that "attachment to a landscape of home has bodily, visceral, and affective components that are defensive and exclusionary but tend to remain relatively unarticulated" (169). This, combined with the adjacent public beach provides an ambiguity of landscape and self

that is worth interrogating. The "hierarchical power structure" which is at play in

Malibu, "does not like ambiguity," suggests Sibley (1995: 80). This ambiguity of the

boundary line brings discomfort to homeowners. To counter the ensuing anxiety, they

establish more stringent, fixed boundaries. Thus, it makes sense that Malibu residents

would want to dredge the pubic sand to make artificial, landscaped dunes because this

would represent a clear dividing line between public and private space. This perspective

is informed by Western ideology that is based on hierarchical binaries which privilege

order and certainty over disorder and ambiguity.

This practice can be understood through Cresswell's (2004) discussion on in-

place/out-of-place. He explains that "the use of place to produce order leads to the

unintended consequence of place becoming an object and tool of resistance to that

order – new types of deviance and transgression such as strikes and sit-ins become

possible" (103). The homeowners use the beach to impose order, a separation from

themselves and the unwanted "other." Cresswell (2004) also explains that "the clearer

the established meaning and practices of a particular place the easier it is to transgress

the expectations that come with that place" (103). This is likely why Urban Rangers

target Broad Beach, because it has had such a long history of publicized exclusivity, it is

a relatively easy target. The Rangers are making a clear statement, that the public has a

right to public land and the wealth and privilege to not get to trump that.

To go a bit deeper into the discursive nature of exclusion, "both space and

society are implicated in the construction of the boundaries of the self but that the self

is also projected onto society and onto space…. Thus the built environment assumes

symbolic importance…" (Sibley 1995: 86). People living in Malibu are invested in the status and image that comes along with living in such an exclusive space; therefore they see outsiders who want access to the landscape as a threat to their own sense of self. Particularly, "urban" people of color are suspect. Sibley explains that there "is a history of imaginary geographies which cast minorities, 'imperfect' people, and a list of others who are seen to pose a threat to the dominant group in society as polluting bodies… who are then located 'elsewhere'" (49). This is the underlying and obvious discourse concerning the public use of beaches. The public represents the defiled that does not belong in their pure space, this leads to the practice of exclusion by attempting to set boundaries. Thus, the homeowners of Broad Beach want to see themselves and their environment (including the pubic beach) as pure, and have gone to extremes to create boundaries that keep the defiled away. They would rather the public not even be on the public beach, it would seem that the signs were not enough to keep people away, so the only logical solution was to take the beach away from the public, so there would be no beach left for the public to enjoyably visit.

Finally, like Manhattan Beach, Malibu is constructed as white space, as seen in chapter four. However, there are many Latino/as that make up the landscape, and are actually responsible for physically constructing the landscape (Mitchell 1996) in a way that shapes the ideals of the wealthy. This is evident by the fact that when I was on my Malibu safari, the small streets of broad beach were lined with pickup trucks of contractors and construction workers who were almost all Latino/a. The landscapers and domestic workers are all Latino/a many of whom take a bus to Malibu. They are

clearly visible during the day, yet they are completely invisible in the geographic imagination. It is also highly likely that they are the very people who the homeowners try to keep off the beach when they seek to visit, rather than work there. Race is implicated not only by labor, but also through the representation of Malibu as an exclusive white space. This representation acts as a deterrent to the public, particularly for people of color and low income people.

Conclusion

My aim for this chapter was to look at how the material-discursive formation of boundaries within the landscape contributes to the construction of access. My argument is that people construct access through the enforcement of boundaries within the landscape. I have attempted to discursively interrogate the material practices and discourses of the beachfront homeowners to understand why they are constructing the landscape through boundary making. Indeed, Malibu's national identity as an exclusive space for the rich and famous is enforced and translated by a landscape of very visible and symbolic boundaries. These boundaries are erected to control access.

I also wanted to explore how these boundaries are contested and transgressed to demonstrate that the landscape is highly dynamic and always in the process of being made. These contestations and transgressions help to place the landscape in the realm of social justice. Indeed the landscape is imbued with power and can therefore be used as a platform to challenge existing unequal social relations, in this case access to natural open urban spaces.

Furthermore, I am making the argument that critical cultural geographers should more forcefully engage access both by linking it to the landscape as well as to the point source of exclusion. Exclusion is a manifestation of anti-access. I see this similarly to the idea that the "race problem" is only an issue for people of color, that whites are not implicated in racial struggles. Such a denial leaves the burden of equality on the shoulders of people of color, when in fact much of the "race problem" is a result of unearned advantages among whites, i.e., white privilege. The same logic can be applied to access. In terms of social equality, access to natural, public spaces does not need to be earned; it is a human right (Fraser 1997), so if access is being prevented, then we must look to who or what is preventing it so that they may be implicated in this injustice. In this way, the home owner's claims to privacy, being better stewards of the environment, and beaches elsewhere for the public no longer hold up when they are implicated as being anti-access to the public. We need to recognize that access is a social relation imbued with power. In the next chapter, the conclusion, I tie these ideas to the other empirical chapters in an effort to complete the story of access through the construction of the Los Angeles coast.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

To conclude this dissertation, I reflect on my own experience of the beach to understand why I decided to research access to the coast. I then review my findings and tie them together theoretically. I also reflect on some methodological issues that I confronted concerning my postitionality. I then finish this chapter by suggesting avenues of future research.

I spent most of my 20s living in Los Angeles off of minimum wage and tips earned as a waitress[18]. I was usually off during the day and odd days in the middle of the week, so I would go to the beach all the time. I usually went to Surfrider beach in Malibu because it was the most convenient beach to get to from my apartment in the San Fernando Valley. I would usually wait until traffic had lightened up, and then get on the 101 at about 10:30. This was perfect timing because if you got to the beach any earlier than 11 or 12, it was likely to be chilly and foggy anyway. As I indicated in earlier chapters, I loved the drive to Malibu, having grown up in the Southeast, I had never experienced physical topography like that before, and my amazement of it never wore off during the seven years that I lived there. I was surrounded by beauty, even when there were houses all around like at Manhattan Beach; they were so beautifully crafted and the lawns were bursting with roses, vines of bougainvillea, lemon trees, palm trees, gardenia, and jasmine that delighted my senses. It felt so good to be there instead of

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[18]I lived paycheck to paycheck, though I always had the safety-net of my parents who I knew could help me out financially if I ever needed it. My income covered my health insurance, car insurance, car payment, rent, bills, food and entertainment. I didn't have any dependents to support, and I had some money saved up from when I lived at home and didn't have any financial obligations. So while I had to be frugal with my money, I also benefited greatly from the privilege of being a white middle-class female.

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my cramped apartment with its meager, soot covered balcony and windows facing a freeway. Instead of the constant hum of cars, I heard the constant swell of the ocean breaking onto the shore.

Because I lived off of a waitress' income, I didn't have any money left over for expensive recreational activities or entertainment, and the beach was free (minus the cost of gas). I would go to the beach every chance I had; sometimes I would go before work and change at the restaurant right before my shift. Access to the beach greatly improved the quality of my life. I didn't have any family in California so on holidays when everyone else was with their families; I would go to the beach. The beach was my refuge when I needed to get away, it was the place I went to think, and I was comforted knowing that it was always there waiting for me. It brought me outside of myself and made me feel connected to the natural world; I saw myself as part of the coastal ecosystem. The connection I had with the ocean deepened my overall appreciation and connection to the natural world around me. So this experience supplied the foundation upon which I thought about the coast. I believe that everyone should have access to the coast. While I was living in L.A., I didn't know that all the beaches were actually public property, and I never attempted to visit any other Malibu beaches besides the large and obviously public Zuma and Surfrider. I had never thought about why I couldn't get to most of the beach in Malibu until I heard about the David Geffen case. This started me thinking about all the other beaches that I had never been to because I thought they were private. But then I realized through my research that merely getting to the beach is not the only thing standing in people's way from accessing the coast.

Major Findings

In doing this research, this is what I found. I wanted to know how the coast and access to it was materially and discursively constructed. Through my research I found that there is a complex nexus of ideologies, identities, representations, imaginations, and practices that go into the construction of the beach and access to it. Access and landscapes, like place and identity, are mutually constituted. To understand why some people, in this case, kids from South Central, don't have access to the beach, you have to look at a variety of material and discursive formations of the landscape of the beach and from the place of origin for those needing access – South Central.

First of all, people living in South Central are typically lower-income people of color who rely heavily on public transportation to get to work, school, and entertainment. There are fewer trees around, and fewer safe parks to go to or just be around in general.   There is substantial research in various disciplines that supports the notion that access to green space improves people's quality of life (Kaplan 1995, Ulrich, R.S et al. 1991, Barbosa et al. 2007, Berman et al. 2008; Gibson 2009). The inner city is much more congested with people and buildings than in the middle-class suburbs of Los Angeles. Some kids carefully navigate the streets to avoid encounters with gangs, while others treat the city as a playground, getting chased by cops and gangs. On average, it is 10 degrees warmer in the city than it is along the coast and South Central and several other inner-cities are less than twenty miles away from the beach. The roads are set up so that you could get to the beach in less than thirty minutes by automobile, so it is conceivable that people living in the inner city could go for frequent short visits to the beach whenever they had time. Echoing in my mind is something Sara Wan from

the Coastal Commission said: "It's very important that the public have the right to recreation for a lot of reasons. Not the least of which is people are entitled to escape the pressures of everyday living and if you live in the inner city those pressures are far greater than if you live on the beach in Malibu." She's right.

These differing life circumstances and urban structures are tied to a host of social, political, and economic relations that, while not the focus of my dissertation play a huge role in people's overall quality of life. And, like Wan, said, at the very least, people should have access to free open spaces. So the landscape of where someone comes from influences the degree to which they must travel to find free open, natural, safe spaces.

Moreover, the landscape a person is from also helps to shape his/her real or imagined identity. They come to embody that landscape through the mutual constitution of place and identity. Given that South Central has a reputation for being the "ghetto", those who are from there come to represent and embody the "ghetto" both through self-identification and by those of outsiders. As we saw at Manhattan Beach, people will use these representations and imagined geographies of place to exclude those who come from these places. Bodies from the inner city are seen as threatening, and the inner city is seen as threatening because of the bodies that are there. These bodies and the inner city are racialized and race alone comes to embody the inner city. Black people and Latino/as, combined with the slightest indication of being poor, are stereotyped, feared and excluded from many beaches.

The one beach where this is not an issue in terms of being unwanted is at Dockweiler Beach. Here, there are no homeowners trying to keep "people from the ghetto", aka poor blacks and Latino/as, from the beach. There are no shops of any kind, just a ghost town of a

long since leveled artist enclave now providing a habitat for the El Segundo Blue Butterfly, the

airport and petro processing plant just a few miles away and including a waste water treatment

plant. In fact, there are pretty much only blacks and Latino/as there. This landscape is then

constructed by the bodies that occupy it and the beach comes to be known as a "ghetto beach"

even though it physically, i.e., sand and water, looks like any other beach in Los Angeles. It

even has the one amenity no other Los Angeles beach has – firepits. Still the whole time I lived

in Los Angeles, I never knew this beach existed.

This beach became instrumental to this dissertation, even though I initially did not

anticipate studying it. As Said (1978) says, we often make sense of who we are by who we are

not, and in this case, had I not seen Dockweiler as a racialized landscape, I may have failed to

see how all the other beaches are incredibly racialized as well. This is also where I started to

see how practices shape the landscape (Cresswell 2004).

In this case, South Central is represented as a "ghetto," and the people from there then

embody that representation, and bring it with them to the beach which is then characterized as

ghetto from the perspective of outsiders. This description is then reinscribed through the

practices that people engage in while at the beach.

At Dockweiler, and other beaches, lower-income Latino/as are seen in the ocean with all

their clothes on, blacks from the inner city are seen bringing grills, lots of food, flashy cars, and

open tents to the beach. These practices are different from the normative white practices of

walking around in uncovered bathing suits, bringing a small snack or picnic to the beach, or

exercising. You can tell that a lot of higher-income whites at the beach live nearby because

they don't have to bring so much stuff with them; if they want food, they can go buy a snack

nearby. Whites, Latino/as, and blacks all reproduce these landscapes as racialized spaces through their practices and choice of beaches.

However, should people from the inner city choose to go to a place like Manhattan Beach, they will find it incredibly difficult. Residents of some South Central neighborhoods may be able to get to the beach n a short period of time. However, people from the inner city are unwanted at Manhattan Beach, and this is articulated through a racist transit system that makes it completely unrealistic to get to the beach using the public bus. To get from Compton to Manhattan Beach, less than 10 miles away, would entail a two hour commute including at least a mile walk one way. This is no accident. The Los Angeles Metro Transit Authority has had a history of violating the Civil Rights Act of 1965 by providing separate and unequal transportation to people of color, and these racist practices continue today. In the past, people from Manhattan Beach used their power and privilege of wealth and whiteness to persuade the MTA to stop direct service from the inner city to the beach. Even if blacks and Latino/as could get to the beach more easily, they are aware of the racist attitudes of those living at or near the beach, and would rather not go there.

Being accepted at the beach entails performing the "correct" beach etiquette. This lesson was learned by some kids from South Central who were participating in the Surf Bus program, for which I was a voluntary instructor. Though it was not Surf Bus' intention to do this, we helped to reproduce the beach as a white space and taught the kids how to act white if they wanted to be accepted at the beach – essentially we were whitewashing the kids. We didn't let the kids perform their usual beach practices, instead we forced them outside of their comfort zone by making them perform the predominantly white activity of surfing and all its

related practices of looking, talking, and acting a certain way, that most would label white (Butler 1990, Pratt 1998).

These practices of exclusion did not only happen at Manhattan Beach, but throughout many of the beaches along the coast. The most exclusive beach in Los Angeles is Malibu, where exclusion is staunchly maintained. People of color living in the inner city rarely make it out to Malibu because of the distance, but also because it is seen as such an exclusive white space, there is no reason to go there. Malibu is however, the closest beach to people living in the Valley so its beaches still attracts a crowd. These the crowds are relegated to just two beaches within the 27 mile stretch of land.

Just as South Central has a reputation that helps create a geographic imagination, Malibu does as well. Malibu is imagined both as the epitome of beach culture and exclusive playground to the rich and famous. Much of this representation stems from the surf culture that became commodified through music, film, and television. Surf and Sun movies or Beach Party movies of the 1960s played a major role in constructing the geographic imagination of the beach. These movies portrayed kids, just hanging out on the beach, flirting with the opposite sex, surfing, sunbathing, throwing beach balls during the day, and beach parties at night. Even though most of these movies threw in an anti-establishment beach bum or two, they only reproduced norms of gender, race, and sexuality. Music also played a major role in romanticizing Malibu, and California in general through thematic songs from the Beach Boys, to the constant stream of influential bands and musicians from country-folk, psychedelic rock, punk, and ska. These musicians influenced major fashion trends which also came to be associated with the beachy lifestyle. Malibu grew to icon status with brands and merchandise

that capitalized on its "cool" factor. The ways in which Malibu was and continues to be

portrayed help influence how other whites should act at the beach, thus solidifying a "code" to

the beach.

While these influences have helped create a collective imagination of Malibu as a cool,

care-free beach town, the reality is that the beaches are quite inaccessible. Malibu has been

materially and discursively constructed as an exclusive landscape at the edge of Los Angeles

since the late 1800s when Fredrik Rindge purchased the land. After he died, his wife, May

Rindge spent the rest of her life trying to keep people out. In the end she lost nearly everything

trying to keep it exclusive. Malibu as an exclusive privately owned ranch ended just before May

Rindge's passing. Before Rindge passed away, she allowed a select few to build small beach

homes in Malibu, which became known as the Malibu Colony. Since then, Malibu's landscape

has been very much constructed by the bodies that occupy it. When it was opened up to the

public, aside from a few celebrities, it mostly attracted artists, free-spirits, and people wanting

to be closer to nature and further from the city. Eventually though, the demand for property

increased in Los Angeles with population growth, and Malibu became a high-priced commodity.

An address in Malibu became a symbol of status, and people went to extremes to keep it that

way. The more exclusive something is, the more desirable it is.

While there has been constant conflict between what should be private land and what

should be public, the Coastal Act of 1976 made it very clear that all of the beaches up to the

mean high tide line are public. All along the Malibu coast there, this constantly shifting public

property line runs right up against private property of beachfront homeowners. These

homeowners tried a variety of ways to deter the public from coming anywhere near their

homes by breaking California laws. Homeowners have failed to open up public access ways, they posted illegal signs that say private property and no-parking, they used landscaping both on the side of the street and beach to encroach upon the public beach in an effort to increase their own privacy. They literally reconstructed the beach by dredging wet sand up to their property to create artificial dunes so that the public has no sand to walk along. Homeowners used security guards to threaten and intimidate the public from walking along the beach. All of these issues came to a head in the last two decades as several groups concerned with public access brought publicity to these infractions through lawsuits, and the media coverage of people being threatened for practicing their legal right to be on the beach.

The discourses behind these exclusionary practices are varied and suggest that those with social and economic power feel entitled to control the access of others if they so desire. Some of the arguments I heard were that homeowners had a right to their privacy (at the expense of the public); homeowners were better stewards of the coastal environment; and the public had plenty of other beaches to go to. These arguments are used to discursively construct boundaries between themselves and outsiders who represent the city. In the next section I reflect a bit more on these theoretical claims.

Through these empirics I found that landscapes can best be understood through representations and practice. Landscapes, like place, help to construct identities and vice versa. Different groups use these constructions and imaginations of place and identity to exclude or include people, which translate into access. Together, these empirics tell a story about what the Los Angeles coast is – a racialized highly controlled and contested space, and who has access to it – predominantly those with social and financial power. The purpose of studying this

space was to interrogate how the overall coastal landscape contributes to access particularly

for those who may need it the most. As I have argued the issue of access is highly complex, and

seeing it only as a material formation would not offer any form of solution. If we want people

to have access to the coast, we must also look at the discourses behind exclusionary practices

and feelings toward poor people of color.

Theoretical connections

In the above review of my research, I make several claims about race, access, and

landscape. Let me now be clearer about how my theoretical perspectives framed this analysis.

First, what I tried to show through this research is that by interrogating access, we can better

understand the construction of the landscape and vice versa. This can best be accomplished by

holding the landscape up to the scrutiny of a critical geographic perspective. It has not been my

intent to develop a new theory of landscape or place. I modeled this work after Richard

Schien's prescription to studying landscapes and race to describe the material setting, offer a

history of its construction, explore the everyday experience of the landscape as well as the

geographic imagination, and speculate on how it relates to ideas and ideologies about race.

I made an effort to follow this guide in my dissertation to add to the "fledgling literature

on race and landscape in the United States" (Schein 2006: 13). I first described the landscapes

that were involved in this study, not only the coastal landscape, but that of South Central as

well. There is strong relationship between how people living on the coast view people from the

inner city and vice versa. Therefore, it was imperative to explore the construction of identity

through place for those living in South Central (chapter six). This allowed me to better explain

why people from the inner city were being excluded from the beach. In addition to describing

these landscapes I looked at the history of how they came to be what they are today especially since Malibu and South Central are such iconic places (chapter 4). I explored how different groups experienced the landscape through a look at everyday practices and tried to understand how these practices and perceptions of the landscape formed ideologies of place and belonging which was very much linked to race and how these ideas mediated access (chapters five-seven).

In chapter 5, I looked at how the landscape of the South Bay was constructed by the bodies and practices that occupied it. In this chapter I talked about these processes based on archival research and social networking on the internet. I found that Dockweiler Beach was being judged as a "ghetto" space because most of the people there were black and Latino/a from the inner city. This is the result of place and identity being mutually constituted. It also demonstrates the fact that it often until someone transgresses a space that the invisible boundary constructed by the dominant group is made visible (Cresswell 2004). So in this case, the fact that Dockweiler is described as a "black beach" reveals quite clearly how all other beaches are actually "white" beaches. People of color have always recognized this racialized pattern because they have been the ones excluded from most of these "white" beaches either materially or symbolically been made to feel unwelcome.

For whites to exclude people of color from the beach without being considered racist, they use a variety of discourses that point to anything but race (Bonillia-Silva 2006).   Thus anyone who is not white and doesn't perform typical white beach etiquette, the kind that has been played out over and over again through the media I described concerning Malibu earlier, will be seen as an unwanted outsider, not 'because of their race', but because of what they are doing (Bonillia-Silva 2006; Sibley 1995, Omi and Winant 1994).   This was what Surf Bus was

trying to get past with the kids. Surf Bus didn't allow the kids to misperform at the beach. The

program taught the kids how to fit in at the beach. Furthermore, much of the racist ideology

that allows these social inequalities to occur is grounded in an ideology of liberalism that

prevails in the modern western society (Goldberg 1993). Goldberg explains that

> liberalism is committed to individualism for it takes as basic the moral,
>
> political and legal claims of the individual over and against those of the
>
> collect…In this, liberalism seeks to transcend particular historical, social,
>
> and cultural differences: It is concerned with broad identities which it
>
> insists unite persons on moral grounds, rather than with those identities
>
> which divide politically, culturally, geographically, or temporally (5).

This liberalism is pervasive in Los Angeles, and has resulted in an obsession with privatization

(Davidson 2006). This is why the Coastal Act is and was so profound. The one place that

Californians thought that it was in the public's best interest to have access to it was the beach.

However, based on my research, this perspective of the better interest for the public has faded

away. What is more, this perspective denies that structural inequalities exist, much less their

(privileged whites) role in these inequalities.

Malibu and Manhattan Beach share some common discursive connections, as well as

various material strategies of exclusion. The dominant discourse in both these places is one of

racist liberal individualism. The people living in Malibu and MB believe that they have earned

the right to their privacy through wealth. They fail to see how their unearned advantages of

being born white and born into families with money (though certainly this is not how all people

have acquired their wealth) have allowed them to assume the myth of individualism. They

don't see that their actions directly determine the actions of others. The practice of exclusion is also the practice of anti-access.   However, they don't see this relationship between their actions and people poor people of color.

Furthermore, access to the beach symbolizes access to other social rights. If people can't get to a beach that is ten miles away, how are they expected to get good quality jobs, education, or healthcare? This urban nature, while requiring maintenance, is already there – it is not something that has to be built. And it has already been established that people have a social right to free and open spaces (Fraser 1997). Yet, poor people of color still can't get there, even though they are the ones who have the least amount of access to green spaces.

Those who hold social and economic power will use these differences in practices to construct boundaries to keep the unwanted people out (Sibely 1995). The construction of these boundaries is more than simply maintaining privacy as the homeowners like to claim, it is a discursive response to the fear of losing one's sense of self which is deeply tied to the landscape. The homeowners in Malibu and Manhattan Beach are so invested in the landscape because it represents who they are and who they are not (Sibely 1995, Said 1978). Thus homeowners must hold tight to these boundaries defending them at all costs to keep their own identity intact.

One does not have to travel to Malibu to know that these boundaries exist. They are well known to the public through the representations of the beach as white spaces. The representation and geographic imagination of Malibu does the work of deterring people of color from going to the beach. I spoke with a black man who told me that "black people know" not to go to certain beaches, including Malibu.   This knowledge comes from a history of blacks

observing and developing a "critical 'ethnographic' gaze of whiteness" (hooks 1992). This, coupled with the fact that Malibu itself is portrayed as an exclusively white space in most of its media representations, doesn't draw in blacks and other people of color who are not represented in that landscape. However, the beach is generally constructed as a dominant white space, so the practice of going to almost any beach for people of color should be understood as a transgressive act.

While those with social and economic power have created boundaries to keep people out in very material ways (camouflaged access ways, unequal public transit) it is still possible to transgress these landscapes (Cresswell 2004). This is seen in Dockweiler Beach, even though there are not whites present to construct material boundaries, the discursive boundary that beaches are a white space is being transgressed by bodies of color occupying that space. The Surf Bus was an effort in some way to transgress boundaries by bringing kids from the inner city to the beach. The kids represent that which is unwanted at Manhattan Beach, even though Surf Bus tries to teach the kids how to 'act white' so as to be accepted, the fact that the kids are present illustrates some transgression. The kids start to learn about assimilation from this experience, this is the one of many choices they will be confronted with in terms of identity. Because the dominant practices at the beach are different from their own, their decision, which may seem unconscious, will contribute to their identity construction. In Malibu, the work of the Urban Rangers is one of the most obvious transgressions. The transgressions represent some contest over space and access. Focusing on these transgressions is really important too in understanding how landscapes are made and remade. This reminds us that landscapes are dynamic and in a constant form of flux.

The story here is that the coast is materially and discursively constructed to be an exclusive white space. People of color from the inner city are often kept away from the coast which seriously affects their quality of life. These two processes of exclusion and access are interrelated. The exclusionary practices of beachfront homeowners are an attack on the public's access. This gets us thinking about access more critically, whether it is through the perspective of mobility or landscape, we have much work to do on access which seems to have played a peripheral role in discussions of landscape. That said, adding access to the discussion of landscape offers a way of seeing the landscape as a dynamic space representing and constructing social relations. As Matless (2003) points out, landscape "carries a relational hybridity, always already natural and cultural, deep and superficial, which makes for something inherently discursive" (231). This hybridity allows us to connect seemingly banal practices with profound issues of social justice.   Also the discussion of landscape and access together opens up more avenues to address social issues such as race. I argue that it is actually race that links landscape and access together. This can be done with other social differences such as gender, sexuality, age, and/or physical ability.

Positionality revisited

Finally I want to further address some methodological issues that came out of this research that I did not mention in my chapter on methodology, because it wouldn't have yet made sense, being that I hadn't engaged with my research yet. I confronted a few methodological and ethical dilemmas. I want to begin by saying that I am and was supportive of Surf Bus' endeavor to teach kids from the inner city how to surf. However, my theoretical critique of Surf Bus would seem to suggest otherwise. Even though it was glaringly obvious that

Surf Bus was whitewashing the kids, I didn't want to address it for quite some time. I didn't

want to address it for several reasons: 1. I knew that Marion was not consciously trying to

whitewash the kids; she was trying to offer them a fun experience that might change their lives

for the better, or at the very least, save their lives someday both materially by understanding

ocean safety, and symbolically by relying on the principles of the "Surfer's Code" to get through

the large and small trials of life. Therefore, I was explicit about what I believed Marion's

intentions were when I wrote about how Surf Bus was implicated in the reproduction of the

beach as a white landscape. That said, I am not confident that she would understand or

approve of my connecting her organization with a racial project. That brings me to my second

issue.

2. Negotiating my role as a very active participant with Surf Bus and conducting research

on Surf Bus. Kim England aptly addresses this when reflecting on S.J. Smith's understanding of

participant observation. England (1994) writes, "adopting the role of a supplicant may make it

too easy for the researcher to 'submerge the instrumental and exploitative elements of

participant observation beneath a wave of altruistic intent' (S.J. Smith, 1988, 22)" (249). 3. How

would I address my role in whitewashing? As an instructor, I participated in this as well; there is

no way to separate myself from that. I didn't believe that I was doing any harm to the kids, but

I knew I was reinscribing the beach as a white space not only through my own subjectivity, but

through my practices as well. So the way that I tried to deal with this was to implicate my own

actions in this process just as I implicated Marion and Surf Bus, there was no other way around

it. Though I will say that my recognition of the whitewashing hadn't solidified until I was

analyzing my data after the summer. Had I been more self-reflexive at the time of my

participation and seen just how much I was contributing to the whitewashing of these kids and

the landscape, I may have reconsidered my participation. In all honesty, I feel confident that I

still would have stayed because I believe the advantages of Surf Bus outweighed the

disadvantages, at least in the short term Still, I know I am just perpetuating exclusion based on

race and class in the long run. That is still a tough pill to swallow though. While I have not

settled this moral and academic dilemma yet, I intend to continue giving it my attention past

the submission of this dissertation.

    The other dilemma related to Surf Bus that I must address is my interview and email

correspondence with John Smith, the founder of MattMan Surf Kids, who funded most of the

Surf Bus program the summer of 2011. John expressed a racist perspective of Latino/as from

the inner city, though he claimed that he was not trying to sound racist. I wasn't sure how to

deal with that information, whether I should include it or not. I was very conscious of the fact

that without John's financial contribution, Surf Bus probably wouldn't have happened at all that

summer. I didn't want to do anything that would jeopardize Surf Bus' ability to run the camp

and I had to confront the fact that my words could seriously upset John, so much that he

wouldn't want to work with Surf Bus, which I was then affiliated with. I didn't share

information about my interview with anyone at Surf Bus, but I knew there was a possibility that

John would read my dissertation. My positionality as a researcher and participant with Surf Bus

became very murky. In the end, I chose to include my analysis of these findings in my

dissertation. I had to remember that I was first a researcher, and that all of the participants

were aware of this. In fact, because I was a researcher, I did always feel a bit like an outsider,

people talked to me hesitantly sometimes, wondering what I was thinking about what they

were saying. In those cases I was always upfront with them and shared my perspectives. I was completely upfront with my intentions, and my findings were imperative to this research, so I stayed true to that.

Finally, this research has been very personal to me because the coast is a place that I deeply care about and believe everyone should have access to it. At no point did I grow tired of this research as so many of us do when writing our theses and dissertations. Still echoing in my mind is the laughter from the kids I worked with over the last two summers. I look forward to continuing this research because I believe that we all, the public, have a right to natural spaces, especially when they are so close to us that they are part of the urban fabric. We should all be made to feel welcome in these spaces. This was, after all, the point of the Coastal Act of 1972. That was one time when Californians came together to say that we can't privatize everything, some spaces should belong to everyone, some spaces are so important to the health of the physical and social environment, that they can't belong to just one person. I also hoped to show that close proximity to something in no way translates to access. Through this research, I have attempted to show that access and the landscape are dynamic spaces and ideas that must constantly be negotiated and scrutinized so that people can actually enjoy the urban natures that are so close to them.

<u>Future Research</u>

I would like to continue this research. I particularly would like spend more time with the kids and their families in South Central. I had limited access and time with the kids, and my understanding of their everyday lives is through the stories that they told me. I would like to volunteer at A Place Called Home, to get to know the kids' lives better. I would also like to

interview their parents, since they are the ones who really have a say in how and when the kids

can go to the beach. The parents are also the ones that are truly being made to feel excluded,

so I want to see how they perceive these boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. To do this

would have required a Spanish interpreter and much more time.

I would also like to explore the history of South Bay even more, by looking at primary

sources including photographs and interviews at Dockweiler Beach. I had not intended to make

the South Bay a focus of my research, so I didn't budget in time to get this kind of data. It was

only after I had returned from California that I realized how rich this historical information

would be.

Another aspect of my research that I did not anticipate was the legal battles of the MTA.

I knew that the infrastructure of Los Angeles was unequal, but I had no idea that it could be

proven to be in violation of the Civil Rights Act. In the future I would like to explore this issue

further and interview officials from MTA about their rational for creating such inconvenient bus

routes for people who need them.

Finally, I was not able to delve deeply into the human-nature relationship as I had

originally hoped to. I didn't force this aspect into the dissertation because I realize now that

understanding human-nature relations within the context of a public place is highly

complicated. I followed my data which took me in directions of social justice based on race. I

couldn't ignore this rich outcome of my research, nor did I want to downplay it to make room

for a discussion on human-environment relations. Instead, I realize that this is just the

beginning to understanding the human-environment relations in Los Angeles. In this

dissertation I focused more on the human side involving social justice, as I continue this

research, I will try and explore the connections to the environment more. However, my research made me realize that social inequalities make it more difficult to have access to the natural environment, directly influencing what can be said and how people conceptualize about human-environment relations in an urban nature. I had to learn this and interrogate these social relations and constructions of the landscape to fully understand the complexity of human-environment relations in an urban, public, nature like the Los Angeles Coast, which I still continue to explore.

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