

FIELD NOTES

Student 2 ● Prof. Mani ● Fall 2020

Field Note #1

The user is a self identified woman from the Pacific Northwest, who has experience camping, and is 40 years old. She is looking for a place to have an outing not far from Northwest Washington. She prefers to be in a place away from large numbers of people. She owns a tent, and a car, but she prefers to “glamp” and stay in a small cabin if possible because she is going alone. Glamping being a term to describe a situation like camping, where one is staying in the woods, but having added amenities. Glamping is looked down on by many members of the community as a “lesser activity” and not real camping. Four users answer her thread and all of them offer helpful solutions. u/bob_lala suggests going to either Oregon or Washington which have many campgrounds and opportunities for Glamping. The first user makes no attempt to belittle the idea of the user glamping. The second user recommends going to Washington where one can rent cabins and “yurts”. A yurt essentially being a dome shaped large tent. The second responder adds links to booking a yurt or cabin and instructs the user to book one soon because they are popular and availability runs out fast. The third response suggests renting a cabin at Kalaloch, Sol Duc hot springs. Upon further research this is located in Washington. The final response is very short and suggests Ruby beach. Ruby beach is located in Washington as well. Besides a lack of enthusiasm and detail from the last responder, all replies made an effort to help guide the original poster to her goal, and made no attempts to belittle her camping practices.

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u/Z010011010 makes no identification of their gender, race, or age. They make a post concerned that too many people are going unprepared into the wilderness and the poster is worried that this could be a fatal mistake. He does identify himself as an amateur because he says that he is not an expert guide. He also makes it clear that he is not trying to “gatekeep”. A gatekeeper being someone who judges a person's status in the community. This term is used to identify a toxic person in the community. His main question is how to let people know they are underprepared without being rude or condescending. This wanting to be a good person is evident in the original post on the subreddit. The user wants to teach and inform, not unfairly judge. The top comment instructs the user that most of the people who are underprepared come out safe, and if the user really wants to help, they can bring extra water to give to passersby. The next comment says that they believe the original poster is being too nitpicky, and that these people will be just fine. They add that people do not need a \$300 Garmin to go safely on a hike. A Garmin being a high quality brand of GPS(global positioning system) used to navigate trails. This brings up a question of possible classism in the community. The second commenter adds that it may be a good idea to let underprepared people know what the poster carries so they get an idea that they may be lacking. The next commenter u/woodbarber volunteers for SAR which stands for search and rescue, an organization that finds lost people in the outdoors. This user immediately gets noticeable respect from the previous commenter and the original poster for their occupation. This means that being in SAR is a major determinant of hierarchy. This user adds to the discussion by saying they would never tell anyone to leave the trail, but they also

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compare gear to give them an idea that they are underprepared. All three of these users had an emphasis in their writing about being as polite as possible. The common goal was to inform the inexperienced members rather than berate and judge them.

The final thread is a gear discussion thread about what to keep in a car at the trailhead. Gear posts like these are popular with the users, who use it as an opportunity to give advice, and to show off their experience and knowledge. The original poster does not identify anything about themselves not directly relevant to the post. The post is a list of the users' typical list of items they leave in the car while on hikes and while camping. The user also asks other users what they leave in their cars to get an idea of what he could add. The first suggestion is a change of clothes and a way to clean eyeglasses. Several users recommend leaving information in the car for rangers to find the user should they become lost, and detailed descriptions of where they will be. One user from Canada does not identify their gender but mentions that they do have a wife. This user suggests leaving a cooler with drinks of choice and ice in it for a reward at the end of the trail. Everyone on the thread remains gender neutral, and few users identify anything about themselves not related to the subreddit. All posts try to contribute to what the original poster is asking, and no one attempts to show off gear with one notable exception. The user mentioned their wife specifically mentioned owning a Yeti cooler which is a higher end product. The users are all enforcing community values of sharing experience and knowledge, and there is very little evidence on this thread of any blatant

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hierarchy. Again, the possible exception is the Yeti cooler remark which can be analyzed further in field note #2.

Field note #2

The user in the first field note identifies herself by gender and location, this is one of the few times this is done. Gender is not important on the subreddit, and has no relevance to the community goals. She makes it clear that she prefers to glamp. This is because glamping is safer than being in a tent, and a cabin offers more security. She wants to glamp because of her alone status she says. This can be interpreted several ways, the first being that she can afford more luxury due to lack of people in her party. The second would be that she feels vulnerable, because she is alone. Members of the outdoor community are often very friendly people, but secluded places especially at night attract people with bad intentions. Many people disappear while camping and hiking, without a trace. The other users seemed to respect this and gave the original poster all the information she wanted. This is not because she was a woman and they sought some kind of clout by helping a “damsel in distress”. This thread would have very likely been exactly the same had the original poster not identified themselves, or had been a male. Users in the community would be willing to help anyone out, because of the community value of spreading experience and knowledge about the subreddits topics.

u/Z010011010 makes no identification of their gender, race, or age. This user posted the second thread in the notes. They are a self-proclaimed amateur, because they

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said they are not a professional. The user is concerned that they are gatekeeping, and make it clear that they want to inform and help rather than judge other people. Whether they are subconsciously judging or not is almost impossible to tell. One of the repliers states that people do not need a \$300 Garmin to go safely on a hike. This accomplishes two things, first this calls out the original poster on being too judgemental on members of the community, and second opens a discussion on gear class in the community. The replier does not want the user to be too judgemental because that pushes people away from the community. In theory having more expensive gear is better, because it has connotations of wealth and would perform its job better than a cheaper unit. However having all brand new, expensive equipment will show many of the community members that one is a novice, and they will be negatively branded. Expensive gear is a double edged sword because some users admire it, while others scorn it, believing it to be a substitute for real skill. The next commenter u/woodbarber volunteers for SAR which stands for search and rescue. This user immediately gets noticeable respect from the previous commenter and the original poster for their occupation. With an emphasis on skills and experience it would make sense that being a member of search and rescue would put someone high on a scale of hierarchy. Unlike the original poster, this user is a professional. The users in the comments for the post all help the original poster make an educated decision on how to gently inform other community members when they are underprepared. This perfectly shows the community coming together to spread experience and knowledge, and determine hierarchy as a byproduct.

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In the third field note, the original poster makes no effort to identify themselves in any way, and only divulges information related to their post. The subreddit is very neutral in respect to all attributes of a person not related directly to the subject of the subreddit. Few if any users on the subreddit r/campingandhiking will treat anyone's questions differently based on class, race, creed or gender. Any bias on the subreddit comes from aspects of the person disjoint from those attributes. Judgement comes from lack of experience, perceived disrespect, and perceived showing off. Showing off is actually outlawed on the community, and goes against the community guidelines. No one is allowed to show off expensive gear on the subreddit just for the sake of doing so. One of the repliers suggests leaving a Yeti cooler in the car with cool drinks inside to enjoy after the hike. This does not have connotations of a boast and is therefore allowed. Yeti is an expensive brand of cooler, but it is also well known and some terms on the subreddit are used as blanket terms, like Garmin is used as a blanket term for hand held GPS. Yeti is also very functional, reliable, and does its job well, which makes it so that it is not just considered a fancy rich man's cooler, but a respectable useful tool. The user makes mention of this not to say that they have a Yeti to boast, but in the context of giving the other community members ideas on how to enjoy the end of their trip better. Because the community values spreading experience the replier is considered a good community member rather than being frowned on.

Field Note 3

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In the first post there are two main points that come off as strange, and may require further research. The first is that the user identifies themselves. The user self identifies as a woman, who is 40 years old, and is from the Pacific Northwest. This is very rare in the community to have someone identify age and gender. In all the research I did, that was the most thorough self identification I was able to find. There was scarcely another mention of race, gender, or creed to be found anywhere at all. It is inexplicable to me in theory, but I have a theory that it takes away from the true goals of the community to bring into light one's personal information. The second strange thing was that the user did not want to go camping alone, and preferred to stay in a cabin, because she was alone and a woman. There are several possible explanations I can think of to answer this question. My first thought was that a woman who is alone, in a secluded place might be considered vulnerable, and targeted by criminals, or feel unsafe because of the prospect for other reasons. My second thought was simply for comfort, because going alone is cheaper. The first thought offers more in the way of being able to research the circumstances around it by researching missing persons cases in the outdoors, and other similar crime statistics. Between the first thing that stood out to me and the second, the second probably offers more in the way of outside research.

In the second post two things that stand out, are the emphasis on non judgement, and the respect for users determined to be part of the hierarchy. There is an emphasis on not judging or gatekeeping other users in the first post. The repliers, and the poster want to make sure the poster does not make anyone feel unwelcome in the community. Further, one of the repliers adds that the price of gear does not matter to hierarchy in

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the community. My thought is that the prices of higher end equipment would be restrictive to many new community members, and so to be more inclusive, expensive gear is not a determinant of hierarchy. Secondary research can be done into the price of high end outdoor equipment to determine if prices make it difficult for an average person to have these items. The respect or users in the hierarchy is evident across the subreddit. The user who was in SARS clearly had more say in the topic than other repliers. My thought as to why is that members of the SARS organization have a great amount of experience with many skills needed in the outdoors. These would include mountaineering, first aid, fire building, and other survival related topics. Secondary research could be done to find what a job in SARS entails, to determine why exactly their skills give them such a high standing in the community.

In the third post the two things I found most interesting were the circumstances around the yeti cooler comment, and the non judgemental energy of the community. The yeti cooler comment seems like an example of a user showing off their expensive gear, which is frowned upon. However it is not looked at in this way, and this comment seems to be appreciated in the thread. My hypothesis is that this user was only trying to help the original poster, and the other community members and they sensed this. Further I believe it was allowed because yeti is not a luxury product but highly functional. For secondary research I could look up prices, stats, and comparisons in Yeti coolers to determine why the user was given a pass. The non judgemental energy of the community seems to be a common theme. No one in this thread identifies themselves. In the community, it seems as though any identification of oneself not related to the

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community is not important. As such no one in the community will openly judge based on gender, race, or creed, based on my experience in the community. The users on the subreddit are able to fulfill their goals without mentioning their identities, and so they don't mention them. The exception being when it has relevance to the question being asked, or the problem which needs to be solved.

The trend I find most interesting out of all of these is the neutrality in the community about any not directly related. All information about the person seems to be irrelevant unless it has something to do with the question, or topic being discussed. The few times someone identified themselves (the woman from the first post and the SARS member) there was a direct reason for them identifying themselves. It was necessary for them to do so for some reason or another. Secondary research will involve figuring out why those identifications were relevant to the topic, which will be very interesting to find out the nuance as to why these people could identify themselves in the context of the community.

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