

Crater Lake National Park: Who Goes There? Exploring the Meaning of Nature with Visitors.

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Biographical Narrative

Althea Godfrey, a non-profit administrator, journalist, and garden writer, returned to school to pursue her interest in environmental issues. A senior Sociology major, she wants to attend graduate school in a PhD program to explore the underpinnings of the relationship between humans and nature, and how this translates into attitudes and sustainable practices. She hopes to study the framing of nature and wilderness, how it's changed through history, and how current media messages shape it today. Althea hopes to contribute to the understanding of people's behavior in the everyday boundary situations between wilderness and the built environment, such as parks, gardens, and with pets. She wants to research, lecture and work with organizations on the experiences that shape cultural ideas about nature, and the role and duties people establish under changing climate and environmental messages. Her plans include academic and popular writing.

Abstract

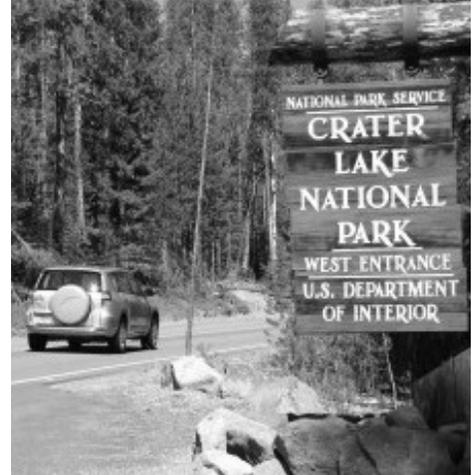
Since 1987, nature-based recreation has decreased across most activity areas. Today's children have less exposure to nature, raising questions about future support for environmental issues. The decline has been associated with the increase in electronic entertainment—internet, video-games, and home movie watching—and gas prices. Do these factors influence park visitors? Are other factors involved? From June 22 to Aug. 14, 2009, 28 visitors to Crater Lake National Park participated in a semi-structured interview exploring these issues and examining their feelings about nature and support for the environment. This sociological study used purposive sampling of visitors over 18 years old to obtain variety in park experiences, ages, and class. Visitors had childhood experiences with nature, which they were reproducing as adults, and separation from video entertainment was seen positively. Support for the environment was seen in the majority, but there is reason to think more than simple exposure is necessary.

Key Terms: Nature-based recreation, videophilia, nature-deficit disorder, national parks

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Introduction

With the deepest lake in the nation, Crater Lake National Park has an exotic reputation, similar to Death Valley National Park in Nevada, or the Badlands of South Dakota. In contrast to these stark desert environments, Crater Lake's beauty is quiet, lush and serene. Tucked into the southwest corner of Oregon, the park attracts up to half a million people each year—a number reached in 1995. This reflects the situation at other national parks, forests and recreation areas, where visitation has been decreasing for two decades. From hunting and fishing, to bird-watching and exploring scenery, participation numbers are down. The reasons for this are not clear, but given the connection between humans and the health of the environment, the decrease needs investigation.



Many hypotheses have been offered and studied to explain the decrease in nature-based recreation. The cost of gas, increasingly structured children's play, loss of neighborhood wild space, a sense of danger, and easy access to video entertainment may each contribute to a decrease in opportunities to experience nature. Are there indications these factors have changed the way families recreate and vacation? Have they reduced visits to national parks and other places where wilderness can be experienced? In this research project, I explore feeling, values and perception about Crater Lake National Park, being in nature and environmental protection. Ultimately, two questions drive the research. What is the impact of exposure to nature in the park on individual lives? What is the impact of visitation on future support for the environment? In a time of shortages and public cutbacks, it becomes even more important to understand the role of national parks as part of the public commons.

LITERATURE REVIEW

On a grand scale, the quality of human health depends on the health of the underlying environment. Recognizing this, the World Health Organization considers environmental protection and conservation as essential to human health and public health strategy (Maller et al. 2005). In her review of the literature, Louise Chawla describes the qualitative research that indicates exposure to nature increases environmental awareness and support for environmental issues (1998), a social benefit especially important in a time of ecological and climate change. However, environmental support may be more subtly engendered. In a study looking at wildlife based recreation, Bright and Porter describe that increased environmental awareness can be more accurately assessed when the meaning of the nature-based activity to the participant is

considered (2001). This places national park activities like hiking and camping in a broader context of experiencing quality family time or attempting physical challenges. If so, this places national parks, which exclude extractive activities, in a unique position among federal agencies to inform and nurture positive environmental awareness.

On the individual level, access to natural views have been shown to decrease hospital stays, and accessible parks have been associated with increased physical health in neighborhoods (Mikkelsen et al. 2007, Srinivasan et al. 2003). Other studies show nature viewing enhances creativity and reduce stress (Louv, 2006). Nature as curative has a long history in Western and alternative medicine, with the nation's first parks promoted to communities as a social benefit that would not only improve health and well-being, but manners and worker productivity as well (Young 1995, Taylor 1999). These early advocates may have been correct. According to WHO, stress and mental disorders are 10 percent of the global burden of disease, and public health advocates argue that nature's effectiveness in stress reduction is a sensible treatment alternative (Maller et al. 2005). As evidence they point to findings that show contact with natural scenes improves perception of job stress and is associated with lower incidences of headaches and illness (Maller et al. 2005).

So, along with their other credits--spectacular and unique scenery, wildlife habitat and recreation value--national parks can be seen as restorative environments. These landscapes "foster recovery from mental fatigue," as described by Kaplan and Kaplan, and include four elements: fascination (effortless interest); a sense of escape from the usual; a sense of being part of a larger whole; and are compatible with a preconceived frame or interest (Maller et al. 2005). "Nature can be seen therefore as an under-utilized public resource in terms of human health and well-being, with the use of parks and natural areas offering a potential gold mine for population health promotion" (Maller et al. 2005:52).

Changing Attendance



higher income levels (Louv 2006).

After annual increases over a period of at least 50 years, attendance at National Parks and other outdoor recreation locations is decreasing, a trend that began in 1987 (Pergams and Zaradic 2006). This corresponds with decreases in wildlife viewing activities, according to a U.S. Forest Service survey. "Participation in wildlife watching (observing, feeding, and photographing wildlife) decreased from 76.1 million in 1991 to 62.9 million in 1996, but it increased to 66.1 million from 1996 to 2001" (U.S. Forest Service web site). Visitors are disproportionately from

Videophilia

Drawing from survey data conducted over this time period, Oliver R.W. Pergams and Patricia A. Zaradic examined electronic entertainment such as television watching, video gaming, home movie watching, and internet use, along with theater attendance, federal park funding, park capacities, eco-tourism and foreign travel, income, age, gas prices, and reduced number of vacation days. They found a correlation between the rise in use of electronic media and gas cost and the drop in nature-based recreation. This has implications for environmental policy because “environmentally responsible behavior results from direct contact with the environments and that people must be exposed to natural areas as children if they are to care about them as adults” (Pergams and Zaradic 2008:1). Videophilia—a term they coined to describe the love of electronic entertainment—is draining the available time and allegiance to outdoor and nature based activity.

In declaring children were suffering from “nature-deficit disorder,” journalist Richard Louv created wide-spread public awareness of the decline in nature based recreation. His 2006 book *Last Child in the Woods* was a call to reverse the decrease in nature based recreation among children, and cites data, numerous studies, interviews and his commentary about the social cost of children’s lack of exposure to nature. He argues that the lack of primary experience with nature is damaging. He points out that children’s free interaction with nature in public settings like parks is often compromised and regulated while development of open space is destroying natural areas at rates not explainable by population growth alone (Louv 2006:30). He also strongly argues that the increasing use of psychotropic drugs and attention deficit pharmaceuticals is evidence that children are becoming increasingly depressed and argues it is related to the loss of nature (2006:49).

Fear of the wild and the danger of unsupervised play are other factors cited in Louv’s synthesis. This is a change in the social construction of outdoor play. The rise in structured activities—league sports, after-school programs, and day camps—decrease the time for individual agency. Louv argues that instead of a dangerous place, nature should be seen as honing survival senses.

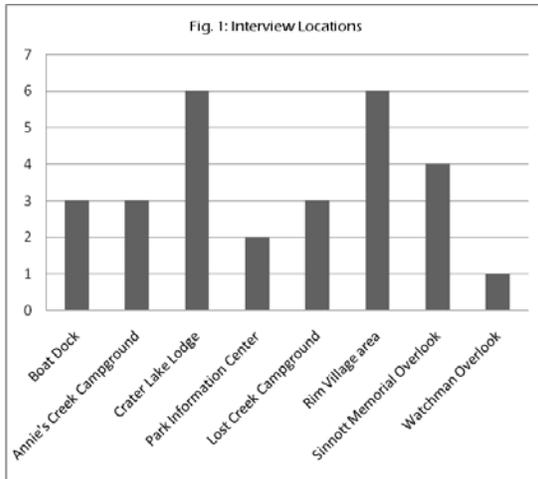
Still, as National Park Service promotions proudly declare, the number of park visitors exceed those who attend major league sporting events and NASCAR races. The visitors to Crater Lake NP had overcome any and all obstacles to visiting. How would they respond to open-ended questions about these issues? The findings of Pergams and Zaradic were especially influential in moving the research toward exploring technology use. Do visitors come in order to experience health or spiritual benefits? Richard Louv’s book has made nature-deficit disorder a talking point for environmental educators--future environmental advocacy require children have exposure to nature. Were visitors reproducing positive childhood experiences, and if so, had they become environmental advocates? Who is going to Crater Lake and why?

METHODOLOGY

After reviewing the literature, exploratory research in the park was planned and a semi-structured interview schedule was developed to explore issues related to declining nature based recreation. Short interviews with 28 respondents examined: exposure to nature as a child; commitment to nature for recreation; spiritual connection and preservation, and obstacles related to getting to the park. Consulting with national park staff inspired additional questions to contribute to their understanding of visitorship. Since a number of studies have theorized that technology use contributes to the decline in nature-based recreation, respondents were asked about equipment, use time and importance of access to these during park visits. Although gas prices were also implicated by Pergams and Zaradic, these were not directly investigated. With the increase in two-working-parent family, single parenting, conflicting or decreased vacation time, and increased structure of childhood play, respondents were asked questions that might reveal these as obstacles to visits. Respondents were asked whether they spent time outdoors as a child and given opportunities to elaborate. Increased time demands were assessed when participants were asked about juggling schedules.

Some theorists are concerned that lack of exposure to nature will diminish support for national parks and conservation efforts, so respondents were asked whether they had taken action on the environment. Prompts included being a conservation group member, to physical participation in trail upkeep or legislative action. An inquiry about practices at home also measured environmental commitment. Participants were allowed to define what they considered "natural environmental space," and some included dog care as contributing to natural space or wildlife. The sense of spiritual connection to nature and its importance and the frequency of visits to natural sites were considered valuable measures of a commitment to nature. This survey was submitted to the Internal Review Board at Southern Oregon University and approved.

Potential participants were approached at a number of locations within the park, given a brief description of the research as contributing to understanding about the reduction in park visitorship and asked whether they would be willing to participate in a 20 minute survey. A majority of those approached agreed. They signed and received a copy of the consent form, which provided contact information. Class and race were considered when selecting respondents, but a majority of park visitors were white. It is not easy to determine class membership in a campground, or at a recreation area. Most people are casually dressed, and I found that income and education levels can not be predicted by the mode of camping. Although a number of non-white visitors were approached, only three agreed to participate. With this small sample and the lack of random sampling, it will not be possible to generalize the result of the study, however when there is a lack of studies demonstrating the link between exploratory research can be valuable by affirming theoretical views or by adding new elements to consider.



A variety of visitor experiences were desired: people who were on day trips and longer stays; camping/hotel guests; RV/tent campers, passive and active users. In addition, a range of incomes and ages were desired. Interviews were conducted at Rim Village, Sinnott Memorial Overlook, a rim overlook near the Village, Annie Creek Campground, Lost Creek Campground, Crater Lake Lodge, and at the boat dock. As surveys were collected, the selection of potential respondents became more focused. Interviews occurred between June

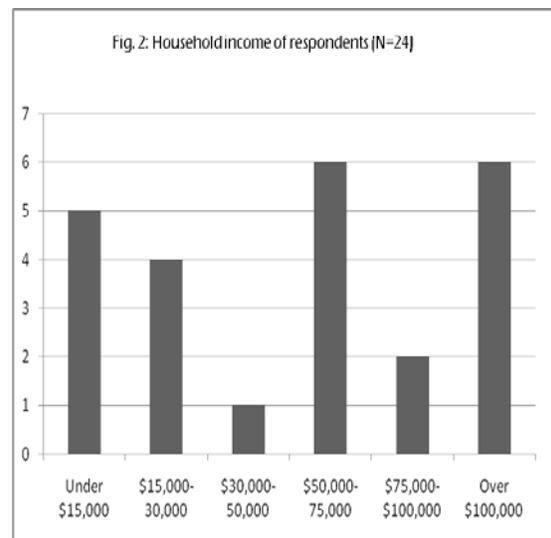
29 and July 21st on a variety of days: Monday, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday. On the days I visited, both of the two campgrounds were mostly empty, so the selection of respondents was constrained. In contrast, the lodge was at capacity. When it was clear that no new themes were being encountered, interviews were concluded.

RESULTS

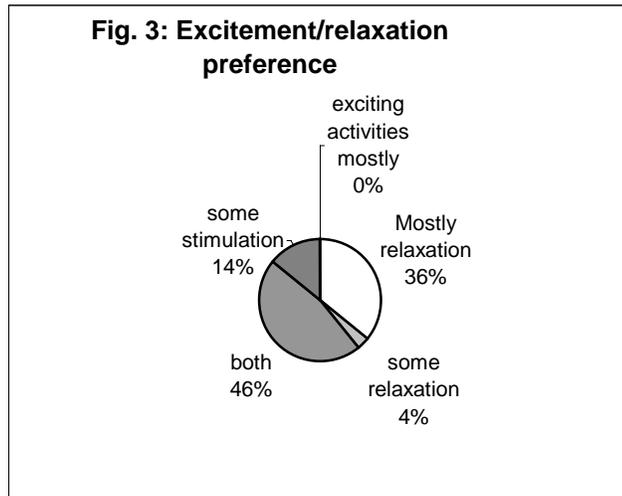
A total of 28 surveys were completed, with 13 male and 15 female respondents. Of the 28 respondents, six were local residents, and four were on day trips. Ashland was considered the southern end of the "local" area and Happy Valley the north end. Two respondents were locals camping on multiday trips, one along the Umpqua River and the other in Crater Lake National Park. An additional five respondents were visiting the park for less than 8 hours, a total of nine; six respondents were staying one night and 13, just less than half, were staying multiple nights, most frequently two. The longest stay was for 4 nights by a couple who were full time RVers.

Twenty two people were considered visiting from a distance. Two were from Oregon, Eugene and West Linn. The remaining visitors resided out of state: four from Washington, ten from California, one each from Texas and Florida and two from Germany and one from Canada and one from England.

The visitor income profile matched the national park visitorship profile, where it's been seen that recreation in national parks is becoming more an activity of upper income individuals (Louv 2006). There was more opportunity to interview older visitors, with 17 over 45 years old and 21 over 35. In 2008, the median age in the US is 37.9 (U.S. Census Bureau website).



For most of the respondents (21), Crater Lake was one of other sites visited on their trip. Even those on a day trip made additional stops: Beckie's Café, Prospect and area waterfalls were mentioned. Three respondents were participating in a guided tour or workshop that included CLNP. Other reasons interviewees gave for coming to Crater Lake included: to see a remembered sight from childhood, or to share this place with their children because they had seen it when young. Others were coming to see an iconic location, such as the man who brought his two young children because they were curious



about the image on the state quarter. This was also indicated by the “favorite feature” chosen by respondents: the lake itself. The panorama drew others, such as a man on a photo expedition, and a family that biked the rim drive. The geology was important to a few such as the geography teacher from Germany, who said, “This volcanic crater was one of our first choices.” For a few, wildflowers were the draw. Many (N=11) mentioned its convenience either to home or to another destination as the reason they made the choice to come to the park. Another ten said it was one destination on a longer road trip. Considering the three who were participating in a professionally arranged tour, only four of those surveyed had made Crater Lake the focus of a vacation plan, although most had made an effort to get to the park and spend time there.

NATURE AS REJUVENATING

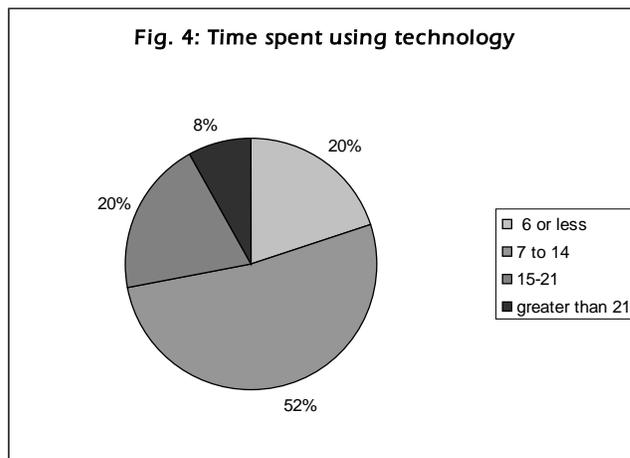
Videophilia offers a passive opportunity for excitement and entertainment. In an effort to reference this issue, visitors were asked what kind of stimulation they desired on this trip--exciting, relaxing or both. Most answered both, but respondents clearly saw natural scenery as exciting. It was “exciting to see Oregon,” “exciting to see new places,” and “A visit to Wizard Island... that’s exciting stuff.” While park administrators may have a concern about “windshield tourists,” the visitors themselves seem to be very stimulated by vistas within the park. This is may be associated with the restorative function of parks as described above.

OBSTACLES OVERCOME

The change in social structure that has increased the number of two working parent families and single parent families remains relevant. In this small sample, only one parent was single. Only one family had a parent at home full time, but in most cases, at least one parent was either working at home or working part time. Eighty-nine percent were taking extended road trips, and the only individual who mentioned gas

price as an obstacle was on a day trip. No-one mentioned admission to the park. Vacation time was the most mentioned obstacle, but judging by the context in which it was mentioned, it was not seen as insurmountable or troublesome by any of my sample. Even those who work for themselves have to arrange a vacation, and 35 percent of those surveyed felt they had no obstacles to making the trip to Crater Lake. Thirty-two percent felt they had minor obstacles—carsickness on the drive up, other destinations that were also considered, and vacation restrictions. The remaining 32 percent made large commitments—arranging the schedules of multiple families, taking off two months of work without pay and packing food to hike the Pacific Crest Trail, and self-employed persons who arranged care for animals, plants and substitute workers. In some cases the children’s activity was seen as an obstacle. However, for those surveyed, the vacation seemed to have priority. “We scheduled around it,” seemed to be the operant attitude.

TECHNOLOGY



All respondents were familiar with technology and, with the exception of video game machines, owned the equipment: televisions, VCR/DVD players and computers with internet access. In this sample, more owned computers (86 percent) than televisions (79 percent). Ownership of video game players (36 percent) was clearly associated with age, and parents of youth and younger respondents were the owners. Nineteen respondents (73

percent) used electronic home entertainment for less than 15 hours a week, with the majority falling between 7-14 hours a week. Parents mentioned child use as being much higher in some cases, however in other homes, technology use was limited by parental choice. “Our TV lives in the closet,” said one parent. None of these respondents found it difficult to leave technology behind to visit Crater Lake. In three cases, respondents mentioned technology equipment was not left behind. This may be true with a few others—RVs, automobiles, iPods and Blackberries have made technology very portable—but most people seemed to be relieved to be out of touch.

This group seemed to be wary of television programming, and several made it clear that their televisions were primarily for movie watching. This is interesting, in that Pergams and Zaradic found home video watching associated with the decline, rather than television program viewing.

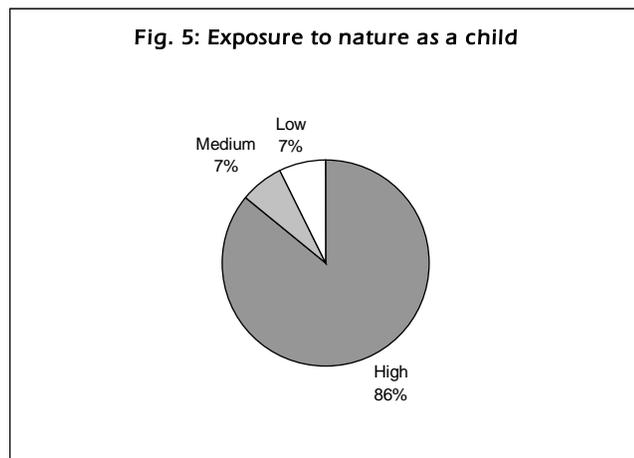
In conversations with National Park staff, the potential to add cell towers for mobile phone reception was discussed. However, lack of access to electronic

entertainment or reception did not appear to be a priority for these visitors. Even the woman who was hiking the Pacific Crest Trail for months did not pack a cell phone. In this sample, respondents were often traveling between parks, and felt that was enough opportunity to check email, or go to an internet café.

COMMITMENT TO NATURE

One of the concerns of researchers is that the lack of exposure to nature as children would lead to lack of commitment to natural places, such as parks and conservation areas, in adulthood. The clear majority (86 percent) of those surveyed at Crater Lake had a high level of exposure: summer camps, camping trips, hiking, and just plain playing outside were reported. These respondents sought out nature on their own as well, as one reported: she had “the opportunity to go where we wanted where I lived. I’d go into the hills and trees.” Another lived on Vashon Island in Puget Sound as a child, which was “like a permanent camping trip.”

Of the twenty respondents making other stops, six were expecting to visit both natural and built (city) environments, one individual had visited another city during her vacation, and the rest were expecting to tour other natural environments, usually other parks in the region: Redwood National Park, Olympic NP, Mt. St. Helens National Monument, Lava Beds NM, and Mt. Rainier NP were among the sites mentioned. This preference for nature-based recreation was seen in the question about other vacation destinations the respondents had taken in the previous five years, with 20 taking predominately nature-based vacations with passive (scenery) and active (rock climbing) attractions.



Only ten considered that they had no obstacle to their visit. One-third (9) were willing to overcome large obstacles in order to participate. One respondent was hiking the Pacific Crest Trail from the Oregon border to Canada and “had to take unpaid leave of work, prepare food for two months (ahead), get permits, and reserve campsites. I had to pay bills at home even though I’m not living there.” Another respondent, a mother with her husband and two young children, was tent camping in order to afford a month-long trip. “We sacrifice comfort for beauty,” she said. Of the surveyed, an additional nine mentioned gas money, carsickness, other destinations and children’s activities as obstacles. Work obligations were mentioned most often by respondents as an obstacle necessary to surmount in order to visit.

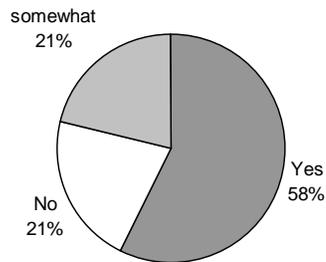
ACTIVE COMMITMENT

Other evidence of a commitment to nature is taking action on environment issues, from joining groups, to trail building or speaking to politicians in person. Of the 57 percent who took action in some way, 29 percent took a national action in the last year, including contributing to a national organization like the Nature Conservancy, while seven concentrated action on local issues. Forty-three percent took no action, or very little, such as the respondent who answered, “I might have signed a petition. I don’t know.” At the opposite extreme is the college student, a recent graduate, who volunteered at an elementary school, created an organic garden for students, and leads a “creation care bible study group” with the theme “How can Christians care for the environment?” Another couple, who farmed oysters, also kept bees and maintained a natural space at home in addition to fostering a connection to nature in their children teaching environmental education classes and taking family vacations in natural spaces.

Fifty-four percent of respondents said they maintained some natural environmental space at home. For the majority, this included some care for wild birds, including plantings, feeders, baths and boxes. Three people considered pet care as an aspect of caring for nature, declaring, “The dog is part of nature.” Another felt she was feeding wild birds because they were eating the food kicked out of the cages of her pet birds. A total of six respondents had native plant gardens or significant (1.5 acres or more) open space. An additional five respondents had ornamental or food gardens. Of the remaining eight, four pointed to the limitations at their residence as the reason they

did not support nature or wildlife this way.

Fig. 6: Spiritually nurtured by nature?



A powerful potential for connection and commitment to nature is through its power for spiritual renewal. In the 2004 General Social Survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, 74 percent said they were “spiritually touched by the beauty of creation” most days, every day or many times a day. It is not possible to know what these respondents were including in their definition of “creation,” but the phrasing is evocative of the

natural world. This inspired my question “Do you find visits to Crater Lake or places like it spiritually nurturing? Do you seek them out for this reason?”

Fifty-seven percent of these respondents answered with an unequivocal “Yes” or “Absolutely.” One woman answered the question about year-round participation with information about her spiritual fulfillment: “I receive my Holy Communion riding my horse out in the wilderness. That’s the body and blood of creation.” Another said, “It’s one of the main reasons to go in nature, to get the spirit, a ‘cleansing’ vacation.” This answer,

and others in the survey, echoed the restorative response described above by Kaplan and Kaplan.

An additional 18 percent found themselves agreeing they found a spiritual connection during the process of answering the question. This was almost as if they were discovering something about themselves. As one woman said, she didn't necessarily seek nature out for spiritual reasons. Instead, she, and others in this category, found themselves responding "spiritually" once they arrived on site. As one man answered, "I don't consider myself to be a spiritual person, so I don't look at it from that angle. They are revitalizing. They are a change from reality. But it is the most spiritual I get." To another, the sight of a butterfly inspired a prayer of thanks.

Continuity of behavior could be seen as an indicator of commitment, and twenty (71 percent) respondents indicated they sought out natural environments year round. A number of these had hobbies that helped sustain their interest in being outdoors in all seasons: rock-climbing, skiing, kayaking, mountain biking and hiking were mentioned. But others needed no activity to make the outdoor connection: "Just walking and being in nature. Nothing physical, just appreciating different ecosystems."

Repeated visits to natural locations chosen over the plethora of vacation destinations was seen as another related indicator of commitment. Respondents reported lists of vacation destinations. After visits to family were excluded, of those surveyed, 71 percent chose nature-based vacations rather than visits to metropolitan areas during the last five years. These were both exotic (Galapagos, rock climbing in Greek islands, Dubai) and more local, such as regional landmarks (Mt. McLaughlin) and National Parks (Redwoods, Grand Canyon), beaches (Oregon coast) and undeveloped areas (Wagner Butte, Jackson County, Oregon).

FAMILY BACKGROUND IN NATURE

A number of researchers have found that connection and commitment to nature are most likely found in those who had a nature connection as a child. Given this finding, Louv's proposition that children spending little time outside were suffering from a "nature-deficit disorder," a number of local investigations were done. At Sidwell Friends School, a private Quaker school located in a residential neighborhood in northwest Washington D.C., teachers David Wood and Margaret Pennock began working with 8th grade students to assess and confront nature deficit disorder. From their online schools survey, one question seemed important to ask at Crater Lake: "Do you think your children spend more or less time outside than you did as a child?" According to the article in *Connect Magazine*, 72 percent of adults had spent more time outside than their children. In this survey, of the 15 respondents with children over 5 years old, 54 percent answered similarly, with children indoors more than parents. A few responded they were intentionally exposing their children to nature, or "to show them where logs come from." Others were concerned: "They're so techno-savvy. There's a trend. I hope it doesn't make them indifferent to preserving our natural resources." Despite the quantitative nature of this question, most respondents shared more information and reported on

children who entered nature-based professions, or had outdoor activities. Parents seemed to feel a pressure to limit electronic entertainment, and this question did bring up the conflict between that pressure and the desires of the children.

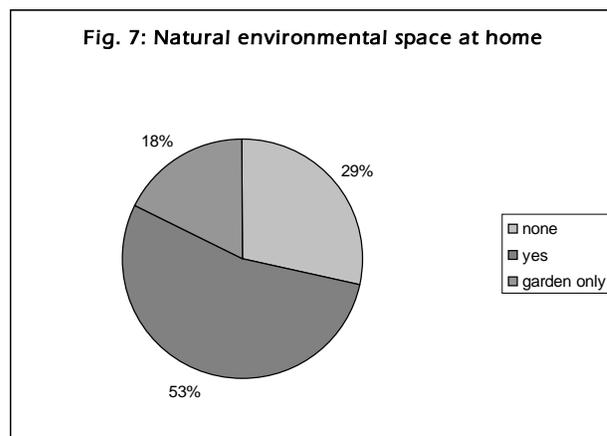
In those traveling without children (N=16), 44 percent considered that they had spent a greater time outdoors than had their parents. An equal percentage said children were outside more and 12 percent said there was no difference. This result is difficult to interpret, because of the wide range in ages of the respondents, which needs to be controlled in future surveys.

All those surveyed felt they had an average or better awareness of resource conservation and sustainable practices. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being highly aware, 36 percent considered themselves at level 5, and a few had taken classes or were professionals in the field of water quality or environmental chemistry. Another 46 percent considered themselves at level 4. The importance of this awareness might be characterized by the response of one person, who said they were “Four aiming for five,” on the awareness scale. Being informed may imply some social categorization that is seen as undesirable or undeserved. A number qualified their knowledge base: “We’re well informed, but not activist...”, “we eat organic,” and trying to stay “on top of it.”

CONTINUING SUPPORT

Two questions looked specifically at action steps being taken to benefit nature, one on political or association based actions and the other on home-based nature enhancing activities. The literature suggests that exposure to nature will increase or enhance these activities. Of those surveyed, 43 percent took little or no political advocacy actions. The prompts for this questions included petitions, memberships in groups and contacting legislators. Twenty-nine percent took some nationally based act, such as making a contribution to the Nature Conservancy. Twenty-five percent concentrated their efforts locally, such as a woman who belonged to a local riding group that acted “pro-environment.” Two people reported extensive activity. For one, a theology student, it was connected to “creation care.” In the second case, it was connected to his business as an oyster farmer and restaurateur. A number of people had professional ties to nature (water quality professional, biologist, zoologist). On the whole,

this was not an “activist” group, instead taking actions integrated into daily living.



This included 54 percent who maintained a “natural environmental space.” Bird feeding and other bird care was most frequently mentioned. Twenty-one percent had native gardens or open undeveloped space. An additional 18 percent had food or flower gardens and of those who did

not maintain such a space, it was due to an external limitation, such as apartment dwelling. When asked about this, two respondents included dog care as “part of nature.” This is an interesting way to construct nature when the prompts included bird feeders, koi ponds, trails, or riversides. The author has also observed this construction the way people frame garden and farmer’s market commitments. Rather than framing these as domestic animals, or agriculture, they are lumped into the larger category of “nature.”

Another measure of ongoing support is exposing one’s children to nature, as discussed above.

CONCLUSIONS

This research project was begun in order to examine the prevailing theories about the decline in nature-based recreation and its potential effect on support for environmental issues. Are electronic pleasures seducing people away from nature? Will declining attendance pose a problem in the future?

Experience in nature as a child does seem to be associated with continued commitment to nature. With a majority reporting multiple exposures to nature as a child, these respondents continued to choose nature over technology in many ways. They camped in tents, stayed overnight, took most of their vacations in natural spaces and were unperturbed by the loss of electronic entertainment during park visits. However, it is not as clear that early exposure inspired active support for the environment. It seems that the legacy of their exposure was a personal one they were continuing to reproduce, both at home with gardens and on nature based vacations. Four of the 15 parents spoke about their intentional efforts to introduce their children to nature, from learning “where logs come from” to participating in outdoor sports like biking and skiing and in nature education programs. “Hopefully, we’re passing it on,” said the wife of one respondent. Without prompting, parents spoke proudly about their children who entered nature based professions. These respondents valued nature and the opportunity to visit it: “We don’t mind making a massive trek for a day and a half of beauty,” said the mother of two young children. Given the profile of this sample, the increased number of two working parent families and single parent families remains relevant and local nature center activities presents an intriguing opportunity to explore whether parents of these children are able to take nature-based vacations.

Especially intriguing is the association of those who seek out nature with a mentor that constructs nature as “good,” as discussed by Bright and Porter. David Sobel has alerted us to the dangers of ecophobia—when environmental education creates the fear of ecological deterioration which may deaden feelings toward nature, or convey a sense of hopelessness (Louv 2006). Bright and Porter emphasized that meaning is an important aspect of nature based activity, that is, its construction as a “family time” or resource for food, or for connection to nature may be very important in establishing an attitude supporting environment issues. This may indicate a new direction in terms of framing the environment if we want to engender positive feelings and commitment to support environmental programs. Future directions for this research include bivariate

analysis, to test whether significant correlations exist between past experience, technology use and time devoted to nature.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule.

Crater Lake National Park: Who Goes There? Exploring the Meaning of Nature with Visitors.

Gender: _____ Home zip code: _____

- When you were deciding about your vacation you probably had to choose among a number of different destinations. What were your other choices and why did you come to CLNP?
- Will you make any other stops on this vacation trip? Will they be similar outdoor destinations or something different?
- When making vacation plans we usually have to juggle schedules and wish lists. What obstacles did you have to making this trip?
- Have you taken action on the environment, say to write Congress or contribute money to an environmental cause or group? Examples are the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, NRDC. How often do you take actions? (weekly, monthly, several times a year, yearly)
- Do you maintain any natural environmental space at your home? Like bird houses or feeders, gardens, koi pond). Do you volunteer with any organization to maintain natural spaces near your home, like trails or riversides.
- Do you find visits to Crater Lake or places like it spiritually nurturing? Do you seek them out for this reason?
- Were you exposed to nature as a child? For example, did your family go camping, or did you attend summer camps in natural areas? (Family garden, bird-feeding.)
- Do you try to visit natural areas year round, or just during the summer? For example, do you cross-country ski, hike for fun, do any bird-watching or nature photography?
- What other kinds of vacation destinations have you or your family traveled to over the past five years?
- (If childless adult)
Do you spend more or less time outside than your parents did?

- (If parent of children over 5 years old)
Do your children spend more or less time outside than you did as a child?
- How would you rate your environmental awareness about sustainable lifestyle practices like recycling or resource conservation?

Scale

Low

High

1

2

3

4

5

- On this visit are you looking for excitement or relaxation?

Mostly relaxation---some relaxation,-- both--some stimulation--exciting activities
mostly

- Do you or anyone in your home have a
_____ television? _____ Video game player _____ DVD/VCR player?
_____ Computer _____ Internet access?

- During the week how much time do you spend using electronic media, like the internet, video games or movies but not including television. What about on weekends?

- Is it hard to leave technology behind to visit CLNP?

- What is your favorite experience in this park?

- The boat ride,
- Fishing,
- hiking,
- wildlife viewing,
- relaxing in nature,
- the rim drive
- other.

- Do you have a favorite park feature?

- Lake
- Trails
- Wildlife
- Historic Buildings

Age: 18-24;

25-34;

35-44;

45-54;

55plus

- Number in party _____#_____ under 18, _____#_____ adults
- Length of stay at CLNP_____
- If multi-day answer: Are you:
_____Wilderness camping _____Tent camping _____RV
_____Hotel off-site _____Hotel on-site
- If with children: Do both parents work outside the home? Full or part-time?