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workers with teenage children.

In the development and study of outdoor recreation behavior the clear cut distinctions made above, for illustration sake, are not always so clear. Similar factors affecting behavior may be related to more than one unit of analysis. The important point is, however, that visitors to parks and recreation areas behave the way they do in response to personal needs and outside pressures. We can gain a clearer understanding of the effect of these factors and conditions on visitor behavior, and the relation of visitor behavior to park purposes and goals by considering the appropriate unit(s) of analysis.

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## Understanding Interpretive Clientele

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Interpretation, a process of non-formal environmental education and visitor communication services in leisure settings is highly dependent on understanding visitor behavior. Whether at a museum in Columbus, Ohio, on a cruise ship to Alaska, or in their favorite national park, visitors seek out specific information. Likewise, organizations hosting the visitor seek to provide additional information. A blend of theory and practice standards from leisure science, communications, education and marketing provide a basis for understanding, responding to, and, in many cases, directing visitor behavior.

Interpreters have long sought to use marketing strategies to identify the wants and needs of the visitor. At the same time the mission of the organization and the environmental prerequisites of natural and cultural resource sites must also be met. To do this, researchers and practitioners are constantly seeking to better understand their clientele.

Moore and Gross (1985) compiled an annotated bibliography which provides an easy reference to much of the interpretive research conducted between 1978 and 1984. A portion of the research conducted since then has been reported in *Legacy* (formerly *Journal of Interpretation*), *The Journal of Environmental Education* and *Visitor Behavior*. ERIC, a mechanized information search system available through most university library systems, is an efficient method for searching environmental education literature.

One of the unifying themes found throughout the literature is that visitors, functioning in a leisure mode, participate in resource based activities and utilize the communication services of the host organization. Because of these factors, the understanding of leisure science is paramount if one wishes to study visitor behavior as a means of improving interpretive services.

Machlis and Field (1985), working from a Weberian sociological framework, edited a book that exemplifies the utilization of behavioral perspectives to guide interpretive research in leisure settings. The authors, in addition to providing insight into the theoretical bases, focused their observations on the behaviors of various market segments who visit leisure settings – children, family camping groups, elderly, Japanese tourists and cruise ship travelers. A primary finding in each study was that market segments behave differently, thus requiring different services and different interpretive approaches.

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Recent work by Wright, Mullins and Watson (1991) have identified a variety of different behavior patterns and characteristics when National Park Service visitors are segmented into interpretive participant and non-participant categories. In another study Kremmer and Mullins (1991) used a modified naturalistic inquiry approach to focus on gender bias among children's preference for exhibits at a science museum. In this study boys and girls were observed to interact very differently with exhibits. The importance of the study though is not that boys and girls behave differently, but that their behavior may lead them to learn vastly different skills and information from their museum experience. Such visitor behavior studies of various target markets can help us as researchers and practitioners better understand the implication of our work to society as a whole.

The National Park Services is engaged in research to better understand visitor participation in its interpretive programs related to critical resource issues such as acidic deposition and loss of biological diversity. These impacts threaten the various natural, cultural and recreational resources managed by the agency. Without a clearer understanding of who is participating in these programs the agency has little hope of improving its targeting of messages about the extent to which the national parks are being impacted.

Organizations such as the Man and Biosphere Reserve Program, administrated through the U.S. Department of State, are concerned about how community education and public participation can become better tools for protecting world class biosphere reserves in the United States. A special 1991 issue of *Bioscience* focuses on understanding and protecting coastal barrier biospheres. Visitor behavior, interpretation, public education and tourism are key words in this issue.

Internationally, topics such as ecotourism are major issues. Tourists who engage in recreational travel often have a negative impact on the various sites they visit. Yet it is the tourists' dollars that serve as one incentive for many economically poor, ecologically rich countries to preserve these ecologically significant sites. Organizations such as the ECOCIENCIA Foundation, a nonprofit conservation group, and The Metropolitan Touring Company, both headquartered in Quito, Ecuador, are co-sponsoring interpretive and ecotourism workshops for tour guides to help them better understand visitor behaviors, and how to utilize interpretive strategies to protect both resources and economies while meeting visitor expectations.

Wherever people recreate, they come with various behavior patterns that may or may not be useful to them and the resource they are visiting. Researchers and practitioners must recognize that a clear understanding of visitor behaviors in a leisure setting is critical to meeting social and environmental needs. Much knowledge exists on the subject; much more is still required if we are to move the provisioning for visitor needs from an art to a science.

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## The Benefits of Urban Parks: A Review and Discussion of Current Research

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Urban parks form an increasingly important cornerstone of our nation's recreation estate. The President's Commission on Americans Outdoors (1986) estimated that there were 67,685 local parks in the United States containing three million acres of land. Americans make good use of these lands: 39% of the people surveyed for the Commission reported using local areas often. By the year 2000, when over 80% of Americans are projected to be living in cities, the significance of urban parks will be tremendous. Despite this obvious importance, however, research on urban and municipal parks has lagged well behind other areas of recreation research. What little research there is on urban parks has tended to focus on the benefits parks provide.

### The Benefits of Urban Parks

Urban parks provide a multiplicity of benefits to their communities: They create recreation opportunities, preserve open space and wildlife habitat, beautify neighborhoods and sections of cities, serve monumental or memorial functions, provide visual diversity, act as landmarks, and even guide traffic flows.

Recreation use is probably the most important category of benefits provided by urban parks. Use distribution may be a major problem, however. Gold (1972) examined neighborhood parks and concluded that many received such little use that it was difficult to justify their continued existence at public expense. More (1990) examined use rates for the entire park systems of two medium-sized (pop. ca. 40,000) Massachusetts cities and estimated that during July and August the two systems produced 605,608 visitor hours of

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