



# Managing Urban Parks for a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Clientele

One primary question is that of use. Although past findings show variation both within and among individuals and groups, there is a general tendency for White recreationists to travel further and visit urban and wildland parks and natural areas more frequently than African Americans (e.g., Dwyer, 1994; Scott & Munson, 1994; Washburne, 1978). Travel and use patterns by individuals of Latino, Asian, or American Indian origin are less studied and seem to vary across sites and studies (e.g., Chavez, 2001), but one common thread in studies of Latino recreationists is a generally larger and more age-diverse social group (Gramann, 1996). These differences raise questions about various dimensions of access to recreation sites. In urban settings it would seem particularly important to understand how external factors such as costs and transportation alternatives and internal factors such as site facilities encourage or discourage use for a diversity of individuals.

Another important question pertains to activity participation, one of the most-studied aspects of leisure and recreation patterns among racial and ethnic minority groups. The majority of studies have identified lower rates of participation by African Americans as compared to Whites in wildland activities such as camping and hiking and higher participation in urban activities like ball playing and picnicking (e.g., Dwyer & Gobster, 1997). While a continuing debate focuses on why such differences occur (e.g., Floyd, 1999), in an urban setting with high demands for use, one key issue for recreation managers may be to identify how to meet the core needs of all users while at the same time understanding how special needs and desires might be accommodated for particular groups.

While they are less studied, questions about environmental perceptions and preference are equally important to those of activity participation in understanding how parks can better function for a diverse range of racial and ethnic groups. Studies of this type reviewed by Kaplan and Talbot (1988) showed that African Americans generally preferred settings with higher levels of maintenance; more open, formal tree plantings; and higher levels of facility development than Whites. Both the Kaplan and Talbot review and Chavez's (2001) review of studies of Latino groups show a preference by racial and ethnic minorities for development and site arrangements that promote higher levels of social interaction within and among groups of users. These issues are central to park management in all types of settings, but in urban settings it may be equally important to know how sites are perceived negatively by different groups, particularly in terms of their safety.

This raises one final set of substantive issues for research, namely those relating to inter- and intragroup interactions and differences. Clearly, one key issue here is racial and ethnic discrimination (e.g., West, 1989), but

## **Methods**

### **Research Setting**

As Chicago's oldest, largest, and most

4% Asian, 2% other, and 1% missing data. Beyond this, however

or less), a third moderate (4–25 times/year), and a third heavy users (>25 times/year). There was a small, negative correlation between travel time and frequency of park use; those living further away from the park were likely to use it less often ( $r = -.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Because travel time was asked only in the minority survey, it is not known if this relationship holds for White park visitors.

Social patterns of use. One big difference between racial/ethnic group use patterns was social group size and composition. Whites tended to use the park as individuals or

**TABLE 1** Things People Do in Lincoln Park

Response categories	% Black n D 217	% Latino n D 210	% Asian n D 182	% White n D 289	% All n D 898	N All	$\chi^2$ sig. (p)
Passive	50.2	66.2	63.7	45.0	55.0	494	0.000
Sightseeing/hang out	11.1	9.1	16.5	3.1	9.1	82	0.000
Sitting, relaxing, rest	16.1	18.1	7.7	21.1	16.5	148	0.002
Taking in fresh air	.9	4.9	.0	.7	1.6	14	0.000 <sup>a</sup>
Watch people, opp. sex	8.3	4.3	.6	6.2	5.1	46	0.004
Watch organized sports	2.8	5.7	3.9	1.0	3.1	28	0.026
Talking, socializing	7.8	4.8	2.8	.7	3.8	34	0.000
Dating, affection	1.8	3.3	1.1	.4	1.6	14	0.059 <sup>a</sup>
Picnicking, barbeque	10.6	33.8	32.4	16.3	22.3	200	0.000
Festivals, parties	1.8	3.3	14.8	2.1	4.9	44	0.000
Active-individual	32.7	33.3	24.2	75.8	45.0	404	0.000
Walking	16.6	18.1	13.2	50.2	2.1	243	0.000
Jogging, running	3.2	7.6	4.4	18.3	9.4	84	0.000
Bicycling	11.2	11.9	6.6	22.5	14.0	126	0.000
Rollerblade/skateboard	.0	.0	.0	3.5	1.1	10	0.000 <sup>a</sup>
Exercising	3.7	2.4	4.4	4.2	3.7	33	0.695
Walking t014322234Tm40115281732T							

As a measure of how similar the groups were in activity participation, the rank order of activities was correlated between each group. The highest correlation was between Blacks and

**TABLE 3** Things People Dislike About Lincoln Park

Response categories	% Black n D 217	% Latino n D 210	% Asian n D 182	% White n D 289	% All n D 898	N All	$\hat{A}^2$ sig. (p)
Facilities/management problems	41.9	40.0	48.9	50.5	45.7	410	0.059
Lacks maintenance	3.7	2.4	1.1	4.2	3.0	27	0.241
Not enough nature, trees	6.0	.5	2.2	3.1	3.0	27	0.009
Bad air or water quality	.9	.0	.0	2.8	1.0	10	0.009 <sup>a</sup>
Need more/cleaner restrooms	6.5	19.1	8.8	3.8	9.0	81	0.000
Path condition/length	2.3	.5	.6	3.5	1.9	17	0.045 <sup>a</sup>
Beach condition closed areas	.9	.5	.0	2.4	1.1	10	0.060 <sup>a</sup>
Litter and vandalism	17.1	17.1	24.7	35.6	24.6	221	0.000
Lack of facilities	3.2	10.5	1.1	2.8	4.3	39	0.000
Lack of parking	2.3	5.2	11.5	3.1	5.1	46	0.000
Cost of food, parking	3.2	1.0	.6	1.0	1.5	13	0.099 <sup>a</sup>
Lack of information programs	1.8	1.4	.6	1.0	1.2	11	0.676 <sup>a</sup>
Social and user problems	30.0	15.7	22.0	50.5	31.6	284	0.000
Lack of security	4.6	1.4	.6	6.9	3.8	34	0.001
Crowded	1.4	4.3	9.9	17.3	8.9	80	0.000
Cars and traf c	.5	.0	.6	2.8	1.1	10	0.012 <sup>a</sup>
Trail user con icts	.5	.0	1.1	9.0	3.2	29	0.000
Loud and rude users	4.2	1.9	5.5	5.5	4.3	39	0.204
Pet problems	2.8	.5	1.7	3.8	2.3	21	0.091 <sup>a</sup>
Drunks and drug users	3.2	3.3	2.8	1.7	2.7	24	0.660
Gangs and drug dealers	3.2	2.4	1.1	2.8	2.5	22	0.559
Police/staff behavior	6.0	2.4	.0	.7	2.2	20	0.000 <sup>a</sup>
Racial problems/prejudice	6.5	.0	.0	1.0	1.9	17	0.000 <sup>a</sup>
Homeless/strange people	.9	.5	.6	8.3	3.1	28	0.000
Miscellaneous							
Parking, access problems	.0	.5	5.5	1.0	1.6	14	0.000 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Results of the  $\hat{A}^2$ significance test for this item may be unreliable because 1 or more groups had few individuals mentioning it (5 or less).



Favored park attributes. Top responses common to all groups included: lake and ponds; beaches; zoo; peaceful, friendly atmosphere; people and varied

**TABLE 4** Ethnic Groups Represented in the Survey

Black groups n D 169		Latino groups n D 162		Asian groups n D 152	
	%		%		%
Northern U.S. roots	58.0	Mexican	66.7	Filipino	24.3
Southern U.S. roots	38.4	Puerto Rican	9.3	Chinese	18.4
African	1.2	Cuban	1.2	S.E. Asian (total)	36.8
West Indies	2.4	C/S America (total)	19.1	Vietnamese	3.9
		Guatemalan	7.4	Cambodian	1.3
		Salvadoran	1.9	Laotian	2.0
		Costa Rican	.6	Thai	6.6
		Nicaraguan	.6	Korean	22.3
		Panamanian	.6	S. Asian (total)	8.6
		Columbian	2.5	Indian	5.9
		Ecuadorian	1.9	Pakistani	2.7
		Peruvian	2.5	Japanese	8.6
		"American"; no ethnicity identi ed	3.7	"American"; no ethnicity identi ed	3.3

from other user

they pursue



Ethnicity

found that boundaries can be problems if perceived ownership of an area inhibits others from using facilities in it that are not found elsewhere.

### **Discrimination**

Interethnic user conflict is part of a larger problem for minorities who use parks, namely discrimination. Discrimination is a serious issue in park management, and has begun to receive some attention by leisure researchers (e.g., Blahna & Black, 1993; Chavez, 1993; Floyd & Gramann, 1995; West, 1989). In its mildest forms, discrimination can make users feel uncomfortable and lower their enjoyment of their recreation experience. At higher levels it can generate anger and physical violence, and result in user displacement or nonuse by some groups altogether. Although questions relating to discrimination were not asked on the original survey, it is likely that feelings of discomfort or fear can act as a deterrent to park use among Whites as well as racial and ethnic minority individuals (e.g., Gobster, 1998a), and might also play an important role in the marginalization of groups because of

discrimination, and that park managers can begin to take positive steps to counteract some of them. Future research, including in-depth interviews with individuals and small groups, may be another way to get information about discrimination. Such research might also involve park staff and police, to better understand their perspectives and the way they deal with issues where the possibility of discrimination exists.

### **Ethnicity**

As a final discussion point, these findings support the thesis that in some cases racial groupings may be too broad to identify culturally based differences in leisure behavior (Taylor, 1993). Hutchison (1988), in his critique of research in this area, argued that future work "must include population subgroups which contain ethnic subcultures, and must develop a research methodology capable of capturing the very significant social phenomenon under study" (p. 25). This was attempted in the present study, but the quota sampling method limited analysis to sketchy ethnic comparisons in the same way a random sampling of the general population has limited others to sketchy racial comparisons. In follow-up research to this study, we used focus groups with individuals representing a selected cross-section of ethnic minority groups in Chicago, to more precisely identify ethnic leisure interests and needs (Delgado, 1994; Gobster, 1998b; Zhang & Gos

- Baas, J. M. (1992). Identifying service delivery strategies for ethnically diverse users of a wildland-urban recreation site. In D. J. Chavez (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Symposium on Social Aspects and Recreation Research* (General Tech. Rep. PSW-132, pp. 40-41). Albany, CA: USDA, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station.
- Baas, J. M., Ewert, A., & Chavez, D. J. (1993). Influence of ethnicity on recreation and natural environment use patterns: Managing recreation sites for ethnic and racial diversity. *Environmental Management*, 17, 523-529.
- Blahna, D. J. (1992). Comparing the preferences of Black, Asian, Latino, and White fishermen at Moraine Hills State Park, Illinois. In D. J. Chavez (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Symposium on Social Aspects and Recreation Research* (General Tech. Rep. PSW-132, pp. 42-43). Albany, CA: USDA, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station.
- Blahna, D., & Black, K. (1993). Racism: A concern for recreation resource managers? In P. Gobster (Ed.), *Managing Urban and High-Use Recreation Settings* (General Tech. Rep. NC-163, pp. 111-118). St. Paul, MN: USDA, Forest Service, North Central Forest Experiment Station.
- Brune, T. (1978, May). Chicago Park District shortchanges Black and Latino wards; More facilities, programs and staff channeled to White wards. *The Chicago Reporter*, 7, 1-3, 6.
- Bullard, R. D., & Wright, B. H. (1990). The quest for environmental equity: Mobilizing the African-American community for social change. *Society and Natural Resources*, 3, 301-311.
- Carr, D. S., & Williams, D. R. (1993). Understanding the role of ethnicity in outdoor recreation experiences. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 25, 22-38.
- Chavez, D. J. (1993). Visitor perceptions of recreation sites in the San Francisco Bay Area. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 25, 22-38.



