



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

N26-N

February 24, 1970

Memorandum

To: Directorate; All Regional Directors; Director, Office of National Capital and Urban Park Affairs; and All Center Directors

From: Chief, Office of Natural Science Studies

Subject: Office of Natural Science Studies Reports

During the latter part of 1968, the Office of Natural Science Studies conducted a nationwide study to learn about some of the sociological characteristics of the people who went to a national park during the preceding year. The purpose of this study was to obtain baseline data necessary for additional studies which will be undertaken later. While these data were obtained as an integral part of the scientific work being carried out by the Office of Natural Science Studies, they may also be useful to other divisions for any number of purposes.

Periodically, ONS will issue short reports similar to the enclosure, in which some information about people in the parks will be presented. These will be technical reports presenting the information and explaining it. How it may be useful to each division will, of necessity, be decided within the division. ONS will be available, of course, to answer any questions about the information contained in these reports. Should you require additional copies of this report, please contact this office directly. The reports are provided for administrative use only.


Robert M. Linn

Enclosure

PEOPLE IN THE PARKS

In earlier reports in this series it was noted that the recency with which an adult in the society had been to some kind of park was statistically associated with having children in the household under 18; residing in an urbanized area; having education beyond high school and being engaged in a white-collar occupation. This pattern was repeated when the frequency with which adults went to parks was examined. When we compared those adults who had been in a national park during the year preceding the study, we found that as a social aggregate they tended to diverge from the previously noted pattern in that they were more likely to be from smaller cities and not have children under 18 years in their homes. There were several possible explanations for this divergency in the patterns, and in this report we want to extend this line of investigation somewhat. We want to examine, in this report, how the adults who go to national parks compare with others with respect to going to other kinds of parks and some of the variables associated with the behavior, should differences exist.

Park-going Publics

In Table 1 we can compare the recency of the last time the respondent was in any kind of a park among three social aggregates -

(See Table 1)

those in a national park within the year before the study date (last year); those in a national park at some other time, but not during the last year (over a year); and, finally, those adults who reported never having been in a national park (never). It is immediately apparent that the three aggregates differ with respect to recency of last time in any park. The differences (among the aggregates) are statistically significant. Apparently, national park goers went to all kinds of parks more recently than those who have never been to a national park. Among national park goers, those more recently in a national park have also more recently been in other kinds of parks. This suggests that these adults may be generally more active in going to all kinds of parks than are others. In other words, this may be a sub-cultural variation of the society. Table 2 will help enlarge the tenability of this explanation for the observed differences.

(See Table 2)

Those adults who have been in a national park during the past year and have gone to any park recently, show a substantially greater frequency of going to parks than the other two aggregates. These differences are statistically significant. About 44% of the persons in the last year

aggregate reported going to parks as frequently as once or more per month. The comparable figure for those in a national park more than a year ago is 28%, and those never in a national park is about 25%. This table includes a column indicating the percentage of the respondents in each social aggregate who could not recall how frequently they go to parks. The magnitude of the differences among the aggregates is substantial. About 31% of those never in a national park could not recall the information requested and about 23% of those in national parks over a year ago also did not recall the frequency with which they went to parks. However, only about 3% of persons last in a national park within the year could not recall the information. These differences among the three aggregates suggest the presence of differences in the relative importance of going to parks to the respondents. For those persons who could not recall the information, it is reasonable to conclude that the saliency of the activity is less for them than for those who go to parks most frequently. This adds weight to the interpretation of previous findings in Table 1, that there does exist in the society a sub-cultural variation with respect to going to parks as a human activity. Thus in the society it appears that there is a social aggregate who frequently go to parks of all kinds as a highly salient activity of their daily lives, just as there is a social aggregate who attend professional sports activities as an important part of their daily lives. We may thus begin to think about park-going publics as part of, but distinct from the public as a whole. In the remainder of this report we will try to identify some of the sociological characteristics associated with these publics.

Social Class

The idea of social class as used in sociological studies is technical and not pejorative. It is based upon the observations of the behavior of persons who have a similar access to the market place in a society, **that** is, what they can sell their labor for and purchase with their earnings. Associated with such differential access are a number of other characteristics which together produce different life-styles for social classes. However, access to the market is not the sole, nor necessarily the principal determinant of life style. In Table 3 we can examine the relative importance of access to the market among the several social aggregates.

(See Table 3)

In this table a fourth social aggregate is included - those adults who reported never going to any kind of park. This will permit comparisons between those adults who go to parks and those who do not. It is clear that the majority of persons going to parks have what may be called moderate to low incomes, i.e., under \$10,000 per annum. A trend can be seen, by reading up the two left-hand columns of the table, that within the four social aggregates the proportion of the

aggregate with moderate to low incomes declines as one considers recency of going to a national park. However, the absolute majority of persons in each category remains those with moderate to low incomes. This suggests that access to the market alone is insufficient to explain differences among park-going publics. At the same time, it is clear that access to the market place does influence going to parks in an important way. For example, persons in national parks during the preceding year report proportionately more incomes between \$10,000 and \$25,000 than was true among the other aggregates. What cannot be known from this table is what other sociological characteristics such persons possess. For example, if they are older persons, without children under 18 years of age, the analytical conclusions would be different from those reached if they were persons in another phase of the life cycle.

In an attempt to assess several variables related to the income distribution, we examined the relationship between the park-going publics, annual family incomes and occupations. (These tables are not reported here but are available for examination.) The conclusion from this subsidiary analysis was that no single occupational grouping was contributing disproportionately to any income category for any park-going public with one exception. That exception was that for persons with incomes under \$5,000 who never have gone to any park, students, retired persons, and farm occupation groups were slightly over-represented. This finding tends to strengthen the observation that access to the market place alone cannot explain the differences among the park-going publics. Thus, among all the park-going publics both moderate to low and middle income access to the market place interact with other variables to produce the observed behavior.

Age

In every society, age is much more than the chronological accounting of an individual's longevity. Think for a moment of the contemporary assertions about a so-called generation gap and you will begin to recognize how age becomes symbolic of many things in addition to longevity. Think about how you personally are never any particular age, for to someone else you are always "just a kid" or an "old foggy". Now look at Table 4 and compare the age distribution among the four social aggregates.

(See Table 4)

With the exception of those who never go to parks the modal age category is 25-49 years. The three age categories reflect approximate differences in the life cycle of most adults in the society. Thus before the age of 25, most young adults are completing educations, beginning work careers, consummating or contemplating marriage and some beginning child rearing. During the 25-49 year period, most

adults have married, are rearing children, establishing careers and generally settling into the social behavior and actions of adult members of the society. By the age of 50, the child rearing phase is ending, careers are peaking, some terminating and new patterns of behavior acquired which persist largely until death.

With the exception of those who never go to parks, the three other aggregates appear substantially similar with respect to age distribution, although those in a national park over a year ago tend to be somewhat older persons. This may reflect the time lapse between going to a national park and the study date more than any real differences between the aggregates. Thus going to national parks appears to be independent of age alone. However, going to parks per se is not independent of age.

Residential Patterns - Size of Place

A person's place of residence is seldom randomly selected. For many persons in this society, residential location reflects the demands of their occupations - they live where they can obtain work. For others, residential location reflects where they were born and raised - they work where they live. Each of these constraints exert important influences on the location of residences. There are, of course, additional influences such as marriage patterns, place in life cycle, ethnicity, etc. In Table 5 we can observe the residential patterns of the park-going and non-park-going publics.

(See Table 5)

In Report #3 we noted that adults in national parks during the year preceding the study period tended to come from smaller urban areas than was true for the population as a whole. In Table 5 we can observe that nearly 50% of such adults lived in residential locations of under 25,000. Ordinarily we might assume that since many of the national parks are physically located near smaller urban areas that this fact would largely account for the observed pattern. However, when we note that about 57% of those persons who never go to any kind of park also reside in smaller urban places it becomes clear that the relationship between size of place and going to national parks must be more complex than it first appears. Moreover, of those adults who go to parks but have never gone to a national park, approximately 40% reside in smaller urban areas. This latter observation suggests that residence alone is not capable of distinguishing among the various park-going publics. However, as was true with age, neither is going to parks independent of size of place. It will be interesting to learn in later studies whether persons who go to national parks have always resided in the same town or have moved around.

Education

The final characteristic that we want to compare the park-going publics on in this report is education. Sociologically the importance of education lies in its contributions to the processes of socialization in a society. While the precise nature of the impact of the educational experience (i.e., schooling) upon the individual is still an object of study among psychologists, the sociological consequences can be observed. Among such is social mobility, change in the social stratification system of a society and alterations in some belief patterns in the culture. Table 6 compares the educational backgrounds of the four social aggregates under examination.

(See Table 6)

The social aggregate of adults in national parks during the preceding year is the best educated. With respect to going to parks, the differences are quite noticeable when the educational distribution within the aggregate (i.e., across the rows) is compared among (i.e., across the columns) the four aggregates. For example, the social aggregate of those who have never been to a national park is heavily distributed towards having less than a high school education. This tendency is also sharply continued among those persons who comprise the "do not go to any park" aggregate. Apparently, something about the educational process tends to influence an adult's location in a park-going public. While the precise nature of this influence cannot be ascertained from this table some indications are present.

By examining the variation among the park-going publics with respect to a particular education level, we note that having some education at a college level seems to substantially influence going to national parks. We can also notice that going to parks per se as a human activity is not independent of education. That is, the activity does not appear to occur solely as a characteristic of the biological animal. Thus it remains an open question whether man seeks out parks and open spaces as a response solely to his makeup as a biological species. These data suggest he does not. Instead it suggests that some kind of social conditioning, in this instance it is education, is a necessary condition for the behavior to occur.

Summary

This report begins the analysis of sociological similarities and differences among several park-going publics. First, it is important to recognize that the adult population is not an undifferentiated mass of humans with respect to going to parks. Secondly, it is important to recognize that each park-going public can be usefully seen as the outcome of the joint effects of several sociological variables. Moreover, each variable operates somewhat differently

within a particular park-going public. Finally, the analysis is suggestive of further lines of inquiry where we can begin to see the simultaneous joint effects of several variables. For example, while age alone apparently does not differentiate among the park-going publics, what is the joint effect of age and social class? The next report in this series will examine these and other related questions.

Neil H. Cheek, Jr.
Research Sociologist
Office of Natural Science Studies
February 24, 1970

Table 1. Last Time in Some National Park X Last Time at Any Park - %

In Some National Park	Last Time at Park				Total
	Last month	During year but not last month	More than a year ago	Don't recall	
last year	32.0	63.5	4.5	-	100.0
over a year	21.0	48.0	28.0	3.0	100.0
never	15.0	48.0	33.0	4.0	100.0

Table 2. Last Time in Some National Park X Frequency of Going to Any Park - %

In Some National Park	Frequency of Going			Total
	Once or more per month	Less than once a month	Don't recall	
last year	44.0	52.5	3.5	100.0
over a year	28.0	48.5	23.5	100.0
never	25.5	43.0	31.5	100.0

Table 3. Park-going Public X Annual Family Income - %

In Some National Park	Income						Total
	Under \$5,000	\$5,000 to \$9,999	\$10,000 to \$14,999	\$15,000 to \$24,999	Over \$25,000	No response	
last year	16.0	45.0	24.0	11.0	3.0	1.0	100.0
over a year	27.0	42.5	18.0	9.0	2.4	1.1	100.0
never	35.0	40.0	15.5	6.0	1.4	2.1	100.0
do not go to <u>any</u> park	67.0	23.0	4.5	1.0	2.5	2.0	100.0

Table 4. Park-going Public X Age Distribution - %

In Some National Park	Age			Total
	18 - 24	25 - 49	Over 50	
last year	18.0	55.5	26.5	100.0
over a year	12.2	46.3	41.5	100.0
never	15.0	49.1	35.9	100.0
do not go to <u>any</u> park	8.0	32.8	59.2	100.0

Table 5. Park-going Public X Size of Place - %

In Some National Park	Size of Place			Total
	Under 25,000	25,000 - 499,999	Over 500,000	
last year	49.0	16.0	35.0	100.0
over a year	43.0	23.0	34.0	100.0
never	39.4	20.1	40.5	100.0
do not go to <u>any</u> park	56.5	12.5	31.0	100.0

Table 6. Park-going Public X Educational Distribution - %

In Some National Park	Education			Total
	less than high school	completed high school	more than high school	
last year	25.0	39.0	36.0	100.0
over a year	36.0	32.5	31.5	100.0
never	54.0	32.0	14.0	100.0
do not go to <u>any</u> park	76.0	18.5	5.5	100.0

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Northeast Region
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Philadelphia, Pa. 19106

In Reply Refer to:
N26-N
NER(M)

January 30, 1970

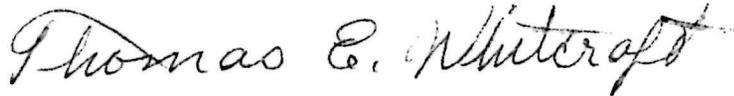
Memorandum

To: Superintendents and Division Chiefs, Northeast Region

From: Assistant Regional Director, Operations,
Northeast Region

Subject: Office of Natural Science Studies Reports

We are enclosing a copy of memorandum N26-N dated January 19, 1970, from Chief, Office of Natural Science Studies, Linn on the above subject, together with a copy of the study conducted during November 1968. As noted in Mr. Linn's memorandum, the reports are provided for administrative use only.



Thomas E. Whitcraft

Enclosures 2

This memorandum is cancelled when brought to the attention of all concerned.