

Social Conceptions of Nature's Functions in an Urban Landscape:

People and Parks in Madison, WI

University of Wisconsin- Madison

Geography 565

Kippy Terry and James Arndt

Abstract

In this paper, we explore the connection between parks and people in the City of Madison, Wisconsin. Utilizing a survey and a subsequent landscape analysis, we identify features of urban parks that contribute to a positive and productive experience for users. With these elements identified, we earn a better understanding of what forms an urban park might take, and what functions those respective forms provide for the betterment of the Madison community. Our landscape analysis was focused on the most popular parks as indicated by our survey: James Madison Park, Henry Vilas Park, Tenney Park, and Edward Klief Park. Incorporating respondent data with our literature review, we determined that Madison residents have access to a high quantity of high quality parks. Considering the limitations of this project, and the relatively homogenous survey pool, we conclude that Madison parks provide an ideal standard for congruent urban parks.

Introduction

The dichotomy of nature and society eludes definition. As humans, we inherently accept this nebulous division, yet individuals interpret these elements in infinitely unique forms. We each have particular conceptualizations of nature, which when melded together create what our society envisions when considering the term “nature” (Gobster 2001, 36). Any natural space one can imagine is the result of a very particular combination of important factors; climate, topography, and human influence are just a few of such factors. The resulting heterogeneity is one of nature’s greatest strengths, although it provides an architectural challenge within the context of parks and urban design: How are we to interpret nature’s various functions into a visual, interactive landscape for a wide variety of users? Parks in an urban setting present a further challenge of trying to enhance the urban landscape, which has traditionally unappealing characteristics, such as pollution and a monotonous hardscape. Urban parks confound the barrier between social and natural environments (Peters et al. 2010). Additionally, every park visitor interacts with and makes use of these landscapes uniquely, based on any amount of individual opinions and experiences. There is no limit to the influence of natural design on human perceptions of their surroundings nor to the influence of human experience on natural design (Thompson 2002).

This study is designed to help identify natural elements that are crucial to one’s experience and appreciation of nature in a city. We will turn to individual perceptions and reactions of nature, within the context of society’s presentation of natural elements, to make a connection between user

satisfaction and natural forms. Through environmental experiences, the mind creates a construct of the natural world, including perceptual and associational meanings. It is important to note that with the contemporary notion of American environmentalism, humans have deeply divided themselves from nature, so that landscapes have become an artifact, in which users can see the mark of humanity upon the Earth. Thus, natural landscapes have become spaces that serve a purpose primarily for human function and aesthetic (Thompson 2002). By interpreting how specific people understand nature, we can identify what elements and services of nature are the most meaningful for users.

Through landscape analysis and surveying subjective perceptions of nature, this study will attempt to find how parks can be effectively incorporated into urban geographies. We will analyze how people perceive nature in their own lives in regards to practical, social, and aesthetic function. This knowledge will assist in the identification of which Madison parks fulfill these ideals for a congruent urban park. We will utilize a combination of several primary forms of research. We will conduct surveys containing 11 questions prompting each participant to describe their usage patterns of City of Madison parks, along with consideration of local geography and personal preferences. Their collective responses will help us shape and define a social conception of nature's function unique to our accessible demographic. Following the analysis of survey responses, we will turn to field work and landscape analysis, cataloguing usage patterns across visible and available elements to determine the ability of urban parks to provide for the desired services of their users.

Our research analysis will rest on the principles of landscape analysis and human-environment theories. Landscape analysis consists of observing and photographing certain natural features, environmental amenities, recreational amenities, and social actors in certain parks, then aligning the previously noted physical characteristics with specific patterns in human behavior. Parks act as landscapes for a wide variety of services such as relaxation, socialization, and recreation. Within all built designs, there is the idea of congruence, or the implication that there is an inherent fit between a built design's form and function (Lawrence- Zuniga 1997, 44). Applied to parks, which have been built with varying degrees of design and composition, congruence would reference a number of nature's functions, which, as we stated earlier, are perceived differently by every user. The variance in public expectations for a public park, suggests the need for variation in form in order to prompt maximum levels of enjoyment and personal satisfaction. The urban environment imposes other systems and social constraints onto these natural spaces, such as the quantity and quality of amenities and accessibility to the park. These considerations contribute to

how a user perceives a park and has the influence to shift a user's priorities regarding how they want to use the space.

Methods

A project focused on matching social perceptions with particular landscapes requires the respondent input in combination with the analysis of particular sites. Therefore, our research for this project was conducted in two steps. The first was through the distribution of a survey, through email and social media, directed towards current and previous residents of the City of Madison. Respondents were asked a series of eleven questions with the intent of drawing out how residents of the City of Madison experience its parks, prioritize the constituent usable elements, and reap different benefits depending on how they experience these spaces.

The particular verbiage of the survey was guided by the investigation of certain questions we sought to answer:

- Does race, age, or gender impact usage/experience of Madison parks?
- What are the usage patterns (frequency, activity types, seasonality) of Madison parks?
- How do users perceive their own experience of Madison parks?
- Which Madison parks are preferred, and must residents travel to access these parks?

Using the guidance of the survey, we then conducted site analyses to determine how well the City of Madison's parks provide for the desired services of its residents. We compared the form and intended functions of particular Madison parks to the usage patterns of Madison residents. We analyzed four parks: Vilas Park, Edward Klief Park, Tenney Park, and James Madison Park, to determine how well these spaces provide for desired services. Demographic data would determine the representativeness of our conclusion, and the remainder would be used to answer our guiding questions, and most importantly, our research question determining the success of Madison parks to provide for Madison residents.

Site Setting

Madison boasts a world-class park system, thanks to the joint efforts of the City of Madison Parks Division and the Madison Parks Foundation, a non-profit partner of the City's department.

Originally, the park system was managed by movements of private citizen activism (“History of Madison Parks Division”). In 1892, Madison residents banded together to organize the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association to develop and maintain the various scenic drives and parks in the city. John Olin, regarded now as “the father of Madison’s Park System,” was among the citizens and funders that worked on the development and preservation of 229 acres of park land within the city limits by 1909 (“History of Madison Parks Division”). Many of the existing parks today are named after citizens who were crucial to the funding or design process: Vilas, Tenney, Brittingham, etc. The Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association acted as the city’s unofficial parks department until 1931, when the City began to reclaim the responsibilities of park development and maintenance. Citizen contribution and support for Madison parks was formalized again in 2003, with the incorporation of the Madison Parks Foundation. The Foundation has a variety of renovation, equity, and programming goals for Madison’s parks (“History of Madison Parks Division”). The maintenance and administrative duties associated with the City’s parks falls to the City’s Parks Division.

Today, 94% of Madison residents live within a 10-minute walk of a city park. The Madison Parks Department owns 270 parks, 4 golf courses, and 1 cemetery (“Madison Parks” 2020). This study will turn to the 270 parks within city limits. Due to time and resources constraints, we will specifically focus on the four parks that have been identified as the most popular parks by our survey responses: Vilas Park, Edward Klief Park, Tenney Park, and James Madison Park (Figure 5). These parks offer a variety of functional and aesthetic purposes and amenities, as evident in the list of facilities for each park on the Parks Division website (“Madison Parks” 2020). Our goal is to identify the alignment between these parks’ designs (including their respective facilities and landscapes) and the wants of the parks’ visitors.

Literature Review

The research conducted in preparation for this project provided us with a variety of ways to interrogate, understand, and analyze urban parks among other urban open spaces. The themes that will be discussed in this review of relevant literature will seek to detail many important topics surrounding the history, design, and use of urban parks. A rather simplistic statement, that parks are not entirely “natural” spaces, brings up complex questions about who these parks are designed for, and the many factors that flow from such an origin. Another, and arguably more relevant topic, is the impressive number of individual perceptions of nature, and more importantly, what different iterations of nature are provided for people. Urban parks, functioning as proximate expressions of

nature in urban landscapes, are interpreted to provide many functions categorized their amenity, restorative, and spiritual properties, among other things. The relationship between the users and designers of a park is integral when planning how to design a park and how such services can be provided, and whether they ought to be provided.

Though individualism and significance are an important part of understanding urban parks, an equally important aspect is the social impact the park has on its community. Discussions about social cohesion place urban parks, among other urban open spaces, as necessary features. Cultural icons and focal points help create shared senses of place and bring people together. The variety of urban spaces that include natural elements is also helpful for accomplishing “loose-fit” spaces, that through the lack of evident maintenance provide various people with places to escape judgement and society. All the concepts that we have previewed so far were important in shaping our understanding of how to perceive and analyze urban parks. Though we have learned that there is little variety in what nature is, there is considerable variety in how nature is to be made use of. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the importance of these spaces and we expect this trend in popularity to continue.

When visiting any space, particularly urban parks, people automatically identify the current users of that space, and in what ways they are using it. This allows people to effectively find a comfortable space and find a way for all users to happily enjoy. However, people rarely consider who is not occupying an urban space. Byrne (2012) discusses that parks are not entirely “natural” spaces. Though it is obvious that urban parks were designed and intentionally built, we often assume a sense of inclusive ignorance on the part of the park’s designer. Though this may generally be the case, many urban parks, when constructed in their own times were impacted by prejudices and exclusionary practices, such as the Jim Crow laws. Every designer has a design goal in mind, and though this has never inherently been exclusionary, there most certainly can be, and has been, exclusion of particular groups from particular spaces.

Lee and Scott (2016) make use of Bourdieu’s theory on culture, power, stratification, and reproduction to outline a broad history of how past injustices, through the example of Jim Crow, led to the existing de facto segregation. Three major components concepts are used: capital, field, and habitus. Capital is sourced from the ideas of Marx, and is seen in four forms: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic. In different ways, these forms of capital create and shape power relationships between different groups of people. A group’s general mode of conduct is referred to as habitus. Habitus defines what is and isn’t appropriate for people, and tends to passively guide behavior without being challenged. The spatially centered concept of field is meant to encapsulate

the space in which different interactions shaped by social structures take place. This can be social and physical. Bourdieu's theory and the understanding that parks are not entirely "natural" spaces, support each other rather well in helping us to be cautious about the presentist narratives we might be inclined to place on an urban park. Survey responses might imply or directly express a perception of being unwelcome, and we ought to be prepared to understand why that might be, so as to better analyze how parks in Madison, Wisconsin might be perpetuating antiquated and unjust power dynamics.

An interesting dimension of the discussion on urban parks is individual perceptions and subsequently, the aggregated social conception of nature. When trying to understand individual perceptions of nature, Don Meinig (1976) operates on the consideration that every person will interpret a landscape differently. Meinig provides ten different ways that a landscape can be viewed by a user: as Nature, as Habitat, as Artifact, as System, as Problem, as Wealth, as Ideology, as History, as Place, and/or as Aesthetic (Meinig 1976, 48-54). These capture only a selection of ways to consider landscapes, yet begin to explain the innumerable ways that landscape can be understood. Though from our perspective an urban park might intuitively embody certain forms, it is important to be open to different interpretations. However, our research has provided us with a sense that what people envision when they consider nature is relatively homogeneous. Natural elements, such as foliage, open space, and recreational facilities seem to come quite naturally. The difference is rather what nature is used for. There may not be much variety in what nature is, but the different ways to understand and interpret natural landscapes provides background for the consideration of use.

There are more readily comparable iterations of the perceptions of services and uses than perceptions about what nature is. This information led us to change our research question to investigate the services people see urban parks to provide. People have a variety of different needs, and the various natural landscapes meet these needs in different ways. A popular narrative is that people use nature and public parks for sourcing mental and emotional restoration. People reconnect with nature, and find clarity. Additionally, there is an interesting, but not mutually exclusive tension between people seeking social interaction and people seeking anonymity and solitude. Both can be accomplished, but might come into conflict. Anna Chiesura (2004) demarcates three major categories: Amenity, Restorative, and Spiritual, but recognizes these aren't exhaustive. Amenity refers to activities such as sports. Restorative tends to refer to relaxing activities, such as reading, Spiritual refers to a deeper connection like communing with nature. These are simplistic

definitions, but these categories of use will help us to understand how people see nature, and particularly urban parks, as places that they interact with and draw services from.

It is important to remember that while parks have provided functional services for humans for the past century and a half, the ecosystem services provided by the environment remain the first priority for a natural space. These ecosystem services include carbon sequestration, seed dispersal, erosion prevention, water purification, air purification, and habitat quality. As cities contribute to grow to accommodate an expected 65% of the global population by 2050, these ecosystem services have the potential to contribute to the inhabitants' well-being and the well-being of the natural environment (Mexia et al. 2018, 469). To maximize these benefits, cities can integrate park space into the urban landscape to provide services such as water and air purification, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, and social and psychological well-being. More specifically, Mexia et al. (2018) identify which forms of vegetation and land cover that can maximize these benefits, such as grassland with high tree density. While this study acknowledges these ecosystem services, our attention is directed towards how the sources of these services, in this case vegetation, create cultural and personal meaning for urban parks' users.

Gobster (2001) found that cultural value within a landscape is held in landscape "icons:" "natural or cultural features in the park landscape that hold important symbolic value to certain groups of people" (36). Although parks are not accessible to all people, it stands true that people from all ethnic backgrounds visit parks, but not in proportion to populations cohorts. Different groups align with different cultural icons; or, different groups align with the same icons in different ways. These icons prompt deeper connections to the parks, which Peters et al. defines as "place-attachment." The more icons, the more place-attachment, and more visitation. With more users comes higher levels of social interaction between visitors. The attachment that users feel to the icons and the social interactions and connections to community have the ability to "facilitate social cohesion" (Peters et al. 2010, 97). The key to this cohesion is tapping into the underlying meanings that characterize the space as culturally important for groups of people. The level of connection that people feel contributes to how often they visit the parks and in what ways they interact with the space and other users. Gobster identifies the services provided by these cultural icons as aesthetic, but this research will expand past superficial appearances into cultural and personal importance. This is especially true considering Meining's theory (1976) that no two people will interpret a landscape in the same way. Aesthetic services can be expanded to be personally meaningful for a variety of users to facilitate higher usage from the surrounding communities.

How can designers and planners incorporate a park that is enjoyable and meaningful for users and for the environment? Historically, parks have acted as spaces for citizens to find relief from busy, polluted city life, but as cities shift to a more sustainable framework, landscape architects and environmentalists have called for a new park model. Through a classic study of urban parks, four types of urban parks have been identified generationally: the Pleasure Ground (1850-1900), the Reform Park (1990-1930), the Recreation Facility (1930-1965), and the Open Space System (1965 - present) (Cranz, Boland 2004, 103). This typology addresses the social purposes that each park serves, as well as its corresponding design to fit such purposes. The current attention to the environment and sustainable development from young professionals and academics suggests that the fifth sequential model would be that of a Sustainable Park. Are parks of this model already existing in Madison? If so, do users recognize and appreciate the sustainable qualities? If not, what measures need to be taken in order to implement a plan such as this fifth model proposed by Cranz and Boland?

Another challenge for urban park planners is anticipating the volume of usage. Sanem Özen Turan et al. (2016) emphasize the importance of participatory planning to the successful design of an urban green space. "Observing the use of a park and measuring the perceptions of people about the park are important in understanding how to design for making the park a successful space." Engaging the community in the design and planning process "creates an impact of increasing use of such areas." Participatory planning is an act related to "transforming power used in creating and operating environments for people" (Sanem Özen Turan et al. 2016, 307). Additionally, participatory planning allows users to have a voice in what icons they want represented in the park landscape.

The last topic of discussion from our research is focused primarily on regulation. In an article on urban open space, Catherine Ward Thompson (2002, 61) provides the idea of a "loose-fit" space. This form of space is essentially meant to relax the boundaries of what can and cannot be considered an urban park. This is meant to make room for the variability of urban natural spaces, and to emphasize the importance of various spaces to different social groups. In the presence of seemingly "reclaimed" natural spaces, individuals seem to find comfort, anonymity, and respite escaping from a critical and unwelcoming society. Therefore, urban parks should be allowed to take different forms and be heterogeneous as constituent parts of an "urban landscape network," rather than iterations of the same design (69).

Additionally, the variety that allows the comfort of many is liked to a "vital role that urban parks play... providing space for the expression of diversity, both personal and cultural; this raises

issues of democratic provision for and access to public open space.” (Thompson 2002, 59) The classic “melting pot” imagery has begun to fall to the wayside and is being replaced by the “salad bowl,” referring to a celebration of diversity, rather than a homogenization. Ensuring this message be portrayed would require an active role from park designers, but it is important that park designers create public spaces that are made with certain ecosystem services in mind, but that don’t force these services onto potential users. Additionally, that there shouldn’t be strict legislation governing all behavior in these urban parks. Some regulation, yes, but over-regulation in the name of security might restrain active use, where this sense of security primarily comes from. The success of any urban park relies on two categories of actors; the designer, and the user. Though the designer may have a particular vision in mind, it is important that they implore local residential wants to ensure the park is successful. The activities that fill a space, may not always fit the original intention. It’s important to understand that “people make places, more than places make people.” (Thompson 2002, 69).

Our research will explore the interpreted form and function of nature within the context of urban parks. The literature we have analyzed contributes to our understanding of the ways people interpret natural landscapes and how they appreciate certain aspects of nature, whether for an aesthetic, cultural, recreational, restorative or social function.

Data & Results

We received 158 responses to our survey. Of those respondents, 83 are female, 67 are male, 3 answered otherwise. Therefore, women, who make up 50.7% of the Madison population, were overrepresented; however, there were no visible gender related trends. 67.7% of total survey respondents are between the ages of 21 to 29, vastly surpassing the expected roughly 24%. The concentration of this age group was due to the high distribution of the survey to University of Wisconsin students. 84.8% of the respondents are White. White residents make up 78.1% of the Madison population. Though this is relatively mild overrepresentation, the underrepresentation of all other racial groups prevents us from analyzing any race related trends. Madison is not a very racially diverse city (“ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates” 2019). Regardless, for the sake of analyzing demographic trends, we still required diverse representation. This lack of diversity is unfortunate, but not unexpected. We conclude that our survey respondents, and corresponding research results, are not representative of the entire Madison community. However, the conclusion drawn from this data still has weight for our particular question and geographic setting. Though the lack of representation ought to be considered, it need not discredit the results all together. Each

respondent is (or was) a resident of Madison, and has equal weight to speak on their experiences of City of Madison parks. Even so, it fails to portray any trends related to demography; an important intention of our research.

We prompted survey respondents to indicate their favorite activities to do in parks; the most popular activities were, in rank order, walking (22.5%), social interaction (19.5%), relaxation (14.5%), eating/picnics (9.7%), and running (7.7%). The remaining activities are listed in Figure 1. The top five activities don't necessarily require any sort of specific equipment. In order to do these things, users would need some combination of an open field, path, and/or picnic tables.

We were interested in how often our respondents visit parks to sense their familiarity with the parks themselves and to discern any differences in park usage rates between seasons. 50% of respondents visit parks weekly during the spring/summer; 20.4% visit parks daily; 20.4% visit parks semi-monthly. There is a wider variance in usage rates during the fall and winter; this can be attributed to personal preferences for winter weather. 33.3 % of respondents go to a City of Madison park less than once a month during the fall/winter; 29.9% go semi-monthly; 21% go weekly.

We offered five park benefits for respondents to rank in order of perceived importance. Stress relief/mental wellbeing was marked 56 times as respondent's most important product of a visit to the park. Second, was physical health/exercise, with 45 mentions (see Figure 2).

Additionally, they are primarily drawn to natural features and environmental amenities (Figure 3). These features and intended benefits are generally linked with the aforementioned activities, and provide a relatively narrow image of how Madison parks are used, but suggest that these parks are primarily spring/summer spaces that don't require built amenities.

Popular Activities in City of Madison Parks

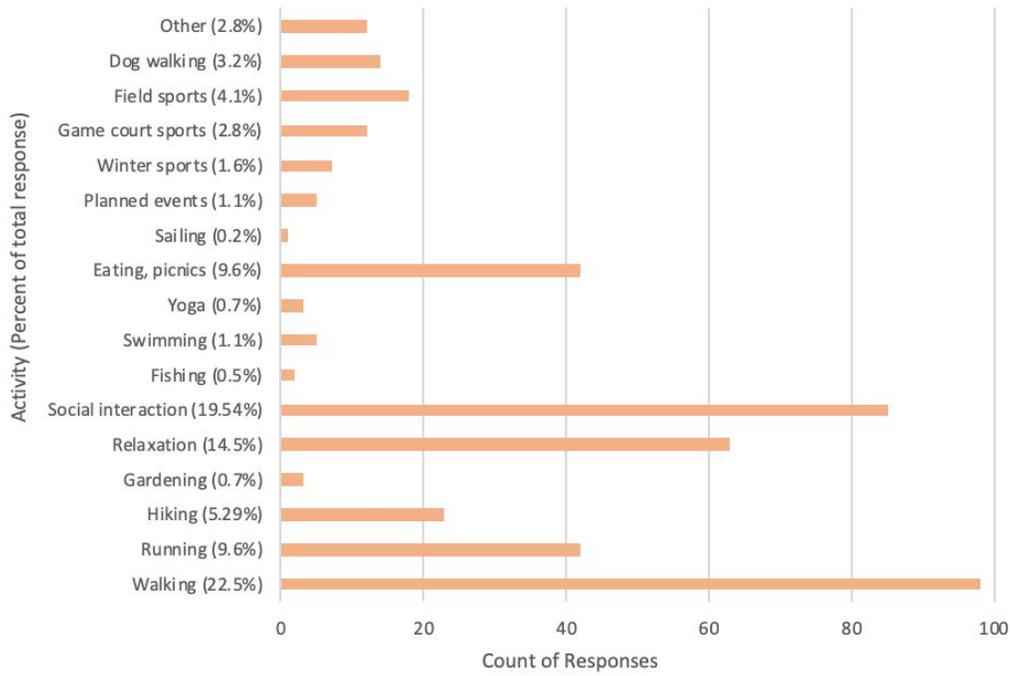


Figure 1 "Popular Activities in City of Madison Parks." James Arndt and Kippy Terry. 2020.

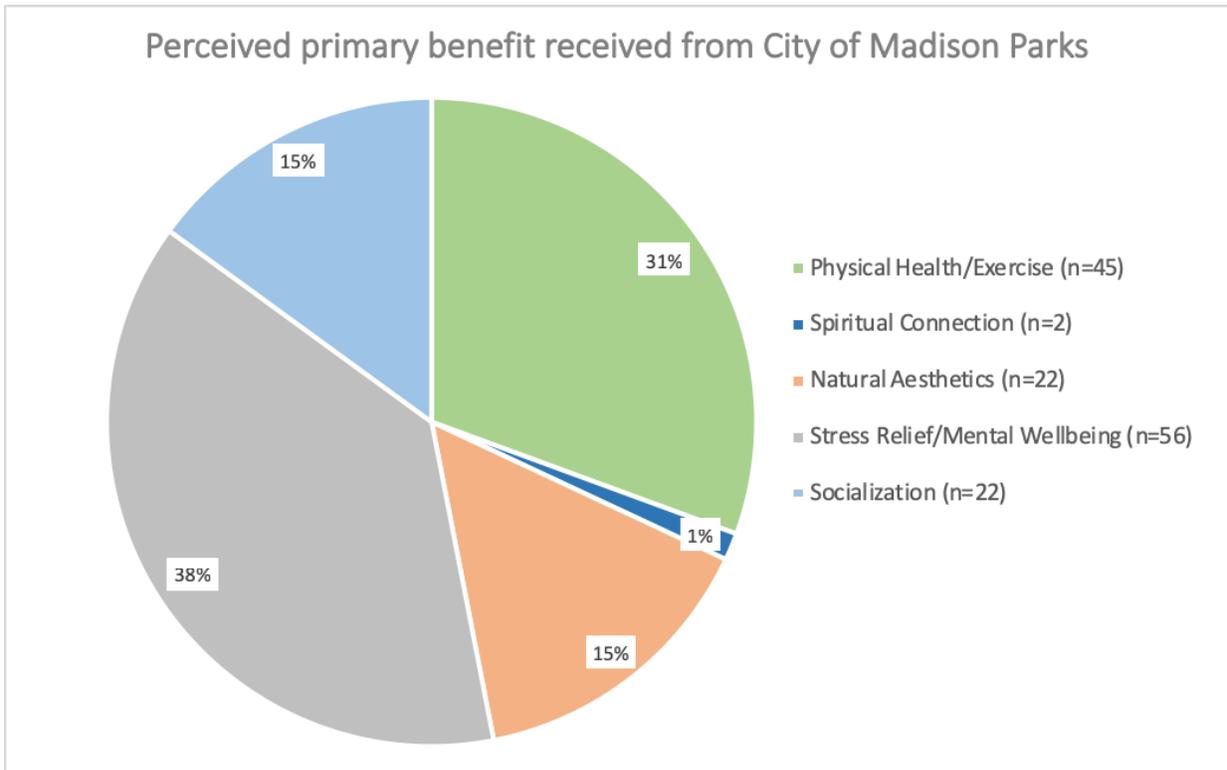


Figure 2 “Perceived Primary Benefit Received from City of Madison Parks.” James Arndt and Kippy Terry. 2020.

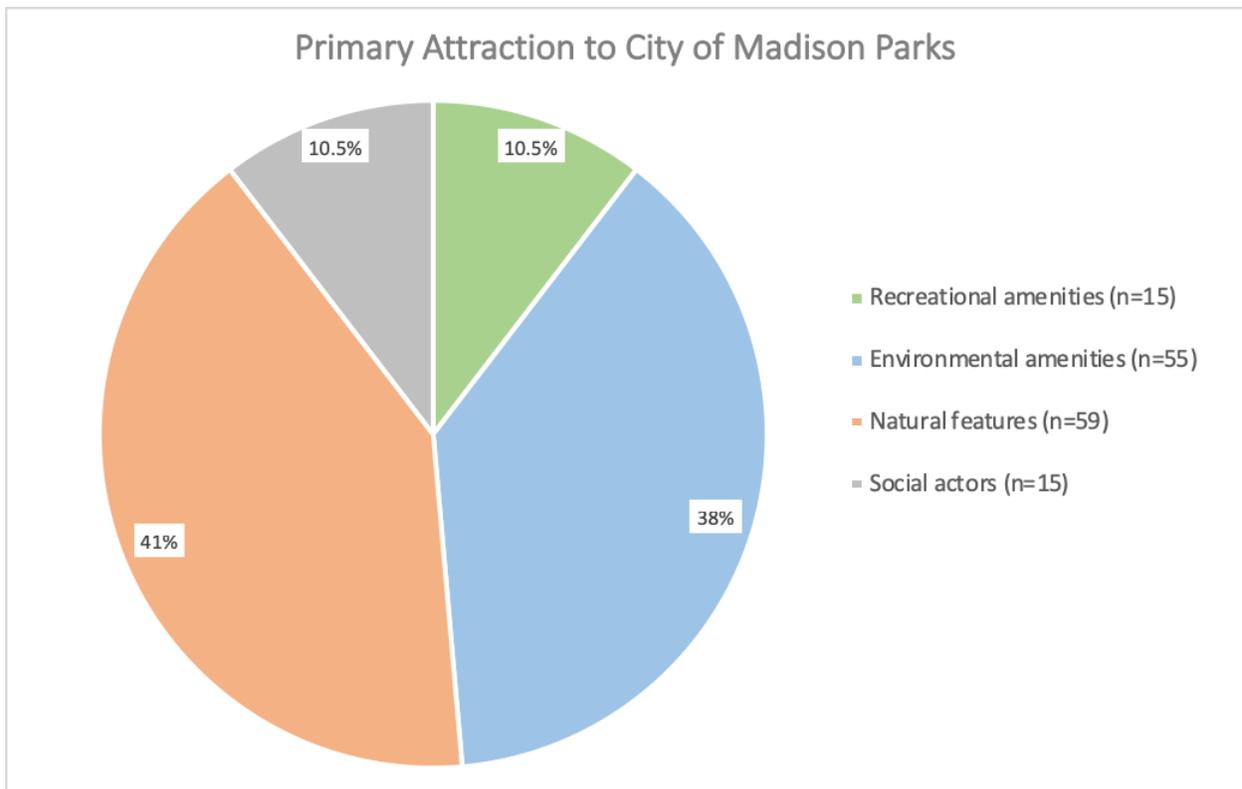


Figure 3 “Primary Attraction to City of Madison Parks.” James Arndt and Kippy Terry. 2020.

Analysis & Discussion

By aligning our survey results to the environmental psychology and design concepts discussed previously in this paper, we can postulate about the grander community's perception of nature and parks and their purposes in an urban environment. Although we have established that urban parks often have a wide variety of users, which would require a widely satisfying park design, our respondent pool represents a mostly homogenous population. We can reasonably assume that they have similar preferences and expectations of Madison parks. Survey respondents indicated that they prioritize certain benefits over others in order to have the most satisfying park experience. These benefits can be interpreted as the respondents' perceived functions of nature: the product of a visit to an urban park. The survey results imply that our pool of survey respondents consider this product to be stress relief/mental wellbeing and physical health/exercise. The association of relaxation and health to public, urban parks is positive. This indicates park users feel comfortable in these spaces and find psychological relief through a connection to nature. Respondents noted that Madison parks are an "escape from urban life," they provide a space to "just go to hang out" and "relax and spend time in nature." To achieve this experience, it seems visitors in Madison parks are drawn to open lawns, lake views, beaches, and other natural features or environmental amenities.

Regarding the geographic distribution of our respondents, especially in relation to their favorite parks, we determined that residents are easily able to access park services that they want to access. As seen in our heat map (Figure 4), the vast majority of our respondents live on the isthmus. This, in conjunction with asking them to list their favorite parks, saw considerable overlap. The vast majority of favorite park mentions were James Madison Park, Henry Vilas Park, Tenney Park, and Edward Klief Park, all of which are within the range of most residents (Figure 5). There were 42 parks mentioned in total, most of which were on or near the isthmus as well, suggesting that the residents on the isthmus have easy access to high quality parks. Additionally, The Madison Parks Foundation reported that 94% of Madison residents live within a ten minute walk from a public park, which would put forth the claim that there is a high quantity of parks as well. These together provide for the conclusion that residents are able to access parks that they prefer to access, and are able to do so easily.



Figure 4. Heat map representing location of respondents. Map created with Qualtrics. 2020

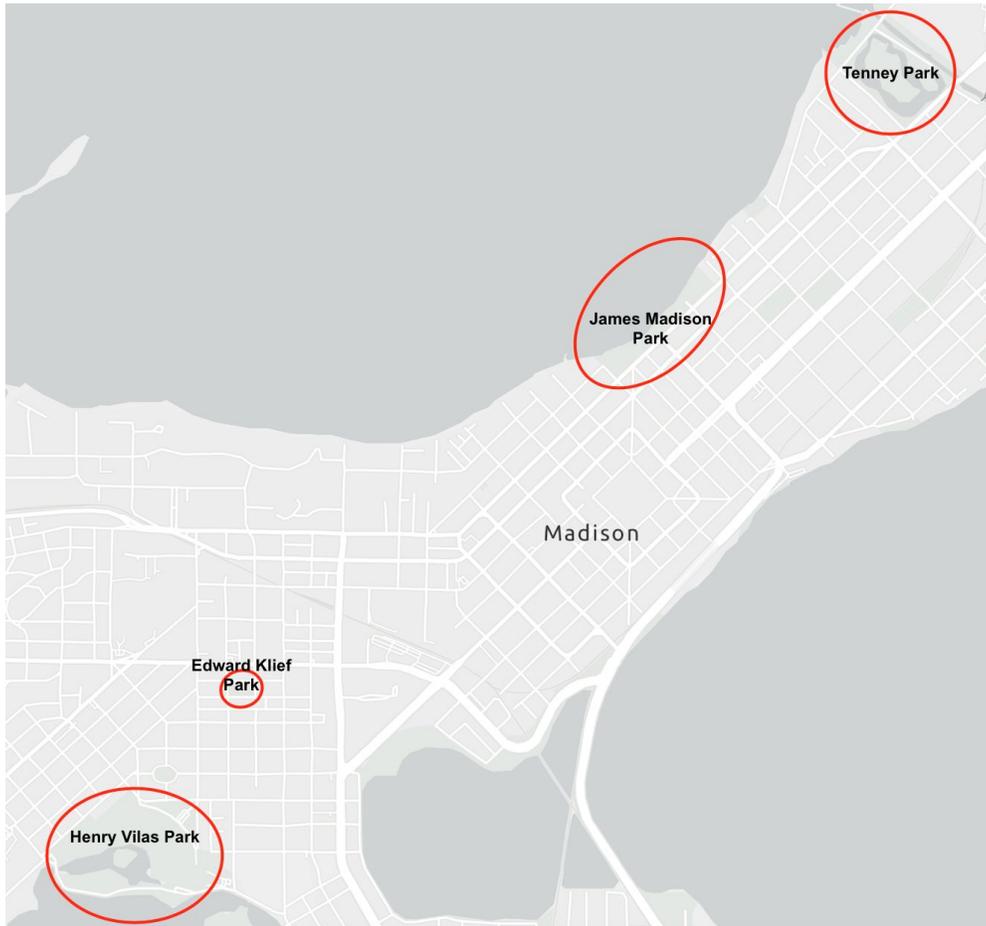


Figure 5. Location of 4 City of Madison Parks. Map by Kippy Terry. 2020.

The most popular park indicated by our survey respondents, by a large margin, was James Madison Park. The primary features of James Madison are its large central lawn, lakefront access, basketball courts, and lakeshore path. The concentration of survey respondents who live on, or near, UW campus, in conjunction with the size and variety of activity choices in James Madison Park, make it clear why it is widely popular. Vilas Park is a mile south of campus, but it also hosts an open field, basketball courts, and a beachy lakefront. These natural amenities and features would easily fulfill a visitor's need for a relaxing natural space, assuming the park is accessible. Vilas Park's location next to the UW Arboretum and the Henry Vilas Zoo brings visitors from those attractions to the park. Tenney Park also has lawn space and a basketball court, smaller in scale to both James Madison Park and Vilas Park. Tenney also features several scenic bridges, and the predictable lake access that typifies Madison parks. The fourth most popular park, Edward Klief Park, is a mini-park, located in a cluster of student housing. The park is often occupied by students hanging out in its field or playing basketball or volleyball. The occasional family or group of rambunctious

teens is sighted on the playground. The primary appeal of Edward Klief Park, compared to the other three parks, is its geographic proximity and convenience for its users. The users of these parks and the respondents of our survey share a common culture, thus a common approach to nature and natural icons. The University community and the surrounding neighborhoods commit to the collective attitude of city pride: pride in the lake, pride in the University, pride in the people. The natural features in Madison's urban parks embody the symbolic value of these declarations. Thus, not only do parks provide a natural setting for emotional relief and physical expression, but also connect the users of these spaces through the understanding of Nature as a Place. James Madison Park, Vilas Park, Tenney Park, and Edward Klief Park transcend the boundaries of a natural space because of the emotional and cultural connections between the users and the landscape.

Conclusion, Future Research

After conducting the literature review for this project, we found ourselves acutely aware of the fact that a country rife with exclusion, segregation, and prejudice often created spaces that reflected these beliefs, making many people feel unwelcome. Becoming familiar with Bourdieu's theory, among others, prompted us to include demographic questions about race, gender, and age to see how these identities might impact a resident's perception of Madison parks. Unfortunately, as described above, the demographic homogeneity of our respondents did not allow us to apply many of these race and gender related theories, and we were unable to analyze if race, ethnicity, gender, or age played any role. However, we did strengthen the claim that people perceive and use parks in various ways. This is evidenced simply by the fact that all prompted activities, where respondents could only pick three, were selected in the survey. Regardless, the trends that we determined in use and perception suggest that a relatively homogenous group has relatively homogenous perceptions. This, we believe, is an expression of the social cohesion detailed by Peters et. al (2010), placing these urban parks as spaces that harness place attachment, and the reported importance of socialization among respondents to point, of course, to social interaction as a manifested segment of the urban park experience. This social cohesion might be argued to be part of a self-repeating cycle, whereby typical activities are taught to newcomers, enforcing certain activities and benefits associated with urban parks as more natural and appealing than others.

In conclusion, City of Madison parks, on account of quality design and respondent preferences, are exceptional. This project points in a good direction. The consideration of the residents ought to be incredibly important for the designing of parks. However, our research seems to be redundant/unimpactful because the City of Madison has done a really good job of listening to its residents on the isthmus (i.e. James Madison) and providing for their needs. This, of course, says

nothing of various social issues, but in the snapshot of the present, and the area directly referenced by our data, the conclusion can be nothing but innocent; this should not be used as a standard, but rather an ideal. If we were given the chance to return to this research in the future, we believe that meaningful conclusions would require a much larger extent of time, and broader survey reach. With more time, we could gain a deeper understanding of particular parks, and be able to analyze a larger variety of parks. Additionally, if we were able to expand to different cities, states, etc. there would be a variety of parks designed by different organizations with different design principles and ecological goals. With broader reach, we would likely have more diversity of demographic groups, and would be able to better determine what role, if any, identity plays in park perceptions. This increased variety of sites, and diversity of respondents would allow us to better understand what distinguishes a satisfactory park from an unsatisfactory one. Ultimately, we believe this research has potential. The limitations of a semester, especially one in the middle of a global pandemic, place significant restraints on the ability to do research of this kind. Nonetheless, this could be a template, or a lesson to learn from, when considering similar research in the future. 🌳

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