

EXPLORING SATISFACTION AMONG PADDLERS IN TWO ADIRONDACK CANOEING AREAS

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Abstract: An exploratory study examining the relationships between visitor satisfaction, perceived crowding, and expected crowding was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study sample consisted of non-motorized watercraft users in two adjacent popular canoe areas in New York State's Adirondack Forest Preserve: the Saint Regis Canoe Area (SRCA) and the Saranac Lakes Wild Forest (SLWF). The SRCA is managed essentially as a non-motorized wilderness area with no road access, while the SLWF allows for some motorized recreation and is easily accessible. A total of 80 questionnaires and 36 questionnaires combined with interviews were collected during weekends in June, July and August 2001. Nineteen percent were day visitors; 81% camped at least one night. Overall satisfaction levels were very high; 67% reported that they were very satisfied, 33% reported that they were satisfied, and none reported that they were neutral, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied. Compared to visitors who reported being satisfied, those who reported being very satisfied expected and experienced significantly less crowding. Of those interviewed, six categories or "families" of responses (social contact within party, social contact outside party, beauty and aesthetics, unanticipated or uncontrollable elements, management considerations, and elements of nature) were identified in over three-quarters of the interview sample, and were judged to be the most salient contributors to visitor satisfaction.

Introduction

New York State's Adirondack Park includes six million acres of public and private land where state land is classified into distinct management areas. The Saint Regis Canoe Area (SRCA) and Saranac Lakes Wild Forest (SLWF), two adjacent management areas, are composed of a series of small lakes and ponds connected by a system of portage trails. They are a haven for campers, paddlers and anglers. An estimated 15,000 people visit the study area every year, with a 5% yearly increase in use (Middleton, 2001). Despite their proximity, the SRCA and SLWF are managed quite differently (New York State, 1997). The SRCA is the only designated canoe area in the Adirondack

Park. Management guidelines for the SRCA emphasize preserving the wilderness character and prohibit motorized use. In contrast, the SLWF is designated as a Wild Forest, allowing for more diverse recreation opportunities, including motorized recreation (with horsepower limits). In addition, the SLWF is readily accessed from several roadside parking lots, and contains two major campgrounds, each with more than 285 sites. Even though the management guidelines for these adjacent areas differ, they share an emphasis on visitor recreation. New York State (1997) defines a Canoe Area as "an area where watercourses ... makes possible a remote and unconfined type of water-oriented recreation" (p. 29). A Wild Forest is defined as "an area where the resources permit a somewhat higher degree of human use ... while retaining an essentially wild character" (p. 32).

Recreation and human use are not unique to the Adirondack Park. Parks and forests have encouraged recreation and human use since the beginning of park management in the United States. For example, the 1916 Organic Act that established the National Park Service cited a dual mission for the parks: to preserve the scenery and provide for enjoyment of the people. The accent on human use has led recreation managers and researchers to be concerned about the quality of the recreational experience, or visitor satisfaction, as a major determinant of successful management techniques.

Visitor satisfaction is deeply embedded in the history of outdoor recreation research (Manning, 1999; Stewart & Cole, 1999). Research regarding visitor satisfaction had its beginning in the 1960s, when Wagar (1964) noted that providing high quality experiences should be the goal of recreation managers. Similar management observations were expressed by many researchers who followed Wagar. In their 1982 article, Schomaker and Knopf noted: "satisfaction has emerged as a central variable in the study of outdoor recreation behavior" (p. 173). Ditton, Graefe and Fedler (1981) remarked: "satisfaction in recreation has typically been regarded as the goal of recreational resource management" (p. 9). Manning (1999) recently demonstrated the importance of satisfaction to recreation researchers by citing 63 pages of references, all related directly or indirectly to the topic of satisfaction. Clearly, satisfaction has and continues to be an important focus in outdoor recreation research and management. However, a dilemma in outdoor recreation is apparent because visitors continually report high levels of satisfaction, regardless of situation or measurement technique (Manning, 1999; Stewart & Cole, 1999).

Statement of Problem

A 1997 study of the SRCA demonstrated that user density and visitor encounters explained little of the variation in perceived crowding or visitor satisfaction (Dawson, Newman & Fuller, 2000). The findings also sparked questions about the relationship between crowding and visitor satisfaction. Some visitors experienced low levels of crowding and reported high satisfaction, but others experienced high levels of crowding and high satisfaction.

These findings are consistent with other studies of crowding and satisfaction, where most studies indicate that density or encounters explain a low amount of the variation in satisfaction (Stewart & Cole, 2001). It has been suggested that there must be other situational variables that contribute to visitor satisfaction (Dawson et al., 2000).

Traditional research methods, generally quantitative in design, have so far failed to identify these situational variables or measure their contribution to perceived crowding and satisfaction (Stewart & Cole, 1999). Some researchers suggest that the traditional research methods of post trip surveys are poorly suited to measure satisfaction (Stewart & Cole, 1999). Post trip surveys require visitors to rely on long-term memory. Often, perceptions of the trip satisfaction change when people reflect on the experience. In actuality, moods, desires, motivations and satisfaction are not consistent through the duration of a trip, and traditional measures fail to measure during-trip satisfaction (Stewart & Cole, 1999).

A mixed-method approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, could be a useful way to test the existing satisfaction model in the SRCA and SLWF, and at the same time describe the experiences of visitors and discover how they understand and attach meaning to satisfaction. Analysis of quantitative data does not explain individual meanings attached to satisfaction. Linking quantitative and qualitative data can provide a way to combine the traditional use of statistics with individual experiences and trip anecdotes, to better explain visitor satisfaction and crowding perceptions (Henderson et al., 1999).

Purpose of Study

There were two major purposes of this study: (1) to examine the current relationships between expected crowding, perceived crowding and satisfaction in the SRCA and SLWF using a "traditional" quantitative survey, and (2) identify other variables that visitors associate with or identify as contributors to their satisfaction through the analysis of in-depth visitor interviews.

Methods

Visitors to the SRCA and SLWF participating in non-motorized forms of water-based recreation comprised the population of interest in this study. Data were collected using two techniques: a quantitative questionnaire and a semi-structured face-to-face interview. Administration of the questionnaire and face-to-face interviewing began in late June 2001 and was completed in late August 2001. To assess visitor satisfaction in crowded conditions, data collection was limited to Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from late June through late August, 2001. Weekends host the majority of visitors, and conditions were more crowded during these times than during weekdays. An equal number of weekends were spent collecting data in each management area.

All data were collected in the field, as opposed to using mail-back questionnaires. Collecting data on-site minimized recall bias and allowed visitors to respond with their immediate thoughts and feelings. Sampling occurred at portage trails throughout the two canoe areas. All visitors were approached at the entrance points of the portage trails, where the trails met the lakes. Visitors were asked of their willingness to participate in the questionnaire and possibly an interview, and were told of the fifteen to thirty minute time commitment.

All visitors who were encountered on the portage trails were asked to participate in the questionnaire. One visitor in every third group encountered was asked to participate in both the questionnaire and the interview. Thus, there were two types of study participants, those who only filled out the questionnaire, and a smaller number who filled out the questionnaire and completed an interview.

Results and Discussion

A total of 116 questionnaires and 36 interviews were collected during weekends in June, July and August 2001. The refusal rate was less than 2%. Only two visitors refused to participate in the questionnaire, and no visitors refused to participate in the interview. The two visitors who did not participate would not provide a reason for their refusal.

Tests of five characteristics revealed only one significant difference between questionnaire-only participants and questionnaire/interview participants (Table 1). Members of both groups were predominately male and averaged approximately 36.7 years old. Neither average party size (4.4 people) nor average trip length (3.3 days) differed significantly between questionnaire-only participants and interview/questionnaire participants. Only mean number of previous visits differed between groups, with questionnaire-only participants averaging fewer than half as many previous visits as questionnaire/interview participants. This difference is attributable to the presence in the relatively small questionnaire/interview group of three outliers who reported 88 or more previous visits to the area. The distribution of other values was similar between groups.

Quantitative Results

The results of the survey question regarding visitor satisfaction resembled those of previous studies. On a five-point Likert-type scale, all visitors chose either satisfied or very satisfied with their trips. The relationship of overall satisfaction to both perceived crowding and expected crowding was tested using ANOVA (Table 2). Both variables were significantly related to variation in satisfaction. Compared to visitors who reported being satisfied, those who reported being very satisfied expected and experienced significantly less crowding. However, the variance explained by these relationships was less than 10%. These results are consistent with previous studies of satisfaction and crowding (Stewart & Cole, 1999).

Table 1. Profile of visitor characteristics by questionnaire and interview participation.

Visitor Characteristic	Overall Sample (n = 116)	Questionnaire Only (n = 80)	Questionnaire & Interview (n = 36)	Test for Differences ^a
Gender (% male) ^b	66.4	71.3	55.6	$\chi^2 = 2.08$, $p = .149$
Age (mean years) ^c	36.7	37.0	36.3	$F = .06$, $p = .813$
Party Size (mean size) ^c	4.4	4.5	4.0	$F = .97$, $p = .328$
Trip Length (mean days) ^c	3.3	3.2	3.5	$F = 1.02$, $p = .315$
Previous Visits (mean times) ^c	7.8	5.3	13.3	$F = 4.24$, $p = .042$

^a Tests for differences between questionnaire-only and questionnaire/interview participants.

^b Subgroup differences tested with χ^2 contingency.

^c Subgroup differences tested with ANOVA.

Table 2. ANOVA test for relationship of expected crowding and perceived crowding to satisfaction level.

Variable	Mean Satisfaction	F	p	Eta ²
Mean Perceived Crowding				
Satisfied	3.73	7.622	.007	.064
Very satisfied	2.82			
Mean Expected Crowding				
Satisfied	3.12	9.978	.003	.075
Very satisfied	2.60			

Qualitative Results

The purpose of the qualitative analysis was to identify environmental and personal variables that contributed to visitor satisfaction. Interview data were analyzed using basic content analysis, where the interview questions were read and analyzed for similar themes or ideas. The 36 interviews were transcribed and imported into the qualitative analysis program ATLAS.ti (Scientific Software Development, 2002), providing a way to organize qualitative data into logical categories. A total of 818 phrases were identified and grouped into 72 different codes, with each code capturing a single recurring theme or idea. For example, "we enjoy being away from cell phones and email" and "I don't think that walkman and walkie-talkies have any business out here myself," were both coded as "technology negative." Related codes were grouped together in larger, superordinate categories called "families." For example, the codes "no technology" and "different from everyday" were categorized into the "change of pace" family. Both positive and negative codes were identified as contributors to satisfaction. Therefore, some families are comprised of both positive and negative elements of satisfaction.

Sixty-nine of the 72 codes were grouped into twelve families (Table 3). Six families (social contact within party, social contact outside party, beauty and aesthetics, unanticipated or uncontrollable elements, management considerations, and elements of nature) were identified in over three-quarters of the interview sample, and were judged to be the most salient contributors to visitor satisfaction. These six families are discussed below.

Social contact outside party. Contact with other visitors had an impact, both positive and negative, on visitor satisfaction. Perceived crowding was an important component of visitor satisfaction in positive, neutral, and negative ways. Although the term 'crowding' implies a negative evaluation of density (Manning, 1999), for the

Table 3. Family category names and percentage of interviews the contained the family.

Family	% Interviews ^a
Social contact outside party	100
Social contact within party	100
Beauty and aesthetics	89
Unanticipated or uncontrollable elements	89
Management considerations	81
Elements of nature	78
Activities	67
Wilderness or illusion of wilderness	50
Adventure and challenge	42
Unspoiled trip	36
Change of pace	31
Familiar	31

^a Indicates the percentage of interviews in which that family category was present.

discussion of this family, crowding will be represented in positive, neutral, and negative ways.

For about half of the interview participants, seeing other people or feeling crowded detracted from their overall trip satisfaction. One visitor clearly articulated his disapproval of other visitors by stating: "my satisfaction would be better if there were fewer people here" (SRCA 29F 8/11).¹ Another visitor from an urban area was bothered because he envisioned a more isolated experience than what he actually received:

¹ Interview code, where the first four letters refer to the location of interview, the middle number and letter refer to gender of participant and chronological number of interview, and last set of numbers is the month and day of the interview.

There seems to be a lot more people up here than normal. Yeah, I realize its vacation time and all, but we used to come up here, the first couple of years we'd come up here, we'd be coming up the week before Labor Day weekend and we wouldn't see a soul for three or four days. I mean, they'd all come in for the weekend, but during the week we wouldn't see anybody. I mean, you live in the city and you just get tired of people. If you do what I do you get real tired of people. (SRCA 36M 8/24)

These comments demonstrate a correlation between direct crowding and satisfaction. In contrast, other comments demonstrate a correlation between indirect crowding and satisfaction. For example, one visitor stated: "The only thing is, on weekends you could very well come in here and not find a campsite. I don't know what those people do. They probably have to carry or something. If only there weren't so many people. That's the problem these days." (SRCA 21M 7/21). The negative impacts of direct and indirect crowding are consistent with the focus of many previous studies.

Despite the obvious negative reaction that some interviewees had to crowding, nearly all of the interview participants were relatively neutral in regard to some aspects of crowding. One visitor explained: "It [crowding] hasn't been negative I don't think. You know, one time today we had this one carry with this large group, and they were just kind of in the way. You know, it wasn't their fault, they were just doing the carry themselves" (SRCA 33M 8/11). The neutral reaction that so many visitors had in regard to crowding can be partially explained by the "respect for others" code, where there was a mutual understanding and respect among visitors. One visitor expressed this mutual respect in the following quote:

We went up to Long Pond Mountain yesterday, and there were like twelve canoes at the base of the hike, and it was like trying to find a parking space, but you just move it in. Because you're working on kind of a code of honor, everybody leaves everybody's stuff alone, because you expect everybody to leave your stuff alone. There are a few exceptions to that, but for the most part... it's not like when you live in a city, where if you leave your car unlocked, you come back to the car and everything is gone. Or you leave your windows open because its warm, and you come back and somebody stole the moose, you know, the stuffed moose off your dashboard or something. (SRCA 36M 8/24)

In contrast, some interviewees reported being positively affected by the presence of other visitors. Meeting new people and feeling like part of a special community was an affirmative experience for some. An overriding theme of positive crowding was the idea of a shared experience with strangers, or having something in common with the rest of the people there. One male visitor demonstrated this by stating:

I mean, it's beautiful, we all love to canoe, or else we wouldn't be here. And everybody is happy and satisfied with that, and having beautiful weather, or, even if it rains it rains. That's part of camping. But everybody that you see wants to be here. It's almost like you're sharing this experience with a bunch of people you don't know. (SRCA 36M 8/24)

Similarly, the sense of belonging to a group and feeling surrounded by people with similar interests was an encouraging thought for about one-third of the interview participants. To be in the vicinity of so many people who share the same interests was a comforting feeling. One visitor illuminates this idea:

Especially in the Adirondacks I've noticed that the people up here are all up here for the same reason, so their all happy, their courteous, no ones out to start a fight or rumble about anything, so to be around people it doesn't really matter, because they just add to the experience as opposed to detracting from it. (SRCA 11M 7/14)

Within group social contact. The opportunity to socialize and spend time with other members of the party was perhaps the most important factor of visitor satisfaction to the interview participants. Every interview participant mentioned some form of companionship as a contributing factor to their satisfaction. Simply spending time with friends or family was the major contributing factors to this family, and subsequent visitor satisfaction. Demonstrated by the following quotes, nearly all interviewees commented on opportunities to spend time with their traveling companions, to have fun together, to rekindle relationships, and share experiences:

It's just time spent alone, just the two of us, which is always great and hard to do in everyday life. (SRCA 20F 7/21)

This has always been a father/son bonding weekend. It's enjoyable. We always look forward to this week. (SRCA 31M 8/11)

I think it's the fact that we laugh a lot. That's probably what it is, we just have a good time. We're not really here to accomplish anything but have a good time. (SRCA 14M 7/15)

Well, he's my best friend, so I get to share things with him that I wouldn't be able to share with anyone else, talk about things that I can't talk to anyone else about, um, and we've been doing this stuff since the very beginning so it's always been something where its been the two of us together. (SRCA 11M 7/14)

[It's] somebody to share it with, and to show them different things that they haven't seen before. Everyone is kind of getting something new, even if it's not the same new thing. Everyone is kind of sharing something different, so that's fun. Really different. (SRCA 18F 7/21)

One aspect of companionship that was mentioned by only four interview participants but remains important is the tension and arguments that can arise among members of a party. People participating in outdoor recreation are, as one visitor put it, "real people." Despite the arguments and bickering, visitors' satisfaction is likely to remain high. Arguments appear to have a both negative and positive effects on visitor satisfaction. One visitor summarized her experience immediately following a difficult portage:

When you get in a lot of pain for one reason or another, it's easier to get annoyed with people. Uh, I get annoyed if I'm in the front of the canoe and the person steering it doesn't pay attention and we watch the scenery go by horizontally, and that really annoys me, and so I become bitchy. (SRCA 17F 7/21)

Naturally it seems that the argument and frustration this visitor experienced would cause her satisfaction to diminish. However, she continued on to say:

But, there were a couple times like after the canoe from Fish Pond where we were all just at the end of our tethers and we all made the effort to try to get along, and go the extra mile, because we knew everyone else was in the same boat, and that really made you much happier, seeing other people try hard too. (SRCA 17F 7/21)

In this woman's experience, the negative result of group tension was resolved into a positive experience by the resulting behavior of the group.

Beauty and aesthetics. The natural beauty and aesthetics associated with spending time outdoors were, not surprisingly, also important to visitor satisfaction. Just under three-quarters of interview participants mentioned the beauty of the area, or the scenery. Statements regarding natural beauty were most often short and direct:

The scenery. It's just incredible. Fresh air, and the lakes, and just the scenery in general. (SLWF 26M 7/28)

It's probably because it's just so beautiful, I mean, it's just so beautiful here. The water is clear, it's clean, um, you know, for us, the weather is fantastic. (SLWF 25F 7/28)

For some, the unique geography of the SLWF and SRCA contributed to satisfaction. One visitor stated: "For people who like canoeing, I mean, you can't beat it. If you're willing to do short carries you can canoe for days without hitting the same water" (SLWF 22M 7/28). Many other visitors mentioned a similar version of the latter statement; a general overview of enjoying the outdoors, and specifically the Adirondacks. A visitor with this general attitude stated: "Just being out in nature, and being out in the Adirondack park which is a fantastic place to be. Really, really beautiful area" (SRCA 17F 7/21). And lastly, a female visitor from Vermont exclaimed: "It's

beautiful, I love it up here. Go Adirondacks!" (SRCA 35F 8/24).

Unanticipated or uncontrollable elements. Weather, abundance of insects, and other uncontrollable aspects of nature affected satisfaction in both positive and negative ways. The following two quotes represent the negative impact that poor weather can have on an outdoor trip:

The weather. That's it though, the weather. The fact that I've dragged my camera out about six times and put it away six times because of the rain. (SRCA 11M 7/14)

Well, you know the weather is always the thing that puts a damper on one's spirits, so yesterday morning's rain was the only thing. (SLWF 3M 6/30)

In contrast, half the interview participants reported that summer conditions were one of the most satisfying aspects of their trips. Exemplifying the attitude of several visitors, one commented: "The weather has been perfect, not a rain cloud once. Yeah, it's been beautiful!" (SLWF 28F 7/29). Others may have experienced poor conditions, but it did not seem to diminish their satisfaction. One rainy weekend visitor remarked "onto each camping trip a little rain must fall. I mean, if you're lucky you get a sunny day" (SRCA 36M 8/24). Another example of this attitude is demonstrated by this quote:

I mean, yeah, of course it would be nice if it was sunny and warm, but, at the same time, you know, it's not about; the rains no big deal, it's not like we can't, you know, do what we're doing but just with rain. So, it can be a little uncomfortable and frustrating, but overall I think it doesn't really affect the trip, but yeah, I think that would be the one thing I would like to change. (SRCA 11M 7/14)

One of the more interesting but less frequent unanticipated causes of satisfaction was coded as "unexpected delights." Unexpected delights refer to the little things that left a lasting impression. Five interview participants mentioned events like this that contributed to their satisfaction. On a rainy July weekend, one visitor was surprised when he found "some nice people left the lean-to with some dry wood. That was nice" (SRCA 15M 7/15). Another interviewee who arrived on a cold weekend without a jacket was pleased to find that "the people who were outfitting me had all the equipment that I asked for and things that I forgot to bring with me, like this jacket, they had it up there" (SLWF 9M 7/06). And lastly, two visitors witnessed a turtle laying eggs at one of the campsites. To ensure that the eggs remained protected, they surrounded the site with stones and left a note in a plastic sandwich bag to explain the purpose of the stones. One visitor came across this, and thought it was fantastic: "seeing the little spot with the turtle eggs that somebody left a note by. I think that was pretty cool, cause I've camped out at that spot before, so we stopped there, and that was really cool" (SRCA 15M 7/15).

Management conditions. Attributes of the two areas controlled by management contributed both positively and negatively related to visitor satisfaction. Among this sample of non-motorized paddlers, comments about motorboats were uniformly negative, but other management conditions made positive contributions to satisfaction. For example, the SLWF and SRCA are essentially unrestricted for visitors, which was positive for many who chose to visit. There is no fee, and the campsites are available on a first-come first-serve basis. These attributes caused visitors to begin their trip relatively hassle free, and already satisfied, as exemplified by the comments of several Canadian visitors. A visitor from Ontario stated: "It's accessible. A lot of places in Canada now you have to reserve camp spots six months ahead of time. If you don't do it in January you can't go" (SLWF 3M 6/30).

The one disadvantage to having this type of unrestricted system is the availability of campsites. On a nice summer weekend it is likely that all or nearly all of the campsites will be taken by Friday evening. Twenty-percent of interview participants acknowledged that this possibility affected their satisfaction. This dip in satisfaction is demonstrated by the following visitor: "as long as you can find a place to camp, now that was a little bit of a problem yesterday when we were tired and had to go all the way to the other end, but at least we found a place" (SRCA 17F 7/21). Campsites become a "home away from home" for visitors, and it is important that they not only find a place to camp, but that it possesses positive attributes. The following quote emphasized the "home" function of campsites:

The area is so nice and where we've been the campsites are spread out enough that unless people are just yelling and crazy, even though they might be right around the corner from you, you still are in your own little section, and your still kind of in your own spot. (SRCA 18F 7/21)

Elements of nature. Simply being in nature, surrounded by water, trees, and flowers was highly satisfying for many visitors. Some expressed sentiments like: "The sunset was really gorgeous. And the stars, the fresh air, and that sort of thing, just being outside" (SLWF 26M 7/28); "What makes me satisfied? The hooded merganser, and a flock of brown ducklings were feeding, that would be a second one. The water lilies would be a third. Seeing loons, of course, would be a fourth" (SLWF 8M 7/06). Enthusiasm for seeing wildlife was especially widespread; nearly all of the interviewees indicated seeing wildlife was an influence on their overall satisfaction. One visitor stated:

We saw beavers, and loons, course we're used to loons by now, being in the Adirondacks, and we canoe in Maine a lot too, but, uh, loons are always wonderful. And some other birds... But, the wildlife is great. There's no moose here, but it's the serenity of being out here with the trees and the natural everything, and no McDonalds. (SRCA 17F 7/21)

For other interview participants it was natural elements other than wildlife that factored into their satisfaction. One visitor was overjoyed by the display of wildflowers: "[I] paddled up pink pond today, and it's just full of beautiful flowers, pickerel weed, and wild roses, white lilies and yellow lilies. You know, it's just a beautiful place to be" (SRCA 21M 7/21).

Discussion

The nature of qualitative inquiry provides the opportunity to examine how a small number of people feel about the phenomena in question. In this study, with the phenomena in question being visitor satisfaction, the interviewees indicated some surprising results. Social factors and setting attributes were the most prominent elements. The importance of setting attributes had been cited previously (Herrick & McDonald, 1992). Previous studies have also indicated the importance of social groups in context to leisure (Stokowski & Lee, 1991); and in the context of satisfaction and crowding in outdoor recreation settings, this has been a minor theme. Many multi-item satisfaction scales do consider social experiences in regard to satisfaction (Whisman & Hollenhorst, 1998); however, results often indicate that visitors consider other variables, like spending time in nature or adventure and excitement, before social considerations.

In this study, spending time with other party members outweighed other elements as a reason for satisfaction. In addition, contact with visitors outside of the immediate party was evaluated as positive by many interview participants. This positive relationship has been previously documented (Stewart & Cole, 2001), but most previous studies have focused almost exclusively on the negative relationship between encounters and satisfaction. Interview participants in the SRCA and SLWF indicated that the negative impacts of outside party social contact in this study were generally because of indirect encounters. For example, the lack of available campsites caused a negative reaction by many interviewees. It has been documented in other studies that seeing the consequences of human use can have a negative impact on experience. The presence of trash or litter (Roggenbuck et al., 1993), lack of available parking (Herrick & McDonald, 1992), and impacts at campsites (Roggenbuck et al., 1993) have all been found to negatively affect trip quality.

Positive social contact with other visitors included the sense of belonging to a larger group and the ability to socialize in a new setting. Some interview participants mentioned the friendly nature of other visitors, and their willingness to offer advice on where to find campsites, and the conditions of trails. Through observations and interview results, it is clear that the social encounters that visitors viewed as positive occurred at locations other than campsites. Positive interactions usually occurred on portage trails or while paddling. When visitors felt secure and private at their campsites, contact with other visitors outside of their space was positive. This illustrates the importance of campsite location and proximity to other campsites. For overnight visitors, campsites become a

home away from home; a place to reflect on the day's events, relax, spend time socializing with group members, and feel unconstrained. As long as personal space is not invaded, the presence of some other visitors in other, less personal spaces can be positive or neutral for some visitors.

The identification of twelve contributing factors to satisfaction lends added support to the multiple dimensions of satisfaction. Further, the codes that comprised the families were both positive and negative in their contribution to satisfaction. Despite the discovery of several negative codes, satisfaction remained unaffected. Identifying what makes people satisfied has been the guiding force behind many studies of outdoor recreation. The guiding force behind this study was not only to identify those specific elements, but also discover why people continually report being highly satisfied with their experiences regardless of evaluating contact with others as positive or negative. It seems that visitors to the SRCA and SLWF were not overly critical in their evaluation of trip quality. They identified positive and negative setting attributes, experiences, interactions and outcomes, but the accumulation of all these events was positive.

Future Research

Further exploratory research is needed to explain why high satisfaction ratings occur so frequently among outdoor recreation participants. The experiences of outdoor recreation participants are multifaceted and dynamic, and qualitative research methods are a useful way to understand the underlying motivations and inspirations to participation from a broader life perception. The semi-structured format of the interview questions in this study may have limited the ability of the researchers to fully address all of the contributing factors to satisfaction, or to examine the full breadth of meanings visitors associated with trip satisfaction and experience. A future study using a less structured interview format would allow participants to express themselves more freely and may be useful in exploring the complex, dynamic nature of satisfaction even more thoroughly.

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