PLACE VISITATION, PLACE AVOIDANCE, AND ATTITUDINAL AMBIVALENCE: NEW CONCEPTS FOR PLACE RESEARCH IN URBAN RECREATION SETTINGS

David B. Klenosky
Purdue University
Department of Health and Kinesiology
West Lafayette, IN
klenosky@purdue.edu

Christine A. Vogt
Michigan State University

Herbert W. Schroeder
U.S. Forest Service

Cherie LeBlanc Fisher
U.S. Forest Service

SaraJane Marshall
Purdue University

Abstract.—This paper draws on recent developments in research on consumer behavior and attitudes to better understand the range of behaviors and attitudes inherent in a diverse urban area. Using a mail survey of Chicago-area residents, we collected data (1) to examine residents' past visitation behavior and recommendations of places to visit and to avoid for a range of Chicago-area sites; and (2) to explore residents' attitudes (and distinguish between indifference and potential attitudinal ambivalence) toward the study sites using a bivariate model of attitudes. The study findings yielded insight into the mix of behaviors and attitudes that underlie urban recreation patterns and suggested several promising issues for future investigation.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

While many researchers study attractive places, our focus has been, and continues to be, on the less attractive places (a.k.a., "post-industrial areas," "brownfield sites") that cities and communities are thinking about redeveloping for housing, businesses, retail, and recreation – and to attract tourists. There is strong interest in reclaiming/restoring these less desirable urban areas for a variety of reasons: to provide an engine for economic development, to readdress environmental justice issues, to provide more recreation opportunities for area residents, and to draw visitors and recreation users (and their dollars) from other areas.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

While it is important to study the recreation potential of "less desirable" urban places, the lack of prior research on these types of places creates a major challenge. The current study addresses this challenge by focusing on two key elements: the place behaviors and place attitudes of the residents of a diverse urban region.

2.1 Place Behavior

A key perspective adopted in this research is that an urban area can be viewed as consisting of three types of places: those that people visit, those that people do not visit, and those that people avoid. The first two categories of places have received considerable attention from recreation researchers. For example, much has been written about place visitation/nonvisitation behavior (e.g., Manning 1999). The third category, places that people intentionally avoid, refers to a different type of behavior, place avoidance, that has received relatively little research attention.

Earlier work conducted by the first author on recreation choice in post-industrial urban areas (Klenosky 2005), indicated that certain areas of Chicago (particularly the Calumet area on the south side of the city) were viewed by some as being aversive/repulsive—that is, places to be intentionally avoided. (For further information on the Calumet area, see Klenosky et al., 2008). In another study conducted by the first author, visitors showed similar avoidance behaviors in a zoo setting (Klenosky and Saunders 2004); some zoo visitors reported that they intentionally avoided certain animal exhibits, specifically those involving snakes or insects. Visitors avoided the reptile house altogether or would enter the reptile house but focus on, for example, the pretty blue frogs while staying away from or refusing to look at the snakes.

Consumer behavior researchers have recently started studying why consumers intentionally avoid purchasing or consuming certain branded goods or patronizing certain places. Lee et al. (2008) identify three types of brand avoidance: (1) experiential brand avoidance, where negative firsthand consumption experiences lead to unmet expectations and inhibit future behavior (e.g., avoiding a store because of a bad experience); (2) identity avoidance, where the image of the brand is symbolically incongruent with the individual's identity (e.g., avoiding eating at McDonald's because that consumer never eats fast food); (3) and moral avoidance, which arises when the consumer's beliefs clash with the values associated with a brand. This last type of avoidance arises particularly when the consumer is concerned about the negative impact of a brand on society (e.g., avoiding or boycotting Nike products because of concerns about labor practices).

In studies related to the avoidance of places, researchers in tourism have looked at a related topic, the perceived risks of traveling in general or of traveling internationally (e.g., Roehl and Fesenmaier 1992, Sönmez and Graefe 1998a). Within this literature, two studies have touched directly on the issue of place avoidance but only at the country/region level. For instance, Sönmez and Graefe (1998b) examined countries that travelers might avoid because of concerns about terrorism or health. Lawson and Thyne (2001) looked at New Zealanders' reasons for avoiding specific countries and cities within New Zealand. In sum, while place avoidance has received some attention, researchers have yet to examine place avoidance involving recreation sites in a diverse urban environment.

Initial qualitative work conducted by the authors to explore place avoidance behavior involved one-on-one interviews with a small convenience sample of Chicago residents. In these interviews, participants were first asked to list places they had visited for recreation in the Chicago area and why. They were then asked about places they avoided and why. A key conclusion (or frustration) from that work was that while respondents were generally able and willing to talk about the places they visit for recreation, they were hesitant or reluctant to identify and talk about places that they intentionally avoid. Discussions of this initial effort with colleagues led the research team to adopt a third-party technique to study place intentions, i.e., to ask respondents to recommend places for others to visit and avoid. Thus, the first contribution of the present study is a dataset of recommendations of recreation places to visit and avoid in a diverse urban area.

2.2 Place Attitudes

Attitudes are a person's overall evaluations of an object, person, place, or thing; attitudes are understood to have a fundamental influence on people's subsequent behaviors (Fazio 1986). To study place attitudes, the initial plan was to ask respondents to evaluate the place in question using a traditional bipolar attitude scale with "extremely positive" at one end, "extremely negative" at the other, and a neutral point in the middle. The use of this scale dates back to early psychological research by Thurstone (1928, cited in Cacioppo et al. 1997), who used bipolar psychophysical phenomena such as brightness (bright-dim) and temperature (hot-cold) as models or metaphors for his conceptualization of attitude. This bipolar conceptualization of attitudes assumes that the negative and positive evaluations are reciprocally activated (and thus perfectly negatively correlated). That is, like the position of the balance knob on a stereo audio system, as one's positive evaluation of an object increases, the negative evaluation decreases.

While the bipolar scale (and conceptualization of attitudes) has been very important in attitude research, recent work on attitudinal ambivalence suggests that attitudes are not always bipolar (Cacioppo et al. 1997). That is, people often hold simultaneous positive and negative evaluations toward an attitude object, especially one that is complex, such as a controversial social issue. Under such conditions, the simple bipolar scale does not provide a complete picture of one's attitude toward that object. The main problem has to do with the midpoint of the bipolar scale. Specifically, when indicating their attitude toward an object using a traditional bipolar scale (shown in Fig. 1A), people selecting point (A) would be classified as having a positive attitude. Conversely, people who select point (B) would be classified as having a negative attitude. If point (C) is selected, however, it is not clear whether those respondents are indifferent or neutral, or ambivalent (i.e., have mixed or conflicting feelings) about the object.

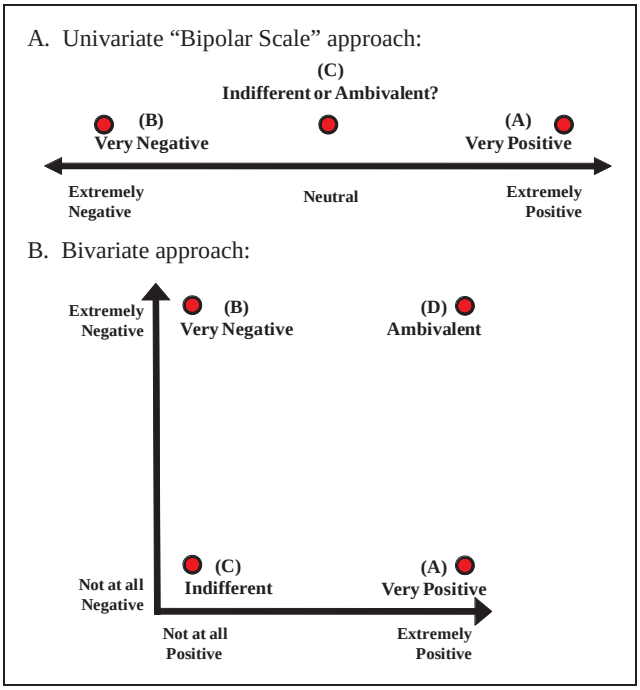

Figure 1.—Univariate "Bipolar Scale" approach (A) and bivariate approach (B) for studying place attitudes.

To overcome this shortcoming of the bipolar approach, attitude researchers have suggested that a bivariate approach should be used instead (Cacioppo et al. 1997). Specifically, Cacioppo and his colleagues have advanced a bivariate conceptualization of attitudes (known as the evaluative space model) that allows for positive and negative evaluations to exist independently. Under this approach, one measurement is used to assess degree of positivity toward the object involved, while another is used to assess degree of negativity. Similar to the traditional scale, those who score high on positivity and low on negativity would be classified as being very positive (point A in Fig. 1B) and those high on negativity and low on positivity would be very negative (point B). Importantly, however, those scoring low on both would be classified as indifferent (point C), while those scoring high on both would be classified as being ambivalent (point D), having a mixed or conflicting evaluation of the object. This bivariate approach thus allows one to differentiate between indifference and ambivalence in a way that the bipolar approach does not.

A central thesis of this research is that people often express ambivalence or mixed feelings—simultaneous "like and dislike," "love and hate," "attraction and repulsion"—toward recreation places, especially those in urban areas. Such feelings were expressed informally to the research team during early research in the Calumet area of Chicago. Thus, a second contribution of this research is that it uses a bivariate approach to assess attitudes and to distinguish between indifference and possible attitudinal ambivalence toward urban recreation places.

3.0 STUDY OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this research were: (1) to examine residents' past visitation behavior and recommendations of places to visit and to avoid for a range of Chicago-area sites; and (2) to explore residents' attitudes (and distinguish between indifference and potential attitudinal ambivalence) toward Chicago-area recreation places using a bivariate model of attitudes. To assess the full range of possible place attitudes, we compiled a list of places that included places we thought people would be attracted to, places people would avoid, and places that would be likely to evoke ambivalent attitudes. An additional aim of the survey was to assess public attitudes toward a new facility being developed on a specific brownfield site in the Calumet area of Chicago, the Ford Calumet Environmental Center (FCEC), which is located in the Hegewisch neighborhood.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

We administered a mail survey to a sample of 3,000 Chicago-area residents drawn from three ZIP code areas, one near and two away from the FCEC site. Each area centered on one ZIP code and included households located in a 5-mile radius of the geographic center of that ZIP code. The proximate area (i.e., in close proximity to the Calumet area of Chicago) was centered in Hammond, IN (population within 5 miles of 213,656) and the two nonproximate areas were centered in Clearing, IL (population 433,726) and Lincolnwood, IL (population 532,464). Each of the three radii is within 30 miles of the FCEC site and is on or near the edge of the Chicago city boundary. Thus, the 5-mile radius of each target sample area includes residents of the City of Chicago and nearby suburban communities. The proximate area includes both Illinois and Indiana residents. In each of the ZIP code areas,

50 percent of the households were drawn at or above the median household income for that 5-mile radius and 50 percent below the median. After three mailings (initial copy of survey, postcard reminder, and second copy of survey), a 14-percent response rate was achieved, resulting in a final n of 411 respondents. Although we were disappointed with the final response rate, we feel the responses that were obtained provided useful information for this preliminary study.

The self-administered survey consisted of seven sections: (1) measures of past activity behavior and interests; (2) ratings of awareness, visitation behavior, and recommendations to visit/avoid 22 specific places; (3) selection and rating of one place to "definitely visit"; (4) selection and rating of one place to "definitely avoid"; (5) ratings of intentions to visit/recommend the FCEC; (6) ratings of the Calumet area of Chicago; and (7) questions on basic demographic characteristics. The findings reported in this analysis include data obtained from sections (1), (2), (3), (4), (6), and (7) of the survey.

The 22 places examined in the survey were five frequently visited downtown recreation sites (in yellow in Fig. 2), three sites in the near-west part of the city (in green), four sites south of the city (in red), four sites to the north of the city (in blue), three sites in the west suburbs (in light blue), and two "national" sites, the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore (in purple) and the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie (in maroon).

Figure 2.—Location of Chicago-area places listed in the survey.

5.0 RESULTS

The 411 respondents tended to be male (55.2 percent), between the ages of 45 and 64 (43.8 percent), and white (79.3 percent), and to have household incomes between $55,000 and $99,999 (39.6 percent).

5.1 Place Visitation and Avoidance Behavior

5.1.1 Past place visitation behavior

The first study objective was to examine past visitation and recommendations of places to visit and places to avoid for the 22 Chicago-area sites included in the survey. Respondents were directed to "imagine that friends of yours (friends that share many/most of your interests) just moved to the Chicago area. Imagine further that your friends developed a list of places in the Chicagoland area associated with outdoor recreation, nature and the environment that they were thinking about visiting. Your friends wanted to know the last time you visited each place; and whether you would recommend that they should visit or avoid each place."

Analysis of the past visitation responses for the combined sample indicated that the most popular study sites were Grant/Millennium Park (which 70.2 percent of respondents visited during the past year), Lincoln Park (visited by 46.8 percent), Lincoln Park Zoo (40.3 percent), Shedd Aquarium (33.1 percent), Chicago Botanic Garden (27.1 percent), Indiana Dunes Naational Lakeshore (26.5 percent), and the Brookfield Zoo (26.4 percent). Study sites that were visited the least frequently included the Dan Ryan Woods Forest Preserve (5.5 percent), the Chicago Center for Green Technology (3.5 percent), and the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie (visited by only 1 percent of respondents during the past year).

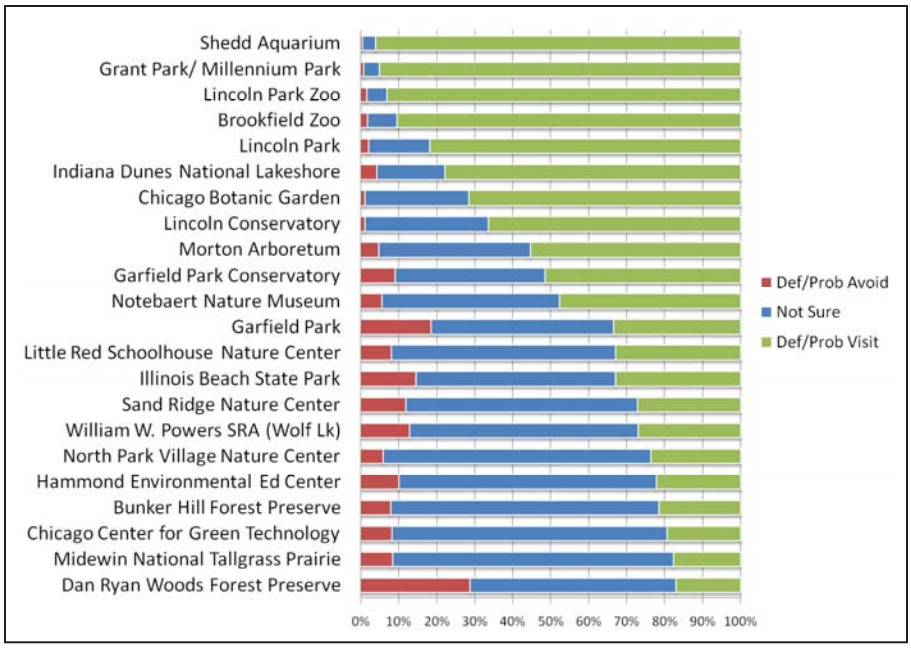

Figure 3.—Recommendation ratings for Chicago-area places listed in survey.

5.1.2 Recommendation ratings of places to visit/avoid

As shown in Figure 3, the places that received the strongest recommendation ratings as places to visit were the Shedd Aquarium (rated as a place to "definitely" or "probably visit" by 96.0 percent of respondents), Grant/Millennium Park (by 95.0 percent), Lincoln Park Zoo (93.1 percent), Brookfield Zoo (90.5 percent), and Lincoln Park (81.7 percent). In contrast, those receiving the strongest recommendation ratings as places to avoid were the Dan Ryan Woods (rated as a place to "definitely" or "probably avoid" by 28.8 percent of respondents), Garfield Park (by 18.5 percent), Illinois Beach State Park (14.5 percent), William Powers State Recreation Area (12.9 percent), and the Sand Ridge Nature Center (12.0 percent).

5.1.3 Recommendations of "One Place to Definitely Visit" and "One Place to Definitely Avoid"

Respondents were then asked to select one place from the list of places (or another place of their choosing) that they would recommend that their friends definitely visit. Respondents were also directed to rate that place on a series of scales. Of particular interest in this analysis were respondents' ratings of their familiarity with the place listed (made using a 5-point scale ranging from "not at all familiar" to "extremely familiar"), degree of positivity (on a 5-point scale ranging from "not at all positive" to "extremely positive"), and degree of negativity (on a similar 5-point scale ranging from "not at all negative" to "extremely negative"). Once respondents listed and rated a place to definitely visit, they then did the same set of tasks for a place to definitely avoid.

Although almost all respondents (406 out of 411, or 98.8 percent) identified a place to visit, only half (197 out of 411, 47.9 percent) identified a place to avoid. Once again, as in the pilot work we conducted, respondents were hesitant to identify a place to avoid.

The place listed most frequently to "definitely visit" was Grant/Millennium Park (listed by 105 out of 406 respondents, or 25.8 percent), followed by the Shedd Aquarium (by 10.3 percent), Brookfield Zoo (9.1 percent), Chicago Botanic Garden (8.6 percent), Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore (7.6 percent), the Lincoln Park Zoo (6.9 percent), the Museum of Science and Industry (4.6 percent), Navy Pier (3.4 percent), the Field Museum (2.2 percent), Sears Tower (2.2 percent), the Art Institute of Chicago (2.0 percent), and the Lakefront Trail (2.0 percent).

The places listed most frequently to "definitely avoid" included the Dan Ryan Woods Forest Preserve (by 58 out of 197 respondents, or 29.4 percent), Garfield Park (by 15.2 percent), and the Illinois Beach State Park (5.1 percent). Open-ended comments provided

by respondents indicated that these were places to avoid because they were viewed as unsafe or dangerous. Other places in this category included general regions such as the "south side of Chicago" (5.1 percent),and "projects, slums, and unsafe/high-crime neighborhoods" (3.0%), and specific locations such as Gary, IN (2.0 percent), Cabrini Green (1.5 percent), Hammond, IN (1.5 percent), and Washington Park (1.5 percent). It is notable that some sites (albeit a small number) were listed by some respondents as places to avoid and by other respondents as a place to visit. Lincoln Park Zoo (3.0 percent), Navy Pier (2.0 percent), Grant/Millennium Park (1.5 percent), Shedd Aquarium (1.5 percent), and the Brookfield Zoo (1.5 percent), fell into this category. These were places to avoid because of bad past experiences at those places or difficulties in reaching or parking at the site, or they were considered too expensive to visit, too crowded or busy, or too commercial or touristy.

5.2 Attitudes

The second study objective was to explore residents' attitudes (and attitudinal ambivalence) toward three places: the place selected to definitely visit, the place selected to definitely avoid, and a place we thought was likely to reflect a mix of attitudes (the Calumet area of Chicago). In the survey, after selecting and providing ratings of respondents' "one place to definitely visit" and "one place to definitely avoid," participants read a description of (and viewed a location and layout map for) the FCEC. They then rated their intention to visit and recommend the FCEC. Next they were asked to provide ratings about the Calumet area of Chicago using the same three 5-point scales they had completed for the "one place to definitely visit" and "one place to definitely avoid" (i.e., ratings of familiarity, degree of positivity, and degree of negativity).

5.2.1 Summed place attitude scores

The first step in assessing attitudes toward the three places was to simulate what would happen if respondents rated the three places using the traditional bipolar attitude scale. Specifically, we created a summed attitude score for each of the three places by summing the separate ratings of positivity and negativity. Thus, if a place received a positivity rating of +4 and a negativity rating of -1, it would have a summed attitude score of +3; similarly, if the positivity rating was 0 and the negativity rating -4, the summed score would be -4; and if the pairs of scores were either 0 and 0 or +4 and -4, the summed attitude score would be computed as 0. Using this approach, the summed scores could range from a low of -4 to a high of +4. The summed attitude scores for the three places are shown in Fig. 4. As would be expected, the mean summed score for the place to visit (Fig. 4A) was very positive (Mean = 3.1, SD = 1.32, n = 396). Similarly, the summed score for the place to avoid (Fig. 4B) was relatively negative (Mean = -1.7, SD = 1.664, n = 197). Interestingly, however, the summed score for the Calumet area (Figure 4C) was essentially normally distributed with a mean of zero (Mean = 0.1, SD = 1.831, n = 380). This result suggests that if a traditional bipolar scale were used to assess place attitudes, we probably would conclude that most people felt neutral or indifferent, rather than ambivalent, toward the Calumet area.

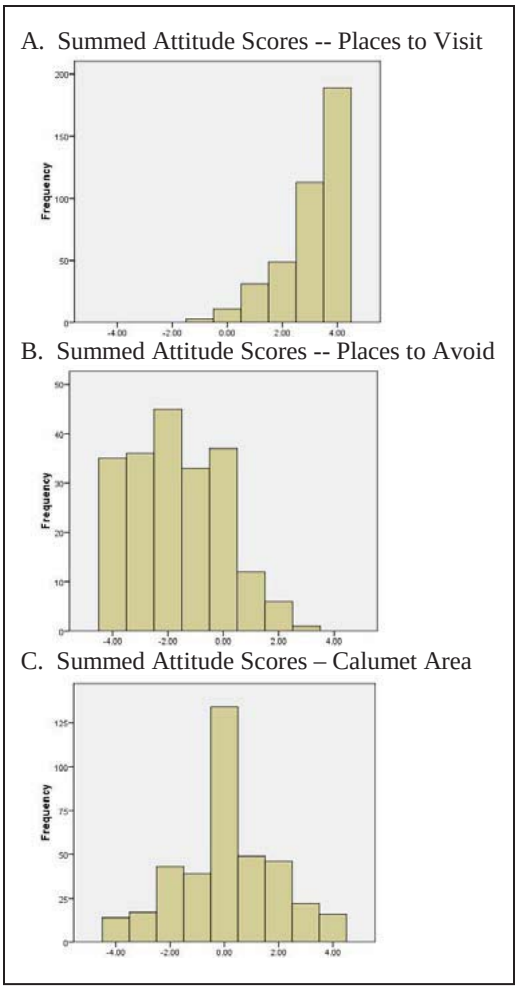

Figure 4.—Summed attitude scores for place to definitely visit (A), place to definitely avoid (B), and the Calumet area (C).

5.2.2 Bivariate place attitude ratings

The next step in the analysis was to examine attitudes toward the three places using the bivariate approach. The results of this analysis are shown in Fig. 5. The bivariate distribution for the "one place to definitely visit" (Figure 5A) shows that most responses clustered in the top right of the distribution, indicating moderate to strong positive evaluations toward the place they selected. The distribution for the "one place to definitely avoid" (Fig. 5B) shows that most responses cluster in the lower left of the distribution, indicating fairly strong negative evaluations. The conclusions for these two places correspond closely to those derived from the summed score analysis.

The bivariate distribution for the Calumet area tells a different story, however. In this case, most responses occur along the diagonal of the distribution, indicating a tendency toward either moderate ambivalence toward the Calumet area (i.e., bivariate responses of either +1 -1, +2 -2, +3 -3, or +4 -4 for the ratings of positivity and negativity, respectively) or indifference (0 0, no positivity and no negativity). Additional analysis indicates that the percent of respondents with ambivalent attitudes (scores of +1 -1, +2 -2, +3 -3, or +4 -4) was highest for the bivariate ratings of the Calumet area (93 out of 380, 24.5 percent of responses), next highest for a place to avoid (27 out of 205, 13.2 percent), and lowest for a place to visit (9 out of 396, 2.3 percent). These differences were significant (Chi-square = 83.389, df = 2, p <.001). The pattern was similar for those with indifferent attitudes (scores of 0 0). Once again the Calumet area was the highest (with 10.8 percent of the responses), the place to avoid next highest (4.9 percent), and place to visit lowest (0.5 percent). These differences were also significant (Chi-square = 40.270, df = 4, p < 001).

In sum, compared to the traditional bipolar approach, the results for the bivariate approach for assessing place attitudes resulted in a richer, more complete picture of how respondents felt about the three places examined. It also demonstrated how attitudinal ambivalence can be distinguished from indifference when place attitudes are evaluated.

A. Place to Visit

	Positivity Rating					
Negativity Rating	0	1	2	3	4	
0	2	4	5	60	189	260
1	1	1	7	32	53	94
2	0	1	5	16	12	34
3	0	0	0	1	4	5
4	0	0	0	1	2	3
	3	6	17	110	260	396

B. Place to Avoid

	Positivity Rating					
Negativity Rating	0	1	2	3	4	
0	10	3	1	0	0	14
1	5	8	2	3	1	19
2	8	14	17	6	2	47
3	18	30	9	1	1	59
4	35	18	7	5	1	66
	76	73	36	15	5	205

C. Calumet Area

	Positivity Rating					
Negativity Rating	0	1	2	3	4	
0	41	8	10	11	16	86
1	6	24	20	30	11	91
2	10	20	62	19	6	117
3	12	31	12	6	2	63
4	14	5	2	1	1	23
	83	88	106	67	36	380

Figure 5.—Bivariate response distribution for place to definitely visit (Panel A), place to definitely avoid (Panel B), and the Calumet area (Panel C).

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

The overall goal of the study was to develop a better understanding of the place visitation/avoidance behavior and place attitudes of residents in a diverse urban area. We collected data on Chicago residents' recommendations of recreation sites to visit as well as less desirable sites to avoid. While only 50 percent of the sample recommended a place to definitely avoid, data collected on place avoidance behavior provide an important counterpoint to prior recreation research (which has tended to focus almost exclusively on place visitation behavior).

In addition to data on place behavior, we collected data using a bivariate approach to measure attitudes toward a place to definitely visit, a place to definitely avoid, and a place we believed would evoke a mix of attitudes (the Calumet area of Chicago). These data yield interesting insight into the range of attitudes in an urban environment and underscore the utility of using

a bivariate approach (instead of the traditional bipolar approach) to conceptualize and study place attitudes.

This research represents an initial effort to understand place avoidance and attitudinal ambivalence. Additional work is needed to explore the bases of these phenomena; to examine whether responses differed by race/ethnicity, income, or location; and to determine whether similar results would be obtained in other study settings. Furthermore, though not examined in the present analysis, data were obtained on residents' place attachment toward the three study sites (i.e., the place to definitely visit, place to definitely avoid, and the Calumet area). Like most recreation research, prior studies have focused on place attachment only in the context of positive/desirable places. Thus, exploring place attachment across a range of positive-negative sites in an urban area would represent an important extension of past work.

7.0 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research is based on a cooperative research agreement between the U.S. Forest Service, Northern Research Station, Evanston, IL and Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN. The guidance of the City of Chicago, Department of Environment, in conducting this research is greatly appreciated.

8.0 CITATIONS

Cacioppo, J.T.; Gardner, W.L.; Berntson, G.G. 1997. **Beyond bipolar conceptualizations and measures: The case of attitudes and evaluative space.** Personality and Social Psychology Review. 1: 3-25.

Fazio, R.H. 1986. **How do attitudes guide behavior?** In: Sorrentino, R.M. and Higgins, E.T., eds. Handbook of Motivation and Cognition: Foundations of Social Behavior. New York: Guiford Press: 204-243.

Klenosky, D.B. 2005. **The impact of negative environmental factors on recreation choice behavior.** In: Bricker, Kelly, comp., ed. 2005. Proceedings of the 2004 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium. Gen. Tech. Rep. NE-326. Newtown Square, PA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northeastern Research Station: 272-280.

Klenosky, D.B.; LeBlanc, C.L.; Schroeder, H.W.; Vogt, C.A. 2008. **Factors that attract and repel visitation to urban recreation sites: a framework for research.** In: LeBlanc, C. and Vogt, C., comps. Proceedings of the 2007 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium. Gen. Tech. Rep. NRS-P-23. Newtown Square, PA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northern Research Station: 39-47.

Klenosky D.B.; Saunders, C.A. 2004. **Brookfield Zoo herp metaphor study.** Unpublished report.

Lawson, R.; Thyne, M. 2001. **Destination avoidance and inept destination sets.** Journal of Vacation Marketing. 7(3): 199-208.

Lee, M.S.W.; Motion, J.; Conroy, D. 2008. **Anti-consumption and brand avoidance.** Journal of Business Research. 62(2): 169-180.

Manning, R. 1999. **Studies in outdoor recreation: search and research for satisfaction (2nd Edition).** Corvallis: Oregon State University Press.

Roehl, W.S.; Fesenmaier, D.R. 1992. **Risk perceptions and pleasure travel: An exploratory analysis.** Journal of Travel Research. 30(4): 17-26.

Sönmez, S.; Graefe, A. 1998a. **Determining future travel behavior from past travel experience and perceptions of risk and safety.** Journal of Travel Research. 37(2): 171-177.

Sönmez, S.; Graefe, A. 1998b. **Influence of terrorism risk on foreign tourism decisions.** Annals of Tourism Research. 25(1): 112-144.