The rest of the Quarter will be mostly “People” oriented

SOCIAL NEEDS AND VALUES OF URBAN SOCIETY

Evolving Relationship to Nature

Our relationship with nature has and probably will always change over time as our social attitudes change. It seems these changes are occurring more and more rapidly in modern times, especially with the revolution in technology. On a broader historical scale we, as a species, have moved from living in nature, as hunter gatherers, to rural and agrarian, and then to mostly living in cities, smaller ones like Davis or larger ones like Los Angeles.

More recently, however, urban people have become more interested in, and knowledgeable about nature. I remember when we still had the “harness nature” attitude, which some people, especially engineers still seem to have today. However, there has been an increase toward an understanding and conserving, and when necessary, restoring natural systems. I think in the last 40 years we have increasingly seen our human selves as a part of nature, another mammal, albeit a very powerful and potentially dangerous one.
Agricultural Revolution

Before the Agricultural Revolution people of nomadic societies understood their dependance on nature and even formed religious symbolism and connections with elements of nature. People were part of nature and they understood that if they violated nature’s laws, some really bad things might happen. They had learned form nature, often from their mistakes. Some cultures granted deity status on various elements of nature, such as trees and rocks. Nature was to be respected, and I often feared, as still occurs occasionally today: the Loma Prieta Earthquake of 20 years ago, and more recently Hurricane Katrina and the Earthquake in Japan. I had a friend on the faculty at UC Riverside who had grown up in Pennsylvania where there are essentially no earthquakes. Coming to California really frightened her, and eventually she returned to the East coast. Some of us Californians might be equally fearful about Twisters if we moved to the Mid West.

So we do still have some appropriate fears about Nature, but much less than our ancestors, and, for some, far too little respect. We tend to respect Nature on a sporadic basis, while our ancestors respected nature on a daily, or even hourly basis.

Industrialization

Industrialization completely changed our perception of nature and the quality of our cities. Toeffler (1980) from Miller, argues that three social changes were necessary to account for the changes brought about by industrialization. These are social attitudes that made it possible for cities to be degraded during the industrial revolution.
a. **War with Nature**

The idea here is that Humans are above Nature, not dependant on nature, and must conquer nature in order to promote Human survival and welfare. Us against Them! It was thought to be good to remove forests in order to grow crops, dispose of our wastes into waterways, mine minerals from the earth, etc. This increased industrial production and thus, promoted human welfare.

b. **Social Darwinism**

In the Mid 1800s, Darwin proposed his theory of Evolution by Natural Selection, in which the fittest survive and the others were eliminated. This biological concept grew in the late 1800s and into the early 1900s when it was incorporated by some into a social context leading to the idea that it was scientific for some individuals or societies to survive, and others to be eliminated in order for “progress” to occur.

c. **Progress Principle**

This is basically the idea that “more is better”. For example, if living in a small city provides some amenities, living in a larger city will provide more amenities. If building a dam on a river successfully stores water, controls floods, and generates hydroelectric power, then more dams will provide more benefits. This concept is most attractive when populations are expanding rapidly.

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**Today’s Human Environment**
Although we have learned to control our environment beginning with the Agricultural Revolution, the building of cities, and especially following the Industrial Revolution, we humans were not the first species to practice some environmental control. There are many examples of animal species who build nests, burrows, hives, etc. to control various aspects of their environment, temperature and humidity.

But humans have extended this practice far beyond these examples, in many familiar ways, some positive and some not.

**Children from inner cities** often reflect attitudes that have resulted from urbanization and control of our environment. It is common for children living in the country to be curious and want to explore trees, frogs and just plain dirt. However, to prepare children for a safe life in the city, they are often taught by parents and teachers to beware of dangers in their environment and, as a result, they are often suspicious of what is not familiar, including elements of the natural world. They are being taught how to live in a city largely devoid of nature, and, of course, they do need to be prepared for dangers in their urban life.

When city children were asked about the value of trees, they said wood was for building things with. Suburban and rural children answered that trees were a place to play.

**Last Child in the Woods**, is a series of thoughtful books by Richard Louv, in which he describes
Nature Deficit Disorder

Louv uses a Walt Whitman quote to illustrate the impact of natural experiences on a child during the 1800s

There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look’d upon, that subject he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass and white and red morning glories, and white and red clover,
and the song of the phoebe-bird,
And the Third-month lambs and the sow’s pink-faint litter,
and the mare’s foal and the cow’s calf,...

And to illustrate what he means by Nature Deficit Disorder, he quotes a fourth grader from San Diego in the current era

I like to play indoors better ‘cause that’s where all the electric outlets are.

Louv describes the 8 kinds of Intelligence of Howard Gardner, a psychologist from Harvard, and you will see why when we get to number 8 (However, the rest are fun as well). When I was in college I really began to doubt that a single measure
of IQ made any sense, so I am very attracted to Gardner’s thinking.

1. Linguistic I, word smart

2. Mathematic I, number smart

3. Spatial I, picture smart

4. Kinesthetic I, body smart

5. Musical I, music smart

6. Interpersonal I, people smart

7. Intrapersonal I, self smart

8. Naturalist I, nature smart

Many of these forms of intelligence can be important in promoting public awareness and support for the Urban Forest, and need to be nurture in our children.

Now, back to Miller, and the adult world:
Urban social values toward nature have developed over time and they are often not positive toward the natural world. There is so much in urban life that is not under our control, for example, traffic congestion, air and water quality, crime, etc. In this situation, people may not welcome the natural world into their lives because it would add more stuff to their lives that they would not be able to control.

These Urban Attitudes have been divided into four categories by Sinton, according to Miller, although both are well aware that they usually form more of a continuum than discrete categories. Nonetheless, categories can be helpful, as we try to face problems of urban ignorance and or apathy toward nature.

1. Love and Dependance

   Rarely, a person or a group of people will absolutely need to live with nature, they will depend on nature, and need to be in an almost wilderness setting. A few hunting and gathering societies still exist. In the U.S. there are a few rugged wilderness types, who seem to gravitate to places like Montana, Wyoming, etc. and can seem quite anti social. These people love nature, need nature, and be careful, they may be armed!

2. Renewal

   Many city folks are comfortable in their urban environment but enjoy escaping the stresses of the city to enjoy trips to natural areas. Camping and Backpacking
are examples. This may renew a contact with their heritage. They enjoy a natural experience on nature’s terms, and are not too fearful to lack of control over elements of nature. There may be some excitement, but not too much. Many of us probably fall into this category.

3. Control

Other city folks like to experience a part of the natural world but need for the experience to be more safely controlled. They plant gardens, go to city parks and zoos, have secure campers, or a cabin in the forest, and will hike on a well marked trail. Many also fall into this category.

4. Haters

These folks stay in the city and have no interest in experiencing nature. They enjoy the amenities of city life and are happy to explore malls, libraries and museums and there is never too much asphalt in the parking lot. They would be bored with a walk in the forest. Hard to image?

Clearly, we will find that an individual may want control with respect to some elements of nature, say snakes, and feel rejuvenated with respect to trees, birds or mammals.

Therefore, we need to have a substantial sample of human attitudes in order to plan and manage an urban forest for these people. We may also want to undertake educational programs, for the public and in schools to change attitudes if we determine that a “better” urban forest needs to be planned and managed.
We are a complex species with regard to our attitudes toward Nature. Trees, as an important part of Nature have influenced us as well. Our preferences toward different trees were explored by Robert Sommer, whose work we will discuss next time.

**Psychological Values** and

**Social Needs, Values, and Urban Forestry**

these sections from p22 to p25 seem rather shallow and will be omitted.

People and Trees Next