

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Visual Golf Course Effects

This research investigation addressed whether visual exposure to a natural environment can be stress reducing. Specific emphasis was on the influence of roadside environments dominated by natural elements as they might mitigate travel-related stresses. It was assumed that motorists and passengers are aware of the environment they travel through, that they have definite opinions about the attractiveness of those areas, and that their behavior can be influenced by the scenic quality of the environments through which they drive.

A total of 160 college-age participants, both male and female, viewed one of four different videotaped, simulated drives through outdoor environments immediately following and preceding mildly stressful events. The simulated drives were represented by (a) an urban structure-dominated environment, (b) a native vegetation forest-dominated drive, (c) a mixed structural and nature forest drive, and (d) a golf course environment. The investigators found that **average blood pressure levels and skin conduction levels were significantly lower in those participants exposed to the golf course environment, than for the other three environments. Further, participants who had viewed the golf course environment performed more accurately on the subsequent mental arithmetic tasks than those viewing the other three environments, including the natural forest environment.** Also, those participants who had previously viewed the golf course environment also performed more accurately on mental arithmetic tasks than those who performed the same tests prior to viewing the simulated golf course drive. The causal aspects of these golf course responses relative to the native forest remain to be clarified. This represents the first definitive data documenting the aesthetic benefits of a golf course environment. Could one conclude that golf course superintendents should have the ability to perform mathematical calculations at a higher level?

By R. Parsons, L.G. Tassinary, R.S. Hebl, and M. Brossman-Alexander. **The View from the Road: Implications for Stress Recovery and Immunization.** *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. Vol. 17, No. 3. 1998.

JB COMMENTS

Just returned from a week in Japan. Golfers in Japan are now paying 25 to 30% less to play a golf course. This obviously has implications for the golf course maintenance budgets.

Made a brief visit to the Japan Sumitoma VISA Masters Competition at the Taiheiyo Club. A big emphasis on the sports pages of Japanese newspapers was the fast greens—faster than they had ever experienced in Japan. One should note that zoysiagrass putting greens are still in use at some golf courses, and are very slow. Obviously, the trend to higher putting green speeds is becoming global in impact. Many people now travel world-wide via the easy access of air travel and are playing golf throughout the world. When playing on the higher-speed surfaces of putting greens at certain golf courses, golfers make comparative evaluations, and many may ask for increased putting speeds on the golf courses they play regularly.

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