

FOR/CSS 235-Society and Natural Resources Lifestyle Analysis Project

Paper Due: Friday, November 1, 2013

Purpose

The idea of the Lifestyle Analysis Project is for us to experience some of the ways in which we each have a direct and personal impact on our environment. It is one way to learn how individual lifestyle choices can make a difference in our ecological footprint. The exercise will require planning and thinking about your individual actions and choices. **You have a total of three weeks to complete this assignment**, so plan accordingly.

Instructions and Procedure

1. **On the next few pages you will find six categories of resource use. Your first task is to choose any three of the six categories** as resource use areas for which you are willing to monitor your own use for a total of 10 days. Since you are going to be asked to try to reduce your use of resources, don't pick an area in which you have already reduced your use as far as you possibly can. The idea of this project is to make changes, assess and even quantify the impact of the changes and experience what it is like to live with those changes. Some changes may not be possible in your particular living situation. If so, obviously, you shouldn't choose those categories.
2. **Week 1** – Once you have decided which categories you are going to monitor, and how you are going to keep track of them, live your life normally, except that each day for **five** days you will record and assess your "normal lifestyle choices" in each of your three selected categories. **(Oct. 14-18th)**
3. **Week 2** – During the second week, make some deliberate changes in your lifestyle with the intent of reducing your personal use of resources, and therefore, your environmental impact. Use the same measures as during the first five days to assess how much you've reduced your consumption. **(Oct. 21-28th)**
4. **Week 3** – During the final week of the exercise, analyze, compare, reflect on, and write a summary of what you did, what you found out, and what your experience was, including the entire two weeks of the exercise. The reflection part of the exercise should include a discussion, based on your experience of the 5 days of reduced consumption, of what it would be like for you to continue consuming less, and thereby living a more sustainable lifestyle.
5. **Keep a daily journal** of your decisions, rationale and experiences.
6. **Go to:** <http://www.skidmore.edu/~jthomas/lifestyleproject> to see how to calculate your use of resources.

NOTES:

- **Your journal should include entries for each day for the two weeks of the exercise -- tracking your impact and reflecting on your experiences.**
- **Use your journal to help you write your paper**, assessing and reflecting on your experiences, decisions you had to make, and their impact on your life (for better, for worse, and/or impacts that were just different) and likely environmental impact
- The exercise is designed so that you can compare what you normally do with what you would do if you consciously and conscientiously reduced your use of resources, and thereby reduced your environmental impact. By tracking both, you can more easily quantify and understand the differences. Use the energy calculator information at: <http://www.skidmore.edu/~jthomas/lifestyleproject> to calculate your resource use.
- The Lifestyle Project involves making changes to your personal lifestyle. If you feel that these changes might negatively affect your health, happiness, and well-being in any way, or if they conflict with your religious or philosophical beliefs, then you may choose the alternative assignment described at the end of this handout on page four.

The Resource Use Categories. For more information see: <http://www.skidmore.edu/~jthomas/lifestyleproject/>

1. **HEAT** – During the second 5 days, expand your comfort zone by turning your heat down by 7 degrees Fahrenheit from its normal setting. (Assuming your normal setting is at about 70, this would entail reducing your heat setting by about 10%). The heat reduction applies for the entire 5 days of the reduction period. The option to use this category is limited to students who have control over their own thermostats and who have cooperative housemates! Estimate your average daily use of power for heat, and estimate the amount of energy and costs you saved during the days you reduced your thermostat by 7 degrees Fahrenheit.

2. **GARBAGE** – Reduce the amount of garbage you produce during days 6-10...maybe even to zero! The three “Rs” of this approach, in order of their impacts, are: **reduce, reuse and recycle**. The most effective action to **reduce** your input to landfills is to reduce the amount of stuff you use, reduce the amount you buy, and reduce the amount you waste you generate. Of lesser but important impact is to **reuse** whatever you can. This helps to avoid buying new things that will eventually end up as garbage. **Recycling** is the last option, having the smallest impact, and should be used only when the first two options have been exercised.

So during the second 5-day interval, your task is to see if you can live in a way that will not contribute anything to the landfill. Note that even though some types of plastics are recyclable, not all of them are. If you aren't able to recycle a particular type of plastic, it counts as garbage. Here are some ideas for reducing the amount of garbage you produce: Write on both sides of pieces of paper, using the backs of old paper instead of taking a fresh sheet. Buy products such as rice, pasta and honey from bulk bins at the market instead of buying them pre-packaged...and bring your own re-usable containers so you don't add a new plastic bag to the waste stream. Also note that it is considered cheating to just hang on to something and then throw it out after the exercise is completed. Toilet paper used for sanitary purposes does not count as garbage as it goes to the wastewater treatment plant, not the landfill. Although quitting smoking is beyond the scope of this project, all butts must be put in the garbage can and counted as waste. They should not be discarded on the ground or out your car window...ever!...regardless of the exercise

3. **ELECTRICITY or WATER** – Try to trim your energy consumption by reducing your use of water or electricity, even to about 50% of your current level of use. To do this, you can do the following things: turn the lights off when you're not using them; turn on only one light instead of two; study next to a window; leave the TV and the stereo off while you're studying; cook meals that don't require lots of burners at once or long cooking times; use the microwave instead of the stove or oven; take a shower at half the usual duration; reduce the flow of water so it's not on at full blast while you're taking a shower; take a cooler shower; install a low-flow shower head; don't leave the water running while washing, shaving, brushing your teeth, or washing dishes; skip the blow dryer and electric razor; don't use any unnecessary appliances; run the washing machine and dishwasher only when it is totally full; consider hand washing dishes using low water consumption techniques instead of using the dishwasher; hang laundry to dry instead of using the dryer. If you do all (or nearly all) of these things it is possible to cut your consumption by 50% or more.

To measure electric use: Check and write down the reading on your electric meter on the morning of the first day of the exercise. Check the meter again on the morning of the 6th day at about the same time as the first reading and calculate the difference. This difference in the number of kilowatt hours you used in the past 5 days. Check the meter again on the morning of the 11th day and calculate the difference between readings on the 6th morning and the 11th morning. This number indicates the amount of kilowatt hours you used during days 6-10 of the exercise. Compare the number of kilowatt hours you used in the first 5 days to the amount you used during the second 5 days. At a rate of 8 cents per kilowatt hour (it's actually a little more than that), calculate how much your use of energy cost you during each of the two periods. Think about and write down some other conditions (in addition to your efforts) that may have influenced your energy and water use results.

To measure water use: If you live in a house, you should be able to check your water meter and do the same kinds of calculations for the amount of water you use. (Water use is measured by the cubic foot. Each cubic foot of water equals 7.48 gallons). If you live in a newer apartment building, you may have a separate water meter for your apartment. In older buildings, there is usually only one meter for the whole building, so you may not be able to calculate easily the impact of your reduction in water use. But you can probably think of some clever ways to do this, like capturing and measuring the amount of water you use for each shower. You could also count the number of times you use the dishwasher in each time period and check the manual to see how much water each cycle uses, and so on.

4. **LEAVE THE CAR AT HOME** - Experience the thrill of the outdoors by riding your bike, walking or taking the bus in your daily travels. Hitching a ride with your friends or roommates does reduce the amount of driving, but is also just too easy, so avoid that option unless there are no other alternatives. Estimate the number of gallons of gasoline you use to run your car in the first period versus the number of gallons you use in the second

period of the exercise. Estimate the amount of money you would save if you did not use your car in your daily travels for the 9 months of the year that you are in school

5. **EAT EFFICIENTLY** - The industrial production of meat requires large amounts of water and energy, and also produces considerable waste. Approximately ninety percent of the grain grown in the US is fed to livestock. If we ate the grain instead of the livestock, we would be using resources more efficiently. For example, 16 pounds of grain fed to beef cattle produces only one pound of edible meat (Cunningham and Saigo, 1999). The majority of the calorie content in the grain is used by the animal for metabolism. This means that when we eat meat from grainfed livestock, we ingest only about 6% of the original calories in the grain. Milk and milk products are less of an issue. One cow produces about 18,500 pounds of milk in a year and between 8 – 30 pounds of milk for each pound of feed (see: <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome>).

Another way to look at this is to consider the amount of water required to produce different foods. For example, it takes 160 gallons of water to produce a loaf of bread, but it takes 2,500 gallons of water to produce one pound of beef (Cunningham and Saigo, 1999). By reducing the amount of industrially produced meat that we eat, and/or by eating only beef from grass-fed cattle, we can have a smaller environmental impact. Another possibility for some is the option of hunting for meat. This measure of our impact, that is, how we eat, also includes attention to the packaging and processing of our food. Packaging uses energy and resources and often creates a lot of waste. Highly processed foods are made using water and energy.

For your first 5 days, keep track of your meals and estimate (or better yet, measure) the amount and type of meat you eat (including breakfast, lunch, supper and snacks).

For the second 5 days, try eating more fruits, vegetables, nuts, and grains and little or no meat. Cut back especially on processed and packaged foods during days 6-10. You should be vigilant about not wasting food during this exercise.

Note: If you eat a balanced diet, you don't need to worry about getting enough protein without meat. An average adult needs only about 40 grams of protein per day (Cunningham and Saigo, 1999). Sources of protein other than meat include whole grain breads (4 g per slice), beans (7 g per serving), pasta (7 g per serving), peanut butter (7 g per serving) and yogurt (11 g per cup). In any case, you should consult a physician or nutritionist before making major changes to your diet or if you have any questions about your ability to complete this aspect of the project.

6. **CREATE YOUR OWN CATEGORY** - There are many other things you can do to lessen your impact on the environment or to have a positive effect on the environment. Be creative and come up with your own way of making a difference. You could write letters to your senators, volunteer with a local conservation group like the PCEI, spend time cleaning up the woods, set up a carpooling system or recycling system in your home or workplace, find ways to educate others about the importance of conservation, or change your lifestyle in a way not described in the categories above. Invent your own category and discuss it with me or your TA before the project starts.

THE LIFESTYLE PROJECT JOURNAL

Keep a journal of your activities in the project with one entry for each day of the two week period. Journal entries should include exactly what you did to meet the requirements of the project, such as the temperature at which you set your thermostat, the length of your showers or the amount of water you actually used, your mode of transportation and your diet. **Also describe how the lifestyle changes affected you, and your thoughts about the changes you made.** Consider ways to make your journal environmentally-friendly.

In addition to the written report of your experience of the project, which is due on October 25th, you will need to show your journals to your discussion leaders one week after the project is assigned, and your completed journals should be included and handed in as a part of your written report of your experience of this project.

Journals are due on the following dates:

1. Th/Fri – October 17/18th. Journals are due at the beginning of your discussion session.

The entries should cover your experiences during the first week of the exercise and should therefore include all of the entries for your "normal" 5-day period and a few entries for your reduction period.

2. Thurs./Fri. October 24/25th. Your TAs will be available to review your progress and journals and answer questions at your normal Discussion Group times. Completed Journals must be and attached to your paper.

FORMAL WRITTEN PART OF THE ASSIGNMENT LIFESTYLE REFLECTION PROJECT FINAL PAPER –

Use your journal and experiences during the two weeks of the exercise to write a paper that critically reflects on changing to a lifestyle that is more likely to conserve resources. Be sure to visit:

<http://www.skidmore.edu/~jthomas/lifestyleproject> for more information on how to track your use of resources and calculate your impact.

Your paper is due no later than 12:30 p.m. on Friday, November 1st. Give your paper to your group leader before class on the 1st or drop it off in the box in front of Dr. Krumpe's office (CNR 19J).

Your reflection should include:

- A statement about which categories you chose to use as your measure of your personal impact and why
- An assessment of whether or not you reached your goals (explicitly demonstrate this using lists, tables and results of calculations comparing your baseline and experimental lifestyles)
- Statements about the decisions you had to make, how easy it was to remember or forget to change your habits, and any difficulties that prevented you from meeting the project goals you pursued
- Statements about what you learned about your habits and whether they reflect your environmental values
- Statements about and possible descriptions of the roles people in your life played in helping you, any negotiations with roommates or friends (or partners or parents) and whether the people close to you joined in willingly, reminded you of your goals, or tried to keep you from meeting your goals.
- At the next level, reflect on whether the University of Idaho and local community were supportive. If you asked people (at campus dining or in a restaurant, for example) to do something differently to help you meet your goals, were they willing (even if they were surprised)?
- And last, address the societal barriers and support systems you encountered (if any) during this project. Does advertising, for example, try to convince us that we need more products so that we can be worthwhile and fulfilled people (whether it is a faster car, a 'better' beer, or whiter teeth)?
- Because it is easy in our current societal and cultural setting to be heavily influenced to consume, be very clear about how family and friends, the community, and society influence your decisions while retaining the final responsibility for your choices.
- Use specific examples to illustrate and support your reflection paper

FORMAT

The final paper should be about 4 pages in length, with 1.5 spaces between lines, 12 point font, and 1-inch margins. Although the paper should reflect your thinking and personal style, it should also be organized and written using formal and proper English. In other words, the paper should read easily from beginning to end, each paragraph should be organized around a single idea, and the sentences should be grammatically correct. Be sure to use correct spelling and punctuation and avoid using slang and colloquialisms.

GRADING

Your grade will be based on the completion of the assignment, the quality of the journal, your thoughtful responses, and the degree to which you adhere to the project. Some grading criteria include the effort you put forth, the depth to which you describe the details of your project, your sincerity and the commitment you demonstrate.

Grades will be based on content (this includes demonstration of meeting your goals), completeness, coherence of writing and proper formatting. Your grade on this assignment will be based on both the formal paper (60% of your grade - 30 points) and your journal (40% of your grade - 20 points).

Alternative assignment - Lifestyle Research Paper Option

If, for some reason, you feel that you cannot do the Lifestyle Project, please speak to your Discussion Group Leader before your discussion group on October 17/18th about the alternative project, which will require about the same amount of work as the regularly assigned project, and will involve library research and writing a formal, full-length Lifestyle Research Paper (about 25 pages long). This paper will be due at the same time as the above regular project paper.

References: Cunningham, W.P., and Saigo, B.W., 1999, Environmental science: a global concern: New York, McGraw-Hill, 650 p.