Continued Wilderness Participation: Experience and Identity as Long-term Relational Phenomena

Jeffrey J. Brooks
Daniel R. Williams

Abstract—Understanding the relationship between wilderness outings and the resulting experience has been a central theme in resource-based, outdoor recreation research for nearly 50 years. The authors provide a review and synthesis of literature that examines how people, over time, build relationships with wilderness places and express their identities as consequences of multiple, ongoing wilderness engagements (that is, continued participation). The paper reviews studies of everyday places and those specifically protected for wilderness and backcountry qualities. Beginning with early origins and working through contemporary research the authors synthesize what diverse social scientists have learned about the long-term and continual nature of wilderness participation and its impact on the formation of identity. The thrust of the paper points researchers, planners, and managers in non-traditional directions and reframes goals and objectives for visitor planning and management in wilderness and other protected areas.

Introduction

This synthesis highlights temporal aspects of experience. Time is an inescapable dimension of all human experience and activity (Heidegger 1962; Munn 1992: 93). It allows people to visit places such as wilderness on a regular and ongoing basis if desired, and in the process, meaningful place relationships may be built and nurtured. We examine experience and identity in terms of ongoing interactions with places and other people throughout one's life, and in all one's activities (Codina 2003: 239). Similar to home, religion, career, family, or hobby we suggest that wilderness experience comprises a long-term source of identity for people who participate on a continuing basis. We offer an interview excerpt taken from Brooks and others (2004) to illustrate continued participation and ongoing experience, setting the stage for the discussions that follow.

> *Researcher*: Would you say… that wilderness is important to you? *Participant*: Yes, I would in a lot of ways… Gosh one of the things we were just talking about the other day that comes to mind in wilderness

Authors: Jeffrey J. Brooks, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Anchorage, AK. Daniel R. Williams, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fort Collins, CO.

is the sense of slowing down… I live in Denver; it is a necessity to get away from all that and slow down and remember the speed at which things really happen… is geologically slow. I think that it's hard to get that experience in the city… the sense of really slowing down and just going where you go. [It] tends to help me bring that back to the city… the reminder of what is important, the scale of things, and the importance of preserving what we have. I mean it tends to carry all my conservationism back. It sort of comes back again for me, and I definitely get that as a result of being in the wilderness.… There really is a spiritual component that is really hard to define. I've been working on that one for years. I couldn't find a way to put it into words on any given day. But, my husband and I got married on an overlook, overlooking Rocky Mountain National Park—way outside sort of the traditional organized religion paradigm; there is something both humbling and expansive about being out in wilderness. I also think that it is important to take that back to my daily life.… *Researcher*: Is your spirituality related to these types of settings? *Participant*: Yes, definitely... it links into a lot of aspects of my life. It's got this trickle down effect where I find things like my commitment to recycling feels like a spiritual act… a mitzvah or something like a religious commandment. It's the determination to conserve water—all these things, I really pick them up when I am out here… getting out in the wilderness reminds me of how important it is ... it permeates a lot of aspects of my life. I'm a quilter; it gets into my quilting, the relationships that I have with people. I think that it gets into an awful lot of things.… *Researcher*: Are there any particular places that have special importance for you? *Participant*:… Glacier Gorge is part of the park that I know best. I've traveled it the most.… It's fairly accessible. So it's always kind of miraculous when you get up there on a quiet day. I've been up there in the winter. I've been up there in the summer and the fall… it's easy to get there and do a quick day trip. *Researcher*: Do you associate Glacier Gorge with family, friends, memories, or beliefs? *Participant*: Yes, some specific memories, I mean my husband and I have spent a lot of time there, so it is very much wrapped around my little nuclear family now, not so much my family of origin. Although, the day after our wedding—the biggest hike I've ever been on—probably 16 or 17 people from our wedding party went up as far as Mills Lake, and lunched by the lake. It was pretty neat. Both of our Dads were there, some of our cousins, a lot of our friends… are also big hikers, so it was a very comfortable space for them. It was great to bring some people who hadn't really been up here before. A big part of the sort of spiritual aspect

of the ceremony itself was for us to commit ourselves to the state of marriedness and to the rootedness of being married in this particular place on the land.… then actually to bring those people with us, and show them: This is what we are talking about… not just get the post card view, which we got at the wedding site, but to say now we're going to walk in it and run into the possibility of rain and get sore feet, and we are going to get tired and just the whole experience… of being up there… and also just great conversations that have happened over the years [on] different hikes…

For this person, the experience of the park, which is partially managed as wilderness, is a progression or continuing process that both contributes to and is interwoven with her sense of identity, well being, and relationships with others in her life. Being there clearly affects her everyday life outside of wilderness in meaningful ways, an observation supported by previous research in both wilderness (Pohl and others 2000) and long-term adventure recreation (Boniface 2006). She does not talk about being in wilderness as a discrete experience or encounter, but as an organizing narrative in the story of her family life. We conceive of continued wilderness participation, and the accumulated experiences tied to it, as a process of building and maintaining (affirming and adjusting) a coherent identity narrative—a story about oneself—that structures and infuses one's everyday life with meaning. This viewpoint contrasts with much prior research on wilderness experience, which has tended to focus on discrete recreational uses or trips in wilderness and related outcomes such as satisfaction and a myriad of other personal benefits (Borrie and Birzell 2001; Roggenbuck and Driver 2000).

The central question that we examine in this paper is how people, over time, build relationships and express their identities through experiences in places such as wilderness or other protected areas and what this means for those who study and manage these places. Beginning with early origins and working through contemporary research in a number of areas, we review what social scientists have learned during the last 50 years about the long-term nature of wilderness experience and its relationship to identity. We conclude with a discussion of implications in which we reframe goals and objectives for research, planning, and management to better account for continued wilderness participation.

Early Origins

Understanding the relationship between wilderness outings and the resulting experience has been a central theme in resource-based, outdoor recreation research for nearly 50 years. A number of temporal perspectives (that is, those accounting for variation over time) emerged out of the research conducted to support the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) reports in 1962. Perhaps the best known is the Clawson and Knetsch (1966) suggestion that recreation experiences were not limited to that which occurred at the recreation site, but also involved anticipation, travel to, travel home, and recollection. Despite its conceptual appeal, it received relatively little systematic attention in the research

literature until much later (see Hammitt 1980; Stewart 1998). This idea has been broadened to investigate the multi-phased (for example, entry, through immersion, to the exit phase) and dynamic nature of onsite recreation or wilderness experiences (Borrie and Birzell 2001; Borrie and Roggenbuck 2001; Hull and others 1992; Hull and others 1996; McIntyre and Roggenbuck 1998). Hall and Cole (in press) addressed the topic of immediate conscious experience of wilderness. Another important temporal perspective involves research on the effects of multi-day educational and therapeutic uses of wilderness (Gibson 1979; Kaplan 1974). This topic is examined by Dawson and Russell (in press). Our focus on wilderness as a continuing pattern of recreation experience has its roots in three other lines of research that have examined patterns of leisure participation across the life course: socialization models, specialization models, and Experience Use History. All three perspectives emphasize how participants learn and refine wilderness behaviors and experiences and how, over time, such learning influences identities and attitudes.

Socialization into outdoor recreation patterns was a major focus of the ORRRC reports as it was seen as an essential tool to forecasting recreation demand into the future. In this context, socialization refers to the acquisition of the knowledge, attitudes, skills, norms, and communication and interpretive repertoires that shape recreation preferences, participation, and identity (Kelly 1974). Initial attempts to examine socialization looked at demographic patterns of participation. The presumption was that demographic characteristics were indicators of living in different social worlds that would transmit different values and interests to its members. While early studies were often disappointing for both conceptual and methodological reasons (Burch 1969; Burdge and Field 1972; Meyersohn 1969), early evidence suggested that use of wilderness was related to socioeconomic status, particularly education, and gender (ORRRC 1962). Moreover, these relationships have been repeatedly observed over the years (Bowker and others 2006; Manning 2011; Roggenbuck and Lucas 1987; Roggenbuck and Watson 1989).

To move beyond the limited explanatory power of demographic aggregates, sociological studies began to examine the ways in which preferences for outdoor recreation activities are formed within small circles of family, friends, or colleagues (Burch 1969). For example, a number of studies looked at the influence of early childhood socialization to explain adult preferences for a variety of outdoor recreation activities including primitive camping (Burch and Wenger 1967) and hunting and fishing (Sofranko and Nolan 1972). Other studies have focused on one's membership in leisure reference groups, for example, socialization into the surfing (Devall 1973), drug counter culture (Becker 1953), or sport fishing communities (Ditton and others 1992). Leisure social worlds refer to an "internally recognizable constellation of actors, organizations, events and practices which have coalesced into a perceived sphere of interest and involvement for participants" (Unruh 1980: 115). Participants in leisure social worlds form shared understandings of the meaning of a certain leisure pursuit,

develop common attitudes towards participation, and acquire specialized skills.

Some socialization models focused less on agents of influence (parents, teachers, peers, and so on) and more on patterns of social roles and personal identities across the life course. Social developmental theory is based on the inevitability of these changing of roles with aging and their impact on identities (Kelly 1974, 1977, 1985; Kleiber and Kelly 1980). Accordingly, life is seen as a journey where the individual passes through a series of developmental stages where the individual seeks to have some continuity of meaning and identity rather than a haphazard sequence of disconnected experiences. Decisions to participate in particular outings are driven by an ongoing effort to become a person with a satisfying life of persistent and coherent meaning. But, as Kelly (1987: 89) argues, development is not simply a matter of passing through a sequence of roles. Rather "we actively engage others on our life journey in ways that have consequences for the kind of persons we become". How much continuity in recreation patterns exists across the life course has been a critical question. On the one hand, early studies by Kelly (1974, 1977) suggested that up to 40 percent of adult leisure activities were initiated in childhood. On the other hand, recreation is a domain in life characterized by situated role freedom within which exploration and change is more common. Thus more recent studies have begun to look at "emerging adulthood" as a critical phase in the development of leisure identities (Sharp and others 2007).

In describing a process of recreation specialization, Bryan (1977, 1979) took the idea of socialization and leisure social worlds further to suggest that one's form or style, attitudes, and preferences for an activity become more specialized as one learns and interacts with other advanced participants. Bryan focused on the idea of a leisure career to account for within activity variation. At the early stages in an activity career, there are the occasional participants who have not established the activity as a regular part of their leisure repertoire. At higher levels of specialization, participants develop technique and setting specializations, become highly committed and invested in the activity, and form distinct setting preferences. Bryan's work was largely qualitative, but the concept led to a number of investigators developing quantitative techniques for measuring specialization levels based on indicators such as equipment owned, monetary investment, level of participation, and technique and setting preferences (Scott and Shafer 2001; Virden and Schreyer 1988; Wellman and others 1982; Williams 1985).

Closely related to specialization studies has been a set of studies focused on specialization related variables including past experience or Experience Use History (Schreyer and others 1984; Watson and others 1991; Williams and others 1990), activity involvement or lifestyle centrality (McIntyre 1989; McIntyre and Pigram 1992; Selin and Howard 1988), and place attachment (Williams and others 1989; Williams and others 1992). Early on, wilderness researchers identified past experience as a simple but relatively powerful variable in explaining wilderness related attitudes and preferences (Hendee and others 1968; Lucas 1964; Nielson and others

1977; Schreyer 1982; Vaske and others 1980). Over time, more complex approaches began to look at various combinations of experience measures such as number of visits to the study area, number of areas visited, and total number of trips (Schreyer and others 1984). These studies showed that past experience influenced a number of important wilderness related attitudes and preferences including those related to crowding, conflict, impacts, management practices, and facilities and services (see Manning 2011: 237-255). Past experience also was an important predictor of more subjective measures of activity involvement (McIntyre 1989) and place attachment (Williams and others 1992). This work has demonstrated that more experienced, involved, and attached participants in outdoor activities develop higher standards of quality, are more likely to evaluate resource conditions as negative, but also are more adept at responding to negative resource conditions to create desired experiences (Williams 1988). In addition, this work shows that as participants gain greater experience over time they develop more complex motivational structures, as motivations for outdoor recreation participation tend to shift from an emphasis on escaping the pressures of modern life toward an emphasis on introspection, self-awareness, and skill development (Williams and others 1990).

Drawing broadly from these early studies examining leisure across the life course suggests that the sense of what constitutes a quality wilderness experience is largely built up in the course of learning how to engage in wilderness experiences as an ongoing process. According to this view, people must learn to experience and appreciate nature and wildness. It is not something inborn (though see Knopf 1983 for a review of research arguing that humans have an innate experience of nature). This learning involves both direct experience of wilderness (physically being in wilderness) as well as social interactions with other participants (often in wilderness but also outside wilderness). As an example of the former, Lee (1972: 70) suggested "children and adults whose experiences have seldom penetrated the invisible walls of the ghetto… have no place in their universe of discourse for assigning positive meanings to the natural features of outdoor recreation settings". As an example of the latter and following Becker's (1953) model of experiential learning, participants often learn the techniques for how to produce the wilderness experience from other more experienced participants. In other words, they learn how to see, do, hear, and smell in the wilderness environment, learn how to recognize the effect wilderness is having, and most importantly, learn how to enjoy the sensations it produces. One must learn to appreciate wilderness experiences just as one learns to appreciate art or fine wine. A key point underlying the life course perspective is that one learns from past experience as well as from other participants who inhabit one's leisure social world.

A Meaning-Based Model

As noted earlier, looking at wilderness experience across the life course is often contrasted with discrete event-based approaches. Aligned with these temporal differences, are

a number of conceptual or philosophical differences. The prevailing approach associated with experience as a discrete event draws on what Patterson and others (1994) refer to as an information processing model of human decision making and well being. Accordingly, well being occurs when specific needs or goals are met. Wilderness visitors are depicted as choosing settings and conditions in a deterministic fashion in which the relationships between environmental attributes and goal attainment are stable and predictable. In contrast, the view of experience as a continuing phenomenon often follows a meaning-based model (Fournier 1991; Malm 1993; McCracken 1987; Mick and Buhl 1992) in which well being arises directly from the nature of engagement in the activity and transactions with environmental features rather than from attaining desired goals (Omodei and Wearing 1990). Rather than seeking a package of benefits through participation in a specific activity within a definitive time frame (that is, with a beginning and end), experiences are viewed as the result of an ongoing project of constructing meaning and identity (Patterson and others 1994). People are seen as actively constructing meaning to shape a coherent biographical narrative (Williams and McIntyre 2001). In other words, people bring with them to wilderness a great "capacity for finding and making patterns" (Stewart 1986: 109) in their personal and social experiences with wilderness or other environments. When visitors find connections or see relationships between these patterns in their ongoing experiences (of self) in wilderness, they make meaning and shape identity.

One of the first efforts to expand the temporal scope of wilderness experience along these lines was proposed by Schreyer and colleagues (1985). They described recreation motives as "learned modes of expression" for describing "standard patterns of behavior". These patterns of behavior, such as wilderness visits, were motivated not as a discrete choice to satisfy a specific bundle of experience outcomes on a given occasion, but through their association with a particular cognitive-emotional state (that is, experience) that an individual has learned to create for himself in wilderness settings. Later, Schreyer and his colleagues refined this view further by characterizing these patterns of behavior as reinforcing the individual's self concept (Schreyer and others 1990; Haggard and Williams 1992; Williams and others 1989). They saw self concept as a relatively stable construct, but one that evolves over time. Drawing on self affirmation theory (Schlenker 1984), they characterized recreational patterns as vehicles for affirming identity in five ways: displays of signs and symbols of identity (for example, styles of dress, equipment); selection of careers and hobbies that permit identities to be built and maintained; selective affiliation with others whose identity appraisals are supportive; interpersonal behaviors designed to elicit identity affirming responses; and cognitive processes such as selective attention, recall, and interpretation of self-relevant information.

To examine the role of leisure activities in the self-affirmation process described above, Haggard and Williams (1992: 15) reported on two experimental studies. One examined the salience of various leisure identity images for eight activity groups (backpackers, kayakers, guitarists, chess players, weight

trainers, racquetball and volleyball players, and outdoor cooking enthusiasts). The other assessed the desirability of these images. They found that a person's preferred activity could be predicted by their desire for certain identity images, noting "not only do we wear hiking boots to symbolize that we are a backpacker… but we also may become a backpacker to symbolize to ourselves and others that we are adventurous, fun loving and a nature lover". Affirming certain identity images was likely an important source of motivation for participation and, moreover, such affirmation can occur in a host of situations outside of specific engagements in the activity.

In another series of studies, Patterson and colleagues (1994, 1998: 449) explored wilderness meaning and identity arguing "that what people are actually seeking from their recreation experiences are stories which ultimately enrich their lives". Drawing on the philosophy of Gadamer (1989), these studies followed a hermeneutic approach to analyzing interview data collected from wilderness visitors (see Patterson and Williams 2002). Hermeneutics is an interpretive paradigm that involves a specific set of assumptions about the phenomenon being studied. First, the meaning underlying human action is understood as more like interpreting texts than like gaining knowledge of objects in nature. The interpretive meanings that we imply here are considered metaphoric, allusive, and highly dependent on context (Bruner 1990: 61). Second, human experience is understood as an emergent narrative rather than as the predictable outcome of persons in situations. Third, storytelling is understood as a fundamental way people construct and communicate meaning. Finally, hermeneutics allows the researcher to understand the phenomenon in context rather than inferring it from de-contextualized observations generated by more standardized psychometric methods (Brooks and others 2004; Patterson and others 1994). Drawing from interviews of primitive campers on the Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Australia and visitors to Delaware Water Gap in the USA (Patterson and others 1994) and day visitors and overnight backpackers at Rocky Mountain National Park in the USA (Brooks and others 2004), they demonstrated that experience is contextual, influenced by individuals' unique identities, their current personal project, past experiences, and other aspects of the situation. For example, Patterson and his colleagues (1994) described how a primitive camper on the Great Barrier Reef reconciled his desire for escaping civilization in the presence of commercial fishing vessels and other potentially intrusive conditions by also emphasizing issues of safety and convenience.

In a later study, Patterson and colleagues (1998) used this hermeneutic approach to study the wilderness experiences of respondents canoeing a slow moving, spring fed creek in a Florida wilderness area. They argued that experience is best understood as an emergent narrative rather than an evaluation of outcomes relative to expectations. This emergent or dynamic quality was particularly evident in how participants interpreted the challenge of navigating the river. In some cases, those who experienced an intense challenge that had unpleasant aspects debated in their own narrative whether or not the experience was positive. Several participants ultimately came to see it in

a positive light with a sense of achievement even though they would have liked to quit half way through. As another example, some participants who experienced the challenge less intensely initially complained about aspects of the setting that contributed to the degree of challenge (snags and blown down trees) but upon reflection and discussion came to realize that these were precisely what made the experience an enjoyable story to relive. Finally, for yet another kind of participant, challenge was more appropriately described as a defining characteristic of the experience which served as a key aspect in building an enduring relationship to the place that was important both to their identity and quality of life.

Parallels in Consumer Research _____

Mirroring the developments in recreation research, some consumer researchers have looked beyond choice and satisfaction models. Working from a meaning-based model, their work has influenced how some recreation researchers have thought about visitor experience and satisfaction. For example, Tse and his colleagues (1990) and Fournier and Mick (1999) demonstrated how the concept of consumer satisfaction is a subjective process emerging through time. Another stream of research focused on explaining "hedonic consumption" activities that involve intense, positive, intrinsically enjoyable experiences (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). Among the varieties of hedonic consumption, Arnould and Price (1993) focused on "extraordinary experiences" which they characterized as involving high levels of emotional intensity and experience, but not necessarily the high levels of effort and independence often associated with flow or peak experiences. Their case study involved multiday whitewater rafting trips in the Colorado River basin. They noted that most participants had only vague pre-trip expectations for the experience and argued that the "disconfirmation" of expectations was not particularly useful for interpreting satisfaction with the experience. Satisfaction with river rafting "does not seem to be embodied in attributes of the experience… or any summary index of specific attributes of the trip" (Arnould and Price 1993: 25, 42). Rather the "narrative of the experience is central to overall evaluation". They highlighted certain themes to these narratives including, personal growth, self-renewal, communion with others, and harmony with nature. Extraordinary experiences involve an emotionally intense experience in which meaning emerges during the process of interaction. Satisfactory experiences are ones that build a compelling narrative of self, and satisfaction is interpreted within the broader context of the participant's life.

Similar research on interactions between consumers and product brands has influenced how some recreation researchers have thought about people's relationships with wilderness and backcountry places (e.g., Ji 2002). Drawing on tenets of Hinde's (1995) theory of interpersonal relationships, Fournier (1998: 367) demonstrated how consumers interact with product brands as partners in relationships and what they "do with brands to add meaning in their lives". She analyzed three life history cases within a framework that consists of four tenets

or conditions of relationships (see Hinde 1995): relationships involve reciprocal exchange between interdependent partners; the purpose of relationships is to provide the partners with meaning; relationships have multiple dimensions and exist in a variety of forms; and relationships evolve and change over time as partners interact and environments fluctuate. Fournier (1998: 361) summarized her main conclusions from the analysis of life history interviews:

> … brand relationships are valid at the level of consumers' lived experiences. The consumers in this study are not just buying brands because they like them or because they work well. They are involved in relationships with a collectivity of brands so as to benefit from the meanings they add into their lives.… these meanings are functional and utilitarian… psychosocial and emotional… purposive and ego centered and therefore of great significance to the persons engaging them.… The processes of meaning provision… authenticate the relationship notion in the consumer-brand domain.

Fournier's relational analysis moved beyond consumer satisfaction to provide insights into the quality of brand relationships. She described *relationship quality* in terms of multiple facets or indicators evident in her interviews: emotional grounding in love and passion, strong expressions of self-connection, high interdependence between person and brand, commitment and intention to act in support of the relationship, and intimate knowledge of brands. She also discovered 15 distinct relationship forms or types in the case histories, including long-term committed partnerships. This suggests that recreation researchers and public lands managers need to consider similar diversity in the kinds of relationships that may develop between visitors and recreation places such as wilderness or other backcountry settings.

A Relationship Metaphor _____

In addition to highlighting important temporal aspects of experience and identity, the works reviewed thus far largely focused on psychological and socio-cultural sources of meaning learned or derived from experiences. A closely related and overlapping line of work has focused on how *relational sources of meaning* contribute to the ongoing relationships that people have with specific settings. Researchers often employ language in the form of metaphors to help think about and describe phenomena (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Scholars in a variety of social science disciplines have applied a *relationship metaphor* as a useful framework for understanding human experiences in everyday life. Researchers must "consider the networked nature of the phenomenon" (Fournier 1998: 346) when they study the importance of one's relationship with a special place or wilderness setting. Relationships exist within networks and "both affect, and are affected by, the contexts in which they are embedded". Stewart (1986: 114) argued that "our relationships with the rest of the world can only be understood in the light of our relationships with each other". A person's relationship with a wilderness setting, community, residence, or other entity is interconnected with that person's whole set of relationships

with other people, places, and things. In the context of place relationships, Manzo (2005: 83) called this "a larger web of meaning in one's life". Recall the illustration at the beginning of the paper in which the participant described the importance of going to a backcountry place in relation to her home town, conservation ethic, hobby, and family.

Couched within a relationship metaphor, we examine two more areas of study to help illustrate the relational connections between continued participation with places and identity: research on the experience of everyday places and research on wilderness or backcountry experience, primarily in the context of outdoor recreation for the latter.

Ongoing Experience in Everyday Places

Process-oriented scholars of place have been influential in advancing the use of a relationship metaphor and its temporal qualities to study how people experience their everyday environments. For example, in a study focused on the interactions between people and places, Milligan (1998) demonstrated how place attachments are constructed in people's memories of past interactions at places and in potential experiences they imagine having there in the future. She also found that people became keenly aware of their connections to place, both past and potential (what might have been), when they experienced a loss of a popular and personally significant café at a university campus. This stream of place research demonstrates that relationships with places can be found across a broad range of contextual situations, settings, and emotions and may take a diversity of forms or types (Hay 1998; Manzo 2005). Meanings of place and relationships to place develop incrementally over time, sequentially over the life course (Hay 1998; Smaldone and other 2005), and in a process characterized by continuity, but also dynamic change (Gustafson 2001; Manzo 2003, 2005, 2008; Smaldone and others 2005). Places become much more than backdrops for activities and experiences; people use everyday places to actively construct various aspects of their identities (Korpela 1989; Manzo 2003, 2005; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996), and they do this to create and maintain a coherent narrative of self that is acceptable to them as a person living and interacting in a particular place (Sarbin 1983).

Hay (1998: 5) explained that "the development of a sense of place over a person's lifetime is… part of wider human developmental processes" subject to regional and societal influences. In a case study of residents of Banks Peninsula in New Zealand, Hay (1998) demonstrated how people's relationships with place had developed across contexts and through time by examining residential status, life cycle (age stage), and development of adult pair bonds (the marriage cycle). Hay (1998: 25) demonstrated parallels between the development of relationships with place and the development of personal maturity that comes with age. This study also showed how sense of place can parallel the intimacy, attachment, and commitment that develop during the adult marriage cycle. "A sense of place, if allowed to fully develop, can provide feelings of security, belonging and stability, similar to the feelings that arise from a fully developed pair bond". In addition, he showed

different kinds of place relationships. For transients and tourists, he demonstrated a "superficial connection" to place; "partial connection" to place for long-term campers, cottagers, and resident children; "personal connection" for new residents without roots in the place; "ancestral connection" for residents with roots; and "cultural connection" for indigenous residents with both roots and spiritual ties. For the last three groups, sense of place was shown to become stronger in intensity and more sophisticated as age and length of residence increased. This highlights not only the importance of temporality, but also supports the notion that place relationships develop as experiences and memories, and thus socially constructed place meanings, accumulate and expand through continued participation (Brooks and others 2006, 2007; Manzo 2005; Smaldone and others 2008).

Gustafson (2001) asked respondents to list the places they had lived and visited. In interviews, respondents discussed which of the places were most important, attributing a range of meanings to the important places in their lives. These place meanings were mapped within a three-pole, analytical model of *self-others-environment*. Gustafson's (2001: 9) analysis showed evidence of a network of relational place meanings in that "the meanings of place expressed by the respondents were often situated in the relationship *between* self, others and/or environment, rather than unambiguously belonging to just one of these categories". In other words, some place meanings were concerned with the relationships between the self and other people, other people and the environment, self and the environment, or all three—self-others-environment. An example of the latter would be a person's membership in an organization, working to preserve and protect a particular place (such as, Friends of Yosemite Valley). In this case, the overall meaning of the Yosemite Valley for an individual member cannot easily be separated (if at all) from his or her membership in the larger friends group. In a second stage of analysis, Gustafson (2001: 14) discovered underlying dimensions of place meaning in the data, including *continuity* and *change* that "introduce a temporal dimension, in which places may be regarded as processes". Gustafson did not explain these temporal dimensions in great detail, but he concluded that the meanings of places change as individual desires and group aspirations (that is, personal and collective projects) create new place meanings. Continuity in place meanings happens when individuals and groups continually reproduce and attribute current meanings of places (that is, those that exist for people's valued places at any given time in history).

Manzo (2005, 2008) analyzed interviews collected from residents of New York City in her study of place meaning. Residents told stories about their experiences, both positive and negative, in a variety of urban locales that they considered to be personally significant. Interviewees described their experiences of place at a broad range of scale (nations, cities, parks, beaches, woods, waterfalls, airports, homes, churches, bars, a photographic dark room, and a hallway closet). Significant places were found to reflect residents' evolving identities in that they allowed them to "be themselves and explore who they are" through privacy, introspection, and self-reflection—aspects

of experience that help foster personal growth (Manzo 2005: 75, 2008). For some interviewees, places where important life experiences had occurred emerged as milestones or transitional markers in the "journey of life" or "bridges to the past". Place relationships were characterized as processes in which people "collected experiences", which allowed place meanings to accrue incrementally. Interview data demonstrated how some urban residents repeatedly used a variety of places, had a diversity of experiences at those places, and thereby added layers of place meaning through continued participation:

> … one participant focused her discussions on a local park about which she told some of her most detailed stories. She met her husband there, and years later, they decided to separate there. This was also the same park where she played as a child, and where she took her children to play. This park was a significant place whose meaning developed from both positive and negative experiences (Manzo 2005: 81).

Manzo's work highlights a number of insights that are important for understanding continued participation or ongoing experience in place. First, one's "experience-in-place" is more significant than the place itself (Manzo 2008: 147), which implies an important link between experience and the creation or construction of place meanings. Meanings of place are constructed from experiences, and it is the meanings that make the place significant. Second, in her earlier review of the place literature, Manzo (2003: 57) documented how people's emotional relationships to places are part of "a conscious process where people interact with the physical environment to meet their needs, express themselves, and develop their self-concept". Experience of a place plays a role in developing and maintaining aspects of one's identity. Third, Manzo's (2005) analysis defined place relationships as life-long phenomena that develop and change over time and with experience, which makes them an appropriate unit of analysis for studying continued participation and the long-term nature of experience and identity.

Process-oriented research in the area of *place identity* has been influential in understanding place relationships. Korpela (1989: 245) defined place identity as "consisting of cognitions of those physical settings and parts of the physical environment, in or with which an individual—consciously or unconsciously—regulates his experience of maintaining… sense of self". The set of thoughts and beliefs that comprise one's place identity does not come pre-fashioned; rather, these evolve through experiences in place. Creating place meanings by interacting with the setting (and one's companions there) implies that actual behaviors are directed toward knowing the self in relation to place in order to develop and maintain one's story of self (Sarbin 1983). People define themselves (and become known to others) in the context of their relationships with people, places, and things; and people spend time thinking about their roles within these relationships and act accordingly. During the course of one's relationship with a place, that individual experiences opportunities to adjust or reshape his or her view of "self-in-place" through introspection, desire for personal growth, or by other means; and well

being or distress may result as one works out one's identity relative to the relationship partner, in this case, place.

These *identity processes* have been shown to be meaningful in people's lives and communities by shaping and reshaping their relationships to place (Hay 1998; Hull and others 1994; Korpela 1989; Manzo 2005; Sarbin 1983; Smaldone and others 2005; Stokols and Shumaker 1981; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996). An underlying theme in this literature portrays the concept of place identity as evolving alongside place relationships. Relationships are reciprocal, so places can play important roles in the psychological development of the self as one's place identity develops as a part of overall self identity (Proshansky and others 1983; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996). Korpela (1989: 245-246) clarified his definition by explaining that emotional attachment (or aversion) to places is at the core of place identity and serves as a necessary foundation for it. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) later demonstrated that residents of an urban area in London, who were emotionally attached to the place, identified more strongly with it than those who were not attached. Drawing on Breakwell's (1986) identity process theory, they analyzed interviews with residents living in the London Docklands and demonstrated evidence that residents used place to maintain positive self esteem, continuity of self, and "to create, symbolize and establish new selves" (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996: 217). Both attached and nonattached residents discussed the area in positive and negative terms at times, and they reported evidence that positive self esteem was provided and enhanced by both physical qualities of the place and feedback received from visitors to the area. The key theoretical implication of this work is that places can serve as relationship partners in the active construction of identity:

> … identity processes have a dynamic relationship with the residential environment. The development and maintenance of these processes occurs in transactions with the environment. In acknowledging this, the environment becomes a salient part of identity as opposed to merely setting a context in which identity can be established and developed (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996: 218).

Other people form the basis of social ties, social interactions, family history, or family identity in place and play a substantial role in the creation and development of place meanings, identities, and relationships (Boniface 2006; Brooks and others 2006, 2007; Eisenhauer and others 2000; Fredrickson and Anderson 1999; Gustafson 2001; Korpela 1989; Kyle and Chick 2004, 2007; Low and Altman 1992; Patterson and others 2002; Schroeder 1996a; Schroeder 2002; Smaldone and others 2005, 2008). For example, simply visiting a place or taking part in an annual recreational trip to a place (just being there) is only part of a person's evolving place identity. Seeing what his or her parents, siblings, or friends do there; hearing how they discuss the place or the trip together; interacting with those people through stories or recreation activities; reliving memories of people and events from previous years; and learning how others react to their experiences of place each contribute to how that person constructs and attributes meaning to the

place. Developing (and maintaining) a relationship with a place often involves socialization processes in which learning and self adjustment occur through continued participation (that is, ongoing experience).

Place researchers have applied a relationship metaphor to better understand the complexities inherent in environmental studies of experience, meaning, and identity. This body of research has demonstrated that people do develop and maintain relationships with places and that there are at least two key processes involved: the active creation of place meanings and evolving place identities. Place relationships are created by continuous, recurring reciprocal interactions between people and the environments in which they live and visit (Brandenburg and Carroll 1995). In other words, people participate with places and places participate with people during the building and maintenance of people's relationships to place in ways similar to those involved in the development of interpersonal relationships. The broad purpose of place relationships is twofold: the provision of socially constructed meaning, both for the person and the place, and creation, maintenance, and adjustment of the self.

Ongoing Experience in Wilderness or other Backcountry Areas

A relatively small number of early researchers either directly or indirectly addressed some temporal aspects of recreation experience in their work (for example, research on specialization described earlier). At various times in the research record and across a number of contexts, recreation researchers have used language and concepts that hinted that a relationship metaphor may have been implied in their understanding of experience. In his classic paper on angling specialization, Bryan (1977: 185-186) wrote of "resource orientation", "resource dependency", "commitment to a variety of angling pursuits", "center lives around sport", and "relationship of the sport to occupation and lifestyle". Use of this language indicated that Bryan had observed that highly specialized and experienced anglers had developed a *relationship to resource* and a loyal *commitment* to a specific recreational pursuit, and that these had developed over time through a process of specialization. In the context of recreation conflict theory, Jacob and Schreyer (1980: 373), drawing from Lee (1972), accounted for conflicts that involved "varying definitions of place" by defining a concept they called "*resource specificity*—the importance an individual attaches to the use of a particular recreation resource". They went on to define the conditions of resource specificity, including "feelings of possession and the role of a place as a central life interest". The language used to describe these concepts echoes, or perhaps foreshadowed, how we have thus far described continued participation and ongoing experience, using a relationship metaphor:

> A second aspect of resource specificity, possession by knowledge (Lee 1972), also affects the *visitor-place relationship*. A person well acquainted with a recreation place has well-defined expectations about the variety and type of experiences to be found there. Standards of

behavior appropriate for users of the place are known. Cases of recurring use could be motivated by simple convenience but it is also possible that an affective attachment for the place has developed over time. While its physical qualities may not be evaluated as unique, the place comes to embody memories and traditions. In this way it becomes a central life interest, a focal point of recreation participation. A sense of possession becomes manifest… (Jacob and Schreyer 1980: 374).

In a paper entitled *Forest Places of the Heart*, Mitchell and others (1993: 34) described a diversity of "use orientations" related to their interviewees' levels of attachment to recreation sites and forest resources in the Chiwawa River drainage in Washington. The objective of the study was to develop a typology that would differentiate between "visitors' relationships with their environment". For example, "dependent visitors" made repeat trips to particular places to do specific activities in "ritualized" ways. For "generalized visitors", the places and activities changed over time, and those in this group expressed "a need to return". "Periodic" and "exploratory" visitors had not yet developed clear emotional attachments to their recreational sites. Visitors categorized as "intimately associated" with a recreation site described the place as "an entity" or "as having a personality":

> Intimately associated visitors had a special relationship with the places of their affection and often personified the locations: "People are only here three months of the year and it keeps to itself the rest of the time. That's when I like to come… when it's quiet and it talks to you." One woman described returning to the area as "visiting an old friend" (Mitchell and others 1993: 33).

Adopting a relationship metaphor, we would argue that what Mitchell and her colleagues (1993) discovered were different types of place relationships at different stages of development. The language used in their study clearly reflects the relationship idea and its utility for studying wilderness or recreational experiences. Other researchers have employed language such as "human relationships with wilderness" (Watson 2004), "changing relationships with wilderness" (Dvorak and Borrie 2007), and "relationships between the public and public lands/agencies" (Borrie and others 2002; Christensen and others 2007; Watson and Borrie 2003). In his study of special places in the upper Midwest, USA, Schroeder (2002: 8) wrote, "People become attached to special places in much the same way that they become attached to a good friend or a family member". The use of this language by these authors serves the purpose of communicating an implied (or explicit) type of ongoing connection between one's experience of a place or wilderness setting and what that place means for one's life and identity.

Another study explicitly applied a relationship metaphor to research on backcountry recreation experience at Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. Drawing on the hermeneutic work of Patterson and colleagues (1994, 1998) and Patterson and Williams (2002), Brooks and his associates (2006) interpreted experience narratives from interviews to address the question of how visitors build relationships with the national park over time. They demonstrated interrelated dimensions of place relationships that were also evident in previous research,

and which begin to describe how relationships to backcountry or wilderness places develop. First, visitors described that time spent at the park or extent of contact with the place allowed for ongoing visitor experiences. This was comprised of purposively making return trips; gaining knowledge of the park, becoming familiar with it, and learning lessons from both positive and negative experiences; and benchmarks that served as symbols of important life stages (such as, the wedding described in the opening excerpt). Second, developing a relationship with the park involved both physical interactions with the park and social interactions with other visitors at the park. The interactions were comprised of sub-dimensions: being in and engaging with features of the setting and one's companions, staying in the park for multiple days, ritualized behaviors, family history or identity associated with the park or the outdoors in general, and socialization of children or other less experienced companions via informal training or social learning. Third, the interviews demonstrated that visitors were engaged in identity processes interpreted by Brooks and his colleagues (2006), in light of previous research, as the definition and affirmation of one's concept of self (Haggard and Williams 1992; Scherl 1989). Sub-dimensions of this theme included introspection or self-reflection, comparing self to other visitors, and recognition of how one's patterns of thinking and behaving had changed over time. For some, this self-awareness and introspection was portrayed as a sense of knowing or recognizing how their stewardship behaviors and desires to protect the park and other places had evolved or changed through time.

Visitors' relationships with the national park included "nurturing love and respect similar to how committed relationships are built between people" (Brooks and others 2006: 344). They concluded that some visitors value their committed and often long-term relationships with the park more than the attributes of the place outside of this relationship (also see Smaldone and others 2005). Visitors in this study defined their relationship as the meanings they had created for themselves and the park over the years through continued participation. To more closely examine how visitors created the place meanings that anchored their relationships with the park, Brooks and others (2007) expanded the earlier interview study by conducting a triangulation analysis that integrated findings from the interviews with findings from survey questions and observations of visitor behavior recorded in the national park with independent samples. Evidence from the observational study integrated with interview narratives showed that visitors frequently explored off designated trails as a way to personalize their interactions with both the "particularities of place" (Lane 2001: 60) and their companions. Field researchers observed visitors interacting with wildlife, trees, lakes, streams, and other physical attributes of the setting (Brooks and Titre 2003). Questionnaire data and analysis of variance showed that visitors who had spent the most time at the park were more attached and familiar with the place than those who had made fewer visits or stays. Those reporting more previous visits also reported that being in the park sparked memories of being there with friends more

so than for those with less previous experience. Drawing on Gustafson's (2001) model of place meanings, Brooks and his colleagues (2007) synthesized findings from the three samples to provide a basic and preliminary description of the concept of relationship to place. Using a three-sphere Venn diagram as a schematic to organize these data, they demonstrated how visitors created place meanings and relationships through ongoing interactions between self, other people, and the place.

In a similar set of research studies, Smaldone and his associates (2005: 403, 2008) investigated and documented processes involved with the creation of place meanings and the development of place relationships for residents of Jackson Hole, Wyoming and visitors to Grand Teton National Park, USA. In an in-depth analysis of interview data, they demonstrated three primary themes that represent dimensions involved with the construction of place meanings. First, a temporal dimension labeled *life stage/course* was described as "how a place can come to embody a particular time period in one's life, and how place meanings change as one ages and passes through critical life stages". One interviewee described her relationship with the Jackson Hole area as an "ever-shifting process: sometimes the feelings and changes are subtle, and sometimes they can be more dramatic" (Smaldone and others 2005: 405). They found that changing meanings of the place were linked to important people in one's life and development and maintenance of identity for some residents and visitors. Second, *searching for a feeling* represented "how emotional needs and feelings play a role in forming and maintaining place connections and subsequently place identity". Many interviewees described how protected areas or their homes in the Jackson Hole area allowed them to regulate their emotions and conceptions of self through continued experience. Interviewees described a range of feelings they had for the area that are "built upon over time, layer by layer… what remains is the feeling instilled by those experiences at the place", and this feeling that comes from ongoing experience "actually can become the focus of meaning" for residents and visitors (Smaldone and others 2005: 408). That is, the mood or umbrella emotion created by continued participation with the place has lasting importance, more so than any one episode or event. Third, *commitment* represented "the extent to which people are committed to a place and are willing to take action to preserve it". This dimension involved both positive and negative emotions and a sense of personal sacrifice involved with one's connection to the area. Smaldone and his colleagues (2005: 412) concluded that the processes of connection to the place are as important as the attributes of the place themselves.

Dvorak (2008) and Dvorak and Borrie (2008) explored wilderness relationships that visitors had developed with the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Minnesota, USA. Drawing on Berscheid and Peplau (1983), Fournier (1998), and several other scholars, they explored a relationship metaphor by using survey items and statistical analyses to measure multiple dimensions and test various psychometric models of a wilderness relationship. They adapted previously published scales to measure and develop a three-dimensional framework

that consisted of relationship to self, relationship to place, and relationship to resource managers (forest service employees). Five factors were found to comprise the underlying structure of a broader relationship factor including, place identity to account for self, place meanings and place dependence to account for the place, and trust and commitment to account for relationship with the management agency. Looking beyond the place factors in the model, Dvorak (2008) concluded that trust of and commitment to managers of the wilderness area were significant components of wilderness relationships at the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. The interactions that individual visitors have with the U.S. Forest Service play an important role in the relationships that they develop with the place (Dvorak 2008). He argued that the interactions between visitors and the managers they encountered at the site represented the "human element" of wilderness relationships. One's relationship with wilderness represents something greater than the attributes of the setting and external forces that affect the experience (Dvorak 2008: 161-162). Speaking to researchers and managers, he clarified that "relationships provide a holistic view that attempts to incorporate much more about the visitor and their human experiences in wilderness" than determining how setting attributes and social conditions affect visitors' satisfaction with discrete trips.

Most readers would probably agree that the everyday experiences that they have with other people, or even organizations, influence their broader relationships with those people or organizations across time. Likewise, researchers who apply a relationship metaphor to the study of wilderness experience propose that the ongoing experiences people have in and with a wilderness area, backcountry setting, or other protected area allow them to socially construct, attribute, and maintain long-term meanings (both positive and negative) not only for the place but also for themselves and others. From this perspective, place meanings are thought to accumulate or build up through continued participation with the place to the point that an ongoing relationship is forged or built between person and place (Brooks and others 2006; Dvorak and Borrie 2007: 13). The place relationship can affirm aspects of one's identity and substantially affect one's broader life in meaningful ways (Brooks and others 2004, 2006, 2007; Smaldone and others 2005). Place meanings and place relationships are not static but change or evolve over time (Smaldone and others 2008; Davenport and Anderson 2005). This relatively new and growing line of research is concerned with understanding the nature and composition of the processes involved in developing and maintaining relationships with wilderness areas and similar places, and what those insights mean for managing the quality of visitors' engagements with both the place and the management agency through time. Studying how wilderness identities and relationships develop and change over time has been established as a valid topic for research on wilderness and recreation experience (Brooks and others 2006), but framing the quality of wilderness experience in the context of an ongoing relationship is a new direction for wilderness research and management (Dvorak and Borrie 2007; 2008).

Implications for Research_____

Researchers are only just beginning to focus on the long-term relationships visitors form with wilderness places. The key to understanding these relationships is to focus on narrative-oriented methods because talking, writing, and thinking about relationships is a primary means by which people come to understand who they are and make sense of their lives. Recall how the interviewee at the beginning of the paper described the personal importance of wilderness: she referenced her marriage, family, and other aspects of her life outside wilderness. For researchers, regardless of their intentions, using the language of a relationship metaphor to conceptualize one's study or describe one's results implies that people's connections to place are temporal in nature (Low and Altman 1992), and narrative processes play important roles in establishing the meanings of places and the bonding of people with places (Brooks and others 2006; Smaldone and others 2005, 2008). To describe the properties and structures of interpersonal relationships, Hinde (1995: 2) theorized that "every relationship exists over time and must be seen not as a fixed entity, but as a dynamic flux". The assumptions underpinning the theories, methods, and goals used to study ongoing experience, identity, and relationships in a wilderness context must match the nature of these phenomena (Patterson and Williams 1998). A narrative approach to social science accounts for the temporal aspects of experience and identity and allows researchers to understand and demonstrate situational context and social processes (Maines and Bridger 1992). Viewing wilderness experience and identity as long-term phenomena points researchers toward a goal of understanding rather than a goal of prediction.

For wilderness management, research questions should aim for a better understanding of the situational, cultural, and personal factors that shape experience narratives and, in particular, the role that managers may have in influencing these relationships. Temporal processes are best studied using longitudinal methods that payoff in comparative results over the long-term. This essentially means asking people to tell their story about wilderness use and what it means in their lives for the past, present, and future. There are a range of methods to generate and capture these stories, which can be broken down into structured narratives initiated by the researcher and self-initiated forms of narration. Examples of the latter are studies that ask wilderness users to keep journals and do other structured writing during a trip (Fredrickson and Anderson 1999) or recruiting visitors to write essays about the place and their visit (Schroeder 1996b). Interviews conducted by a researcher during (Arnould and Price 1993; Brooks and others 2006) or immediately following a visit (Patterson and others 1998) serve as examples of narratives initiated by researchers. Another promising approach is to elicit oral histories of long-time visitors. Steiner and Williams (2011) recently reported results from long-serving backcountry rangers and key stakeholders with long histories of participation. Some respondents reported on how their ideals about visiting and

being in wilderness had evolved. In addition, some described how certain management practices shifted their visitation patterns, often producing unintended consequences.

In natural resource social science, it is less common to use self-initiated forms of narration as research data, but we encourage researchers to use this approach. Insights on wilderness management can also be gleaned from historical sources such as early guidebooks and journals. A much more modern form of self-initiated narrative involves the trip reports being posted on websites. Williams and others (2010) reported on an effort to extract information about the perceptions of visitors to several Colorado wilderness areas from Internet postings. There are some advantages to culling through these reports as unfiltered by the pre-conceptions of the researchers, but it also means wading through large volumes of material only some of which are relevant to the needs of wilderness managers. Considerable promise exists however, in using the Internet as a means to solicit narratives about wilderness trips and relationships. These can be used as both immediate monitoring tools for managers to keep on top of conditions and place meanings that may be in conflict as these arise in the course of a season and as source material for analysis by researchers of longer-term relationships with wilderness. What is needed at this point is research aimed at developing cost-effective and informative ways to monitor and extract information about visitors' relationships with various wilderness areas.

Implications for Planning and Management

The research history reviewed in this paper has shown that place relationships are not the same thing as values, beliefs, norms, attitudes, and behaviors. Managers cannot predict specific visitor expectations or behaviors based on a typology or hierarchy of place relationships. Relationships with wilderness settings are not single experiences, encounters, evaluations of conditions, or satisfactions; they are not the same thing as motivations, expectations, or benefits and cannot be properly understood as such. Relationships with wilderness or other places are holistic and long-term phenomena that are related to human identity and nurtured through continued physical and social interactions both in and outside wilderness areas. And as such, relationships to wilderness places that develop through continued participation cannot be studied and managed in the same ways that have been applied to more reductionist conceptions of experience. That is not to say that people do not care about continuity in conditions; positive and negative sources of continuity can be one of many aspects of both interpersonal and place relationships. Controlling and manipulating setting attributes and social conditions will continue to be useful strategies in certain management situations at specific sites or times, and creating zones in which opportunities for different types of experiences may unfold should account for some diversity in experience. However, area managers should not expect that using these standard tools will completely ensure the quality of long-term relationships or necessarily enhance

ongoing wilderness experience for visitors. Something more is needed to account for wilderness relationships.

We agree with Roggenbuck and Driver (2000: 46) that the linkages between wilderness settings, experiences, and outcomes are extremely complex, more so than previously thought by recreation researchers. We suggest that this realization indicates a substantial need for different approaches to research, planning, and management across the arena of wilderness and outdoor recreation and tourism experience. Leisure or environmental experiences encompass certain amounts of freedom but not complete freedom (Brooks 2003: 17; Valle and others 1989: 8). Patterson and others (1998: 425-426) applied the concept of *situated freedom* to characterize the nature of experience in outdoor recreation and leisure environments. They argued that there is structure in wilderness recreation environments that sets boundaries on what can be experienced, but within those boundaries visitors or residents are essentially free to experience the place in "highly individual, unique, and variable ways", and "experience is seen as emergent rather than predictable". This freedom is one of the many things that allow people to construct place meanings, develop wilderness relationships, and affirm or adjust their identities as their ongoing experiences emerge. These processes happen regardless of how an area is being managed as long as people continue to participate in and with that place. Societal norms, cultural mores, laws, agency regulations, and physical topography serve as some of the many social and environmental boundaries that loosely contain how an individual's experiences emerge. *People create and manage their own experiences* in wilderness, and their evolving identities and relationships do not necessarily need to be (or perhaps cannot be) managed, manipulated, or controlled in the traditional sense of recreation management. Instead they must be encouraged, fostered, and nurtured by agency staff in the role of facilitator (see also Stewart in press). Using the language of a relationship metaphor, wilderness managers can serve as match makers, progressing to marriage counselors who first come to understand relationships then work with people to preserve and nurture them. The role of planners and managers, then, is to become stewards, and perhaps even shepherds, of human relationships with wilderness (Borrie and others 2002; Dvorak 2008; Watson and Borrie 2003; Watson 2004).

Natural resources management, including wilderness recreation and experience, cannot succeed if environmental meanings are not fully integrated (Williams and Patterson 1996). Manzo (2008: 164) recommended, "If we are to develop effective policies to foster stewardship, we must begin with a better understanding of place meaning and people's relationships to place". Fournier (1998: 367) concluded that the relationships that consumers develop with their brands may often be distinct from those assumed by product managers, requiring "a new conception of brand at the level of lived experience". Stewart (2008) argued for a parallel conception of protected areas as being derived from "stories of lived experience". He argued that this alternative concept would help planners address what he described as a "crisis in representation of place meanings" in the practice of environmental planning and management. Relationships are played out in immediate conscious experience during

the course of everyday life; this lived experience is understood and communicated in meaningful ways in stories or personal narratives told (and heard) about valued brands (Fournier 1998) or places (Stewart 2008). Planners and managers will not hear the stories that make a difference in wilderness management unless they talk with and listen to their visitors on a regular basis. Agencies need to direct more resources at developing and maintaining a manager-visitor relationship through time.

Area managers can enter into visitors' place relationships through social interactions on site or in their communities and through open communication in collaborative planning processes (that is, telling and hearing stories). As people talk about their relationships with wilderness or other places, their relationships are further realized and may evolve in terms of personal growth and identity affirmation or adjustment (Brooks and other 2006: 364). Rangers and other agency staff who guide hikes and those who guide commercial visitors, for example, should purposively allow time for visitors and groups to relive their experiences on or near the site through storytelling and other types of social interaction. Another concrete action is listening to and discussing with visitors the conversations or stories that unfold at trailheads, campgrounds, and visitor centers "to learn more about how the experience relates to visitors' lives and to better understand visitors' place relationships". Brooks and his colleagues (2006) recommended that agency professionals directly and explicitly use experience narratives of long-term visitors in education and stewardship programs. People who have developed a long-term committed partnership with a wilderness area or other place should be asked to participate in the management decisions affecting that place; two concrete examples include focus groups and participation in public planning discussions.

Planners and managers should strive to become the human face of people's special places. Drawing on the principles of relational marketing, some research has indicated that building trust for and commitment to the management agency for various segments of the public is an important part of fostering relationships between members of the public and public lands (Borrie and others 2002; Dvorak 2008; Watson and Borrie 2003). Managers will need to go well beyond managing users to building wilderness partnerships and fellow wilderness stewards (Dvorak and others 2011). Knowing visitors better will help managers learn how (or if) segments of the public identify with their agency and its approaches to wilderness stewardship. In other words, do they share some place meanings to the extent that would allow mangers to adjust some environmental or social boundaries to promote resource stewardship while at the same time fostering wilderness relationships and perhaps enhancing the quality of some relationships? Managers will not be able to answer that question until they have a closer relationship with all of their publics.

Reframing the Goal _____

Planning and managing for visitor experience must match the nature of this phenomenon. Based on the perspective of continued wilderness participation described in this paper, we suggest a need to expand the basic goal of visitor experience management beyond providing customer services and satisfaction. Researchers intentionally reframe the goal when they apply this conceptualization of experience. The traditional goal of developing and applying universal principles of onsite visitor management should be converted into a *practice* characterized by learning as a community through social engagements (see for example, Barab and Duffy 2000; Meier 2007; Schusler and others 2003; Stewart 2008; Wenger 1998). A practice of this nature will essentially be ongoing, place-based, and built on a history of case examples. It will be highly context dependent and knowledge (meaning) will be created and shared among managers, social scientists, area residents, visitors, and other stakeholders as necessary. We formulate some broad and preliminary objectives for such a practice:

- Recognize that the place relationships that visitors develop and maintain provide them with both personal and social meanings, and relationships allow them to attribute meanings to places; it is not, however, easy nor do we recommend separating these types of meaning in practice.
- Recognize that place relationships are used to create, maintain, define, and adjust one's sense of self.
- Understand or come to know about a diversity of relationships and their underlying place meanings.
- Understand if, when, for whom, and how place meanings have changed over time by tracking or monitoring meanings and relationships for individuals and groups on a regular basis (Dvorak and others 2011). This objective needs substantial refinement through research approaches that account for time and has no history of application in recreation management.
- Better understand the linkages between continued wilderness participation, place relationships, and people's broader life stories outside wilderness, including their well being and identity.
- Nurture relationships between managers and visitors that foster trust, commitment, and shared responsibility for area stewardship (Borrie and others 2002). That is, reframe management to focus more on building relationships and less on providing customer services and satisfaction.
- In addition to maintaining relationships with visitors, we believe that managers will increasingly benefit from reaching out to residents who live near wilderness areas to learn about their place relationships (see Smaldone and others 2005, 2008).
- Position place meanings, place relationships, and everyday lived experience at the forefront of decisions about land use change (Cheng and others 2003; Davenport and Anderson 2005; Stewart 2008). Reframe wilderness and recreation planning to focus more on meanings and less on contentious issues. Place-based planning should be used to complement, supplement, and defuse planning processes that are dominated by contentious issues (Cheng and Mattor 2010).
- Reinvent planning as a series of dialog forums that "encourage scientists, professionals, and citizens to share, argue, and negotiate place meanings" (Stewart 2008: 100).

- Structure and manage dialog forums to build community, not to reach consensus or resolve conflicts over place meanings (Stewart 2008: 100).
- Explicitly show that decisions had transparent links to the planning process and dialog forums (Stewart 2008: 100). The dialog forums contain the *stories of wilderness* that managers must hear and engage with to understand the personal meanings and shared experience narratives of place that matter most for decision making.

The ultimate goal from this perspective is that managers, working with their partners in a *community of practice*, elevate wilderness experience to the larger realm of human life and well being as reflected in place relationships and identities. Work has been done toward meeting this goal, but more will be required to build a practice that allows scientists, professionals, and citizens to connect the significance of ongoing wilderness experience and relationships with changing societal and environmental conditions (Cole and Yung 2010; Dvorak and others 2011). We recommend that researchers and managers carefully think about experience in terms of long-term process, relationships, and identity. This is an important first step in meeting a continuing need for citizen engagement that accomplishes stewardship of wilderness areas in light of these inevitable changes and in terms of both subjective meanings of place and tangible natural resources.

Acknowledgments_____

The authors wish to thank the workshop participants who thoughtfully reviewed this paper and provided helpful revisions and Ms. Minerva Dorantes, Student Conservation Association, for her assistance in typing the lion's share of the list of references.

Disclaimer _____

The findings and conclusions in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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