

DISSERTATION

CLAIMED IDENTITIES, PERSONAL PROJECTS, AND RELATIONSHIP  
TO PLACE: A HERMENEUTIC INTERPRETATION OF THE  
BACKCOUNTRY/WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE AT ROCKY MOUNTAIN  
NATIONAL PARK

Submitted by

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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY JEFFREY J. BROOKS ENTITLED *CLAIMED IDENTITIES, PERSONAL PROJECTS, AND RELATIONSHIP TO PLACE: A HERMENEUTIC INTERPRETATION OF THE BACKCOUNTRY/WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE AT ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK* BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

CLAIMED IDENTITIES, PERSONAL PROJECTS, AND RELATIONSHIP  
TO PLACE: A HERMENEUTIC INTERPRETATION OF THE  
BACKCOUNTRY/WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE AT ROCKY MOUNTAIN  
NATIONAL PARK

Captured in narrative textual form through open-ended tape-recorded interview conversations, the subject of visitor experience at Rocky Mountain National Park was interpreted to construct a description of visitors' relationships to place while at the same time providing insights for those who manage the Park. A meaning-based model of human behavior was employed within the interpretive and constructionist paradigm of productive hermeneutics, which is based in the philosophies of Martin Heidegger, H. G. Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur. Humans are conceived of as meaning-makers; using this paradigm, outdoor recreation is viewed as emergent experience that can enrich people's lives rather than as a predictable outcome of processing information encountered in the setting. This process-oriented approach positions subjective well-being and positive experiences in the ongoing processes and activities that comprise our life pursuits rather than in particular end states toward which behaviors might be directed.

Twelve interview transcripts were organized around the umbrella themes of claimed identity, as expressed in the narrative, and engagement in personal projects while visiting the Park. This organizational system enabled an insightful within-visitor

interpretation of the interrelationships among experiences, social constructions of a protected place, and the broader life situations and aspirations of the visitors. Each interpreted narrative represents a detailed understanding of a possible experience for an actual park visitor in the context of the setting rather than a generalization about the average visitor experience. These “representative types” provide insight to park managers about diversity in visitor experiences at the national park.

Several themes emerged in the interpretation across narratives, including (1) a relationship of stewardship/sense of respectful mitigation; (2) socially constructed dimensions of the wilderness concept, which both converged with and deviated from definitions in The Wilderness Act of 1964; (3) humans positioned as both part of wilderness and separate from it; (4) description of a process whereby people form a relationship to protected places; and (5) an awareness among visitors of the overarching management dilemma of how to balance human visitation with protection. Management insights and general implications that emerged from the overall interpretation such as using narrative illustration to enhance visitor education were summarized.

Engagement in personal projects overlapped to some extent with traditional end-state domains of recreation motivation. Personal projects are defined as personally relevant, planned, extended, and often sequential sets of practical action, which make our lives meaningful and satisfying. Personal projects can include both intrinsic and extrinsic behaviors suggesting that the study of this concept may enable a more integrated understanding of end-state and process-oriented sources of positive experience.

It is suggested that the particularities of the setting (e.g., wilderness and solitude) and the process-oriented creation of meaning via varying levels of physical and social

interaction with the setting each play important roles, perhaps at different times, for visitors' relationships to places within the Park. The process of forming long-term relationships to places is highlighted as the common thread running through the interpretations of the transcripts. The value of the national park is seen to lie in these relationships, which are time and context dependent, not necessarily in the attributes of the Park, many of which are generic to other protected areas in North America. Incentives to encourage repeat visits and overnight stays in backcountry are discussed as a way to facilitate visitors' positive relationship building with the Park. It is suggested that qualitative interpretive interviews, couched within meaning-based approaches, are appropriate for anchoring these process-oriented relationships to particular places. Because these valued relationships are not interchangeable across settings, we need to enter into similar dialog and communication with other visitors at other parks and protected areas, including designated wilderness areas, to find out more about the physical interactions and social processes by which people develop different types of relationships with those places.

The dissertation concluded with an evaluation of this interpretation based on these implications and insights and provided suggestions for further research to learn about the processes involved with forming relationships with protected places.

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*“His reasons for leaving Athens on the death of Plato can only be conjectured: he may have been dissatisfied with the prospects of the Academy under Plato’s nephew and successor Speusippus, who seemed to Aristotle to have reduced metaphysics to mathematics, or Speusippus may have charged Aristotle and Xenocrates to open a branch of the Academy in Asia Minor.”*

Richard McKeon, 1941, p. vi

In spring of 1998, I found myself ready for another adventure, another story. “There must be more to the ‘human dimensions’ of natural resources than this!” I said. (What was I thinking?) Two individuals answered: (1) “You are about to enter a world where it is important to remember to put students first,” and (2) “You are about to enter a world where it is important to remember to say no once in a while.” Needless to say, I had no idea what this advice meant; what I thought about was seeing and experiencing the snow covered backbone of the continent, drinking micro brews, and finally finding out what an attitude really was. What I discovered was that there was much, much more involved with the relationship between people, science, and natural resources than I could ever hope to learn. (I also discovered that micro brews are not worth drinking—union made!)

First and foremost, I would like to thank God and my parents, Jim and Carol Brooks, my brothers and new sisters, and “The Au Sable River Gangsters” (plus the rest of you Jack Pine savages up in Michigan—that includes you Billy) for your advice, kind words, and patience putting up with me, again, during the past five point five years. Anyway, many good things lead to my studies at Colorado State University (CSU), and many insights have materialized during this learning process. My coursework experience

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**This dissertation is dedicated to my parents and to their parents  
and to the unrecognized souls who preceded them.**

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

*“Appreciation of wilderness must be understood as recent, revolutionary, and incomplete.”*

Roderick Nash, 1981, p. xvii

### **The Place: Recreation and Leisure Setting at Rocky Mountain National Park**

Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP, or the Park) is a protected area situated in the landscape of north-central Colorado in the High Rockies. The conception of creating this national park has been attributed to the naturalist and pioneer Enos Mills and many of his like-minded associates (Trimble, 1996; Yandell, 1986). It was officially established on January 26, 1915 and is administered by The National Park Service (NPS). The Park is comprised of 107, 556 hectares (>265,000 acres) of land in portions of three Colorado counties; approximately 95% of this land is either designated or recommended federal wilderness (U.S. Department of the Interior [USDI], NPS, 2001). The first recommendation for wilderness was introduced to Congress by President Nixon in 1974 and again more recently in 2001 by Congressman Udall (USDI, NPS, 2001).

The concept of wilderness means different things to different people, and its contested meanings have changed through the course of American History (Callicott & Nelson, 1998; Nash, 1982). Nonetheless, the wilderness quality of RMNP is obvious to many visitors, particularly those who are also visiting the Rocky Mountains for the first time, which was my fateful case in February 1998. After interviewing for a research assistantship at Colorado State University, I drove my rental car to the Park for a half-day

visit. I have to admit that on my first venture west of the Mississippi, I was somewhat overwhelmed by what I had experienced there. The place means something to me now.

The place is well named. It encompasses one hundred plus peaks and summits that rise over 12,000 feet above sea level; RMNP is one-third alpine tundra; no protected areas south of Alaska offer access to such an extensive alpine landscape (Trimble, 1996). The Continental Divide essentially bisects the park on its northwest-southeast axis like a giant backbone. In addition, a two-lane, paved scenic highway (i.e., Trail Ridge Road) more or less divides it east-west allowing visitors to traverse The Divide while driving between the gateway communities of Estes Park on the east and Grand Lake on the west. Nearly 30% of the people who visited RMNP during 1994-1995 listed driving Trail Ridge Road as a main activity during their visits (USDI, NPS, 1995). It has been estimated that as many as 700 cars per hour may pass during times of peak traffic (Trimble, 1996). The open expanses and mountain vistas that can be uniquely experienced by foreign tourists and members of the general public from the interiors of their rental or family cars are truly awesome. A visitor from Indiana told me during summer 2001 that no place in the world has a road better for scenic viewing than Trail Ridge Road at RMNP, not even Switzerland (pseudonym: Bob, date: 08/15/01, transcript lines: 56-66)!

This mountain park is a popular destination. The NPS estimated that since 1994 over three million people have visited annually (USDI, NPS, 2001). These include day visitors who stay less than three hours on average and those who camp overnight for an average of three and one third days (USDI, NPS, 1995). This survey provided a concise and useful visitor profile. For example, the average age of visitors at RMNP is forty-six.

Forty percent of the people who visit the Park live in the Inter-Mountain West Region (i.e., AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, and WY) of the United States with Colorado itself producing 38% of the total visitors. Forty-five percent of visitors reported that they had been to RMNP at least once already that year indicating a large group of repeat visitors, possessing varied amounts of familiarity and experience with the Park and the greater landscape. Eighty percent of this sample felt that either funding or crowding is the number one and number two problems, respectively, facing our Nation's national parks today. However, only 20% of the sample said that RMNP was crowded (USDI, NPS, 1995). From the perspective of most visitors in 1995, the Park had not yet become too popular.

While at RMNP, the majority of visitors engage in a combination of hiking, enjoying the natural scenery, and photography (Brooks & Titre, 2003; Brooks, Titre, & Poore, 2002; USDI, NPS, 1995). Eisenberger and Loomis (2003) reported that viewing scenery and hiking were the most satisfying activities for visitors to RMNP. In addition to hiking, other popular, but less major, activities include picnicking, wildlife viewing, developed and backcountry camping, climbing, fishing, and horseback riding. Nonetheless, most of these activities are done in conjunction with either day hiking or backpacking and usually involve taking photos of family, companions, wildlife, wildflowers, and amazing landscape scenes such as waterfalls and alpine lakes. The Park holds over 150 large lakes within its boundaries (Trimble, 1996). Many hiking trail corridors follow mountain streams that lead to these nearly pristine lakes, which offer trout fishing as well as pleasant ambience for family, intimate, or solitary picnics. Some of these trail corridors hide dispersed backcountry campsites (>250, USDI, NPS, 2001)

where visitors are permitted to overnight. To stay at these designated sites, visitors are required to obtain a permit from the Park's Backcountry Office.

Indeed, the place has been described as a hiking park and as a hiker's paradise where the "realities of the Rockies" await discovery. Seventeen years ago, a National Parkways comprehensive guide to the Park stated it this way:

"Rocky Mountain National Park is a hiker's dream come true. Here the National Park Service maintains over 350 miles of trail. More than ninety percent of the Park is administered as wilderness. And only by investigating this region afoot is it possible to fully comprehend nature's dominion" (Yandell, 1986, p. 56).

Hiking and horseback riding are effective ways to experience some of the realities characteristic of the physical environment at the Park. Many of these 350 miles of trail traverse three ecotypes or "life zones" (Yandell, 1986) in the landscape. These zones offer hikers and riders variety in sights, sounds, smells, and the chance to directly experience obvious changes in climate and topography during relatively short hikes. The montane zone is relatively warm and dry with abundant, but widely spaced, ponderosa pines (with some Douglas-firs on the cooler, moister northern slopes). This life zone lies below 9,000 feet in elevation. Between the drier montane area and tree line (11,500 feet), lie the Park's wettest and most dense forests of spruce and fir with spotty thickets of aspen, which turn bright yellow in autumn. This is the sub-alpine zone. Above timberline, visitors encounter the alpine zone, which is characterized by its lack of trees and low growing rugged plants. This is where visitors can experience the fragile alpine tundra. This life zone has a short growing season of six to twelve weeks, continuous winds, and freezing temperatures nearly every night, even during summer (Yandell, 1986).

Wildlife and viewing wild animals are also important features of the Park and the visitor experience. In a 1994-1995 survey, the NPS reported that 83% of the sampled visitors rated wildlife as an extremely important feature, and seventeen percent reported bird watching as their main activity in RMNP (USDI, NPS, 1995). More recently, 22% mentioned seeing wildlife as their most satisfying experience while visiting (Eisenberger & Loomis, 2003). As far as charismatic mega fauna, visitors to the Park may see or hear American elk, mule deer, moose, bighorn sheep, black bear, and rarely cougar. Over 250 species of birds including waterfowl and raptors have been reported at RMNP (Yandell, 1986). Smaller mammal sightings include coyotes, red fox, bobcats, mink and martens, beavers, muskrats, porcupines, pikas (known to some as whistling hares [Young, 1996]), yellow-belly marmots, rabbits, tree squirrels, and several species of ground squirrel. During our summer 2001 fieldwork, we observed visitors watching and feeding fish as well. We also observed visitors photographing, speaking to, feeding, approaching, and harassing wild animals in the Park, particularly birds and squirrels. Other visitors were observed intentionally discouraging both wild animals and their fellow visitors from taking food and feeding, respectively.

Beyond the physical attributes of the setting and basic visitor use characteristics, a recent study by Eisenberger and Loomis (2003) found certain individual personality traits to be associated with visitors' stated purposes for going to the Park. Specifically, (1) "need for exercise" predicted engagement in walking, hiking, and climbing; (2) "need for affiliation" was positively associated with a desire to share experiences with others; and (3) "need for sensory experience" was found to predict visitors' desires to experience pleasant sights, sounds, and smells and an interest in learning about the Park. This is an

interesting and refreshing (but rare) study in the field of natural resource social science for it integrates personality traits and desired recreation activities and outdoor experiences. Potentially important personality concepts have traditionally received little attention in natural resource social science research and management.

On the other hand, I would argue that by reducing people to individual traits, beliefs, or attitudes researchers can overlook the social and personal context and constructions of symbolic meaning associated with holistic visitor experiences at places such as RMNP. The search for “stripped-down” general laws and universal psychological meanings has proven difficult because human understanding of meaning is context dependent (Mishler, 1979; Proshansky; 1981, p. 17). The assumption considered in this dissertation is that human projects, actions, and experiences represent “complex on-going phenomena that transcend simplistic categories of description and explanation” thereby demanding study from a variety of (ideally linkable and integrative) disciplinary approaches (Proshansky, 1981, p. 17). Research alternatives (e.g., qualitative interpretive) that allow for the incorporation of the entire individual and the socio-cultural context in which he or she lives complement traditional attitude and trait studies as well as questionnaires that quantify the experiences of visitors to parks and other protected landscapes.

Rocky Mountain National Park has become a special place for many people because of its environmental characteristics and the valued experiences (which often are social and emotional in nature) that they have had there while hiking, backpacking, or while participating in family reunions, marriage ceremonies, or annual vacations (see Eisenhauer, Krannich, & Blahna, 2000; Mitchell, Force, Carroll, & McLaughlin, 1993;

Schroeder, 2002 for discussions of the creation of special places). It is suggested that local place meanings have been created and are being created by individuals and by community groups, which may influence how the place is valued (Page, 1992). These meanings are associated with either specific places in or around RMNP or the Park as a whole. These meanings, or relationships (i.e., bonds) to place can be defined as ideas and impressions that hold emotional as well as functional and instrumental significance (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981). These relationships are a function of both the people having them and the physical places with which they are interacting. In other words, people hold, assign, and negotiate place meanings, while at the same time places have certain setting attributes, histories, and other capacities “to evoke vivid and collectively held social meanings” for those who occupy and visit them (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981, p. 484). A multidimensional understanding of place includes both culture and the “particularities of place” (p. 60); and how people physically interact with these particularities afforded by a place (Lane, 2001). Brandenburg and Carroll (1995) referred to this “reciprocal interaction” (p. 395) as the process by which places are created.

The concept of sense of place has been described as an integrative “way of expressing a relationship between people and a place” (Williams & Stewart, 1998, p. 23). These authors discussed five defining and inter-related dimensions of sense of place that are important for understanding visitor experience and relationship to place: (1) emotional bonds that develop through time and familiarity, (2) symbols, meanings, and values that are strongly sensed, particularly by those familiar with the place, (3) valued qualities of the place, (4) an awareness and recognition of the cultural, historical, and spatial context of the place, and (5) *the individually and socially constructed set of*

*meanings assigned to the place and its features, which make it special to people* (Williams & Stewart, 1998). These five overlapping dimensions are important (but typically beyond the scope of any single study) for addressing research and applied problems that seek to understand people-place relations in the context of ecosystem management. These dimensions help to provide a conceptual framework for this dissertation. The meanings highlighted in item number five above are of particular importance to this investigation of visitor experience at RMNP.

Ultimately, conservation science, policy-making, and natural resource management are about contested meanings of nature and place as much as anything in this late modern period (see Kleese, 2002 for the specific example of wolves in North America). An integrative place-informed approach accounts for and allows park visitors to express emotional ties, important experiences, and a variety of meanings specific to a place. Once identified as important, these identities and emotional bonds can be collaboratively negotiated by stakeholders during the decision making process (Brandenburg & Carroll, 1995; Cheng, Kruger, & Daniels, 2003). Shared meanings often emerge during planning and public involvement activities as points of commonality on which participants can focus problem resolution. Collaboration that focuses on common ground reduces the risk of polarization among stakeholder groups (Brandenburg & Carroll, 1995). From a place-informed tradition (e.g., Altman & Low, 1992; Relph, 1976; Stokols & Shumaker, 1981; Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992; and others), this dissertation applies an alternative and complimentary approach to people-environment relations that attempts to account for meanings, individuals, and

social relations while retaining contextual richness at RMNP. It is one part of a larger multifaceted study, which is briefly discussed in the next section.

### **Project Background and History**

During January 2001, I was asked to assist with the design, proposal, and field implementation of a study for the NPS entitled *Rocky Mountain National Park Visitor Use in Wilderness* (Titre & Wallace, 2001). I participated as a Colorado State University graduate research assistant. I assisted with this research project under the direction of my current graduate advisor, George Wallace and a research associate, John Titre. Dr. Wallace is currently the principal investigator for this ongoing research project in the Department of Natural Resource Recreation and Tourism. The overall project was proposed as a two-year study of day and overnight visitors to backcountry/wilderness at RMNP. The request for proposals was prompted by two events including (1) questions that arose during the development of a Backcountry/Wilderness Management Plan for RMNP and (2) an Environmental Assessment emphasizing a number of visitor management issues related to recommended designation of more than 248,000 acres (93%) of land as wilderness under the National Wilderness Preservation System (Titre & Wallace, 2001; USDI, NPS, 2001). In 2000, members of the administrative staff at RMNP issued several statements of needed research including (1) information on visitor use in wilderness and (2) research on the quality of wilderness experience at the Park. We submitted a proposal, the study (Cooperative Agreement: CA-1200-9-9009) was funded, and we started the first year of fieldwork in May 2001.

In the original request for proposals, the statement of needs was broad, but became more specific during subsequent meetings with practitioners at RMNP. We were asked to provide information regarding types of visits, distribution (spatial and temporal) of visits, natural resource impacts, demographic characteristics of visitors, setting preferences, knowledge about wilderness, and people's perceptions of existing and proposed management practices. Initial questions generated from these discussions included: (1) Because large portions of RMNP have been recommended for wilderness designation, how do visitors perceive the change in official status to designated wilderness? (2) Does it change their expectations of the experience or of park management? (3) How much do visitors know about official wilderness designation? (4) Do they make any distinctions between backcountry and wilderness? (5) What are the characteristics of people who hold different views? It was suggested that answers to such questions could be used to inform visitor education, zoning classifications, regulations, and specific management actions at the Park (Titre & Wallace, 2001).

To learn more about which of these questions were appropriate, what new ones to ask, and to uncover the salient issues on the ground, we conducted a first-year assessment guided by the principles of rapid rural appraisal (RRA) and triangulation methodologies (see Beebe, 1995; Carruthers & Chambers, 1981; Chambers, 1994; Miller, 1983). We used multiple methods to generate and verify findings. The assessment techniques employed included structured behavioral observations of visitors (i.e., ethograms, field notes, and photographs), semi-structured qualitative interviews with key informants who worked at the park, and semi-structured and tape-recorded interviews with day and overnight visitors during their visits (Bernard, 1994; Brooks & Titre, 2003; Brooks et al.,

2002; Titre & Wallace, 2001). The general aim of the RRA was to elicit information about visitation patterns, visitor types, behaviors, and associated resource impacts, and to use this information to develop structured survey items (for year two) related to existing and possibly new management actions. The tape-recorded interviews with park visitors successfully generated large amounts of textual data. This dissertation is an attempt to describe and understand the experience of place by providing a useful interpretation of a sample of these interviews.

### **Humanistic Conception of the Park Visitor: An Overview**

In the broadest sense, this dissertation is a study of park visitors' relationships with a protected, natural resource setting, or place, situated in the broader landscape of Colorado's northern Front Range. In a less general sense, this dissertation was a qualitative and *interpretive* investigation designed to understand visitor experiences and meanings of backcountry/wilderness and its protection at RMNP. In other words, what does the experience of this place mean to individual visitors and greater society? Quite simply, at least by definition, "interpretation is the clarification of meaning" (Denzin, 1984, p. 13), or "sharing in a common meaning" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 292). Understanding human meaning and experience in the lived world is the fundamental goal of all qualitative inquiry (Schwandt, 1999). As a research need, it has been recognized that qualitative approaches will ultimately provide opportunities to better understand and explain the nature of wilderness experiences and what protected areas mean to members of the public (Cole, 2001; Stynes & Stowkowski, 1996). The qualitative data that were interpreted to understand visitor experiences for this dissertation were collected during

semi-structured interviews conducted in Summer 2001 (Brooks & Titre, 2003; Brooks et al., 2002). These interviews were part of the first year assessment, which served as a prelude to the more comprehensive two-year study referenced in the previous section.

Description and understanding of human meaning and how it affects human experience and action, which was the original intent of the cognitive revolution in psychology during the 1950s, has been largely eclipsed by information theories and models of information processing: This general trend has been thought to reflect advancements in and reliance on computer technology and linear computation in Western society (Bruner, 1990; Malm, 1993). Information processing models have guided the prevailing approach in recreation and leisure studies of visitor experience and relationship to natural resource settings as well (Patterson & Williams, 2002). For example, Vittersø (2002) proposed that cognitive processing of the unique and complex information encountered in wilderness environments generates wilderness experiences. In motivational (Lawler, 1973) and demand hierarchy approaches (Hass, Driver, & Brown, 1980) such as Experience-based Setting Management (Manfredo, Driver, & Brown, 1983) and the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum planning system (Driver & Brown, 1978; Driver, Brown, Stankey, & Gregoire, 1987), park visitors are assumed to be goal-oriented individuals who make rational choices (i.e., demand) about recreation opportunities (i.e., goods and services). A recreation opportunity is seen as some set of activities (e.g., hiking and observing and making sketches) pursued in a particular location with setting attributes (e.g., undeveloped coastline with tidal pools and few encounters with people), which together enable a person to realize certain experience outcomes (e.g., learning about tide pool ecosystems, relaxation, and exercise) that are

beneficial at that point in their life (Driver & Brown, 1978; Driver et al., 1987b; Manfredo et al., 1983). Because experiences themselves are harder for managers to ensure and because managers must also provide different levels of resource protection, natural resource recreation opportunities have been primarily defined according to the attributes of the settings (i.e., physical, social, and managerial) in which the opportunities may be realized. Therefore, the goal-directed visitor is viewed as judging the utility of diverse setting characteristics in terms of their capacity to provide desired experience outcomes (Driver et al., 1987b). These models have provided a predominant and useful conceptual framework for recreation zoning and management at protected areas in the United States. In sum, recreation managers attempt to maintain the integrity of setting attributes within each management zone (and to provide a diversity of zones) along an urban-primitive spectrum to maximize recreation opportunities for the public while simultaneously providing different levels of resource protection. In addition, studies of recreation experience have predominantly followed this motivational research program, which has focused on developing and applying psychometric scales to quantify and predict the desired motives for recreating among outdoor recreationists (Hass et al., 1980).

While studies of recreation experience guided by this approach continue to provide ways to quantify motivational domains, setting conditions, and desired experience outcomes with large probability samples (see Shafer and Inglis [2000] for a recent case study of snorkelers at the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area), a number of recent studies of human experience have focused on interpretation, hermeneutic philosophy, and understanding the importance of meaning in people's lives. In the broad

area of cognitive psychology, researchers have conducted such studies on consumer and advertising experience (Arnold & Fischer, 1994; Mick & Buhl, 1992), education theory (Kerdeman, 1998), and wilderness recreation experience (Patterson, Watson, Williams, & Roggenbuck, 1998) to provide richness in meaning that psychometrics is unable to extract from people who are engaged in holistic, emergent, and unpredictable outdoor experiences, for example. This dissertation follows this recent trend of interpreting substantive meanings with a smaller number of research participants.

I refer to this study as meaning based and humanistic to reflect my assumptions about human nature. By *meaning-based* I imply that I conceive of human beings (e.g., park visitors) as active meaning-makers as opposed to goal-directed processors of information (see Malm, 1993; McCracken, 1987; Mick & Buhl, 1992; Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 2002 for detailed discussions of this distinction). Grant McCracken, a consumer and marketing researcher, described a meaning-based model in which “the consumer is an individual in a cultural context engaged in a cultural *project*. The context consists of the culturally specified ideas of person, object, activity, time and space in which the culture consists” (McCracken, 1987, p. 121, italics added). Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie (1979) described people as living out “life themes,” which they described as cognitive and emotional “representations of existential problems” (p. 45) that people hope to overcome. In a meaning-based model of human experience, people are thought to be engaged in “personal projects”, or personally relevant, planned, extended, and sequential sets of practical actions that make their lives meaningful and satisfying (Little, 1983, 1987, 1989; Nicholson, 1984; Omodei & Wearing, 1990; Wertz, 1989). This *autotelic* approach positions human experience and subjective well being in

the ongoing processes and activities that comprise our life pursuits rather than in particular end states toward which behaviors might be directed as in the case of *telic* approaches (Omodei & Wearing, 1990). Peoples' perceptions of special places, and what they experience at them, are grounded in their larger life projects (Nicholson, 1984; Wertz, 1989). Some researchers have specifically applied personal projects analysis to the study of people engaged in natural resource recreation at protected areas (e.g., Brooks, Titre, & Wallace, in press; Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 2002, Patterson, Williams, & Scherl, 1993). Similarly, this dissertation is primarily concerned with the nature of visitor involvement in the setting as opposed to the achievement of outcomes that may be attained at the end of a visit to RMNP.

The holistic and process-oriented concept of personal project(s) served as a broad organizing theme in the interpretation presented in this dissertation. However, I recognize that people do strive toward specific goals (albeit I am interested in the overall process involved with human experience). Instrumental meanings certainly can be a part of the recreation experience (Williams & Patterson, 1999). For example, a person may be living out a life theme or engaged in a personal project to strengthen his or her marriage (or commitment to conservation, etc.) while visiting RMNP. At the same time, this personal project could include the specific, instrumental, and goal-directed behavior of identifying several new species of wildflowers. An example of what is important for this study is what the experience of identifying wildflowers in the company of one's significant other at a special place within a particular landscape means for that person's life and well being over time. This is a complex question. This dissertation suggests that employing the concept of current personal projects (discussed further in *Chapter Three*)

and other concepts such as claimed identity as expressed in narrative form (Mishler, 1986b), landscape meanings (Williams & Patterson, 1999), and social constructions of wilderness (Williams, 2002) can be effective for unraveling this type of question and ultimately provide insights for both recreation theory and management.

In general, a *humanistic* inquiry takes the view that much scientific knowledge is constructed as opposed to discovered, and the researcher (as well as the human subject) is not separate from the phenomenon under study but immersed in it as a co-producer of this knowledge (Hirschman, 1986). This approach departs from a fragmented view of people to study relatively whole human beings and their lived experiences including meanings, identities, and emotions (Brown, 1990). Research of this nature usually follows the descriptive-interpretive tradition of the human sciences while avoiding the explanatory-predictive tradition of the natural sciences (Giorgi, 2000). To set the tone for the rest of the dissertation, I list five basic postulates about human nature from humanistic perspectives in psychology. These aspects of human nature were modified for this dissertation from the original work of J. F. T Bugental (1964) as found in the front matter of a recent issue of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* (Greening, 2000).

1. Humans supersede the sum of their parts; people cannot be reduced to components. (Interestingly, this is similar to E. P. Odum's notion of an ecosystem.)
2. Humans seek meaning, value, identity, and creativity in life.
3. People exist in a uniquely human context within their physical environments. However, people are intertwined with and cannot be meaningfully separated from their surrounding environments (Valle, 1989).
4. Human beings are conscious; this consciousness always includes an intentional awareness of self in the context of others and place. Conscious awareness is an ongoing activity that has an object; it is not an object itself existing in one's mind (Patterson & Williams, 2002; Valle, King, & Halling, 1989; Wertz, 1989).

5. People have some choice (but not complete freedom) in their lives, which brings responsibility. Humans are active participants in experience not bystanders. People have *situated freedom*, which entails “the freedom (and obligation) of making choices within, and oftentimes limited by, a given situation that the world has presented to him or her” (Valle et al., 1989, p. 8).

The conceptualization of park visitors presented in this dissertation is based on these underlying postulates from this branch of psychology. Humanistic psychology should not be viewed in opposition to other psychological orientations; the aim is to supplement their findings while introducing new perspectives and insights into the lived experience of human beings (Bugental, 1964). However, there are a variety of humanistic perspectives in psychology each upholding slightly different definitional dimensions of the human subject (Sass, 1988; Valle, 1989). The aspects of human nature that I have listed above closely reflect the existential-phenomenological perspective in humanistic psychology as explained by Valle et al. (1989). This conceptualization of the human subject is appropriate for the chosen paradigm in this dissertation (i.e., productive ontological hermeneutics discussed in *Chapter Three*) because it makes no distinction between subject and object; between interpreters and the phenomena they interpret (Bellah et al., 1985; Page, 1992; Patterson & Williams, 2002). The subject and phenomenon under study are essentially inseparable (Valle et al., 1989). This brief discussion about human nature serves to clarify what I mean when I employ the terms meaning-based and humanistic in the dissertation. My assumptions about human nature and experience are further elaborated in *Chapter Two*.

Studying visitor experiences in an interpretive, qualitative, meaning based, and human-place centered fashion can provide evidence that is typically not collected in less personal, more structured visitor surveys, which traditionally employ large probability

samples and pre-determined response categories. Moreover, small sample interpretive studies can also provide stand-alone trustworthy, and credible constructions of human experience, which may not be transferable from place to place. Most parks and protected areas will benefit from conducting both types of studies (Stynes & Stokowski, 1996); one yielding information that is concrete, high in context, and less abstract about visitor experiences, and the other providing abstract, more objective, often quantitative, and shared information about a wide range of tangible visitor characteristics, preferences, motivations, and attitudes.

However, a different type of scientific knowledge is produced in each case. Different types of scientific knowledge usually are not substitutable. While one type of knowledge need not be judged as better than another, one type may certainly be more appropriate and informative than another depending on the research problem, evaluation criteria, and the intentions of those involved. These approaches primarily are independent in nature because these two types of knowledge (i.e., objective and generalizable versus subjective and contextual) are usually generated by research operating under distinct philosophical (i.e., both ontological and epistemological) assumptions about reality, human nature, and the limits of scientific knowledge (Hirschman, 1986; Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 1998; Stynes & Stokowski, 1996). These distinct assumptions can lead researchers to quite different explanations of human experience and behavior (Patterson et al., 1998). Nonetheless, both types of studies can be reviewed in order to (1) thoroughly understand the nature of research problems, (2) gain methodological awareness, which can ensure the quality of research (Seale, 1999a), and (3) verify (or distinguish among) results and conclusions. An in-depth understanding of environmental

meanings can be an important part of the decision making process for proposed policies and management actions.

I postulated that visitor experiences at RMNP would be relatively rich and filled with meaning, and that a deep understanding of exemplars of them could help to guide future research and management at the park, which would certainly make the dissertation interesting and worthwhile. This postulation was not directly tested in the traditional sense, but rather investigated to describe and understand (i.e., interpret) a construction of visitor experience (and relationship to place) at a protected area in a Colorado landscape. This required an approach that has received relatively sparse attention by human dimensions researchers and recreation managers working at protected areas.

From a broad environmental psychology perspective, this study used a paradigm that is primarily concerned with socio-cultural conceptualizations of people-environment relations (e.g., Lee, 1972; Saegert & Winkel, 1990; Williams & Patterson, 1996). This paradigm is primarily concerned with meaning; generally, how the environment is structured by meaning and vice versa. In this approach, places and environmental meanings of interest typically are symbolic (cultural), expressive (individual), and often spiritual (both) in nature (Stokols, 1990; Williams & Carr, 1993; Williams & Patterson, 1996; 1999). These meanings are “created, shared, communicated, and destroyed” (Williams & Patterson, 1996, p. 512) by people, cultural groups, and sub-groups (i.e., ethnic, gender-based, etc; [see Virden & Walker, 1999; Williams & Carr, 1993]). In sum, people-environment research that takes a socio-cultural approach often studies meanings, which can be intangible, contextual, subjective, and best described using specific qualitative interpretive paradigms and research methods. Within a broader socio-cultural

approach, the specific paradigm I used was productive philosophical hermeneutics as discussed from the perspective of consumer research by Arnold & Fischer (1994), and as applied to leisure experience by Patterson (1993), Patterson & Williams (2002), and Patterson and others (1998) to interpret the socially constructed relationships between park visitors and the places they visit.

### **Study Objectives**

The specific objectives of this study are listed below.

1. I sought to acknowledge and explain the underlying scientific orientation and philosophical assumptions (i.e. pre-understanding) that guided the paradigm and methodology applied in the dissertation (*Chapters One and Two*).
2. I sought to provide a background discussion and explanation of environmental meanings as socially constructed phenomena, which form the foundations of human relationships with protected landscapes and places within them (*Chapter Two*).
3. I sought to construct interpretations of visitor experience within individuals (idiographic analysis) by applying principles from hermeneutics and narrative psychology as discussed in *Chapter Three*. This interpretation was guided by two broad themes including (a) current personal projects, and (b) claimed identities (*Chapter Four*).
4. I sought to interpret and discuss visitor experience across research participants (i.e., nomothetic analysis) relative to emergent themes such as dimensions of the experience, social constructions of wilderness, how relationships to place are formed over time, and management insights as a way to construct thematic patterns and interrelationships beyond the individual level but within the scope of the qualitative data (*Chapter Five*).
5. In conclusion (*Chapter Six*), I sought to summarize what was learned while evaluating the usefulness of the study based on its persuasiveness, insightfulness, practical implications, and relevance to past and future research (Patterson, 1993).

## Structure of Dissertation

I decided to use a logical flow approach to structure the dissertation. I tried to tell a story. That is, the structure follows the scientific orientation and paradigm of hermeneutics that I chose. For example, hermeneutical approaches to interpretation recommend conducting a within-transcript analysis prior to the across-transcript analysis (Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 2002). Therefore, this is how I conducted the work and organized the writing.

The dissertation is a mix of the traditional format and the stand-alone manuscript format preferred by my department. An interpretive qualitative piece of this nature does not lend itself well to the manuscript format, although I would suggest that *Chapter Five* is similar to how it might appear when submitted for publication. Actually, a much-abbreviated version of *Chapters Two, Three, and Four* has already been submitted to the peer-edited proceedings of an international professional conference on society and resource management (Brooks et al., in press). In the spirit of personal life projects, I certainly intend to develop, revise, expand, and publish as much of the dissertation as appropriate in due time.

This section (*Chapter One*) provides the necessary background information about RMNP as a protected place, condensed background about visitors and what they may encounter there, and the origins of the parent research project. It also provides a summary of the assumptions made about human nature (and scientific knowledge), the research problem, the study approach, and the objectives of the dissertation.

*Chapter Two: Literature Review and Scientific Orientation* sets the stage by reviewing the literature that guided the dissertation in the context of landscape meanings

and values as socially constructed phenomena. It includes a model (Figure 1), which helped to clarify my thinking (and hopefully the readers') about where this research problem and approach (i.e., paradigm) to the phenomenon of visitor experience are situated in the larger and historical body of research in human dimensions of natural resources. *Chapter Two* is important because it further outlines the philosophical commitments and scientific orientation, which serve as the underpinnings of the interpretation. It discusses my conceptualization of wilderness experience, or more appropriately my *fore-structure of understanding*, or model of human experience in the protected landscape (Figure 2). This conceptualization is what I desired to interpret and understand in its relative entirety. Finally, I present a caveat to my approach as discussed in this chapter.

*Chapter Three: Study Methodology* describes the fieldwork procedures including selection of research participants, interviewing, and text management. This chapter also discusses productive hermeneutics and narrative psychology in greater detail including a description of how an idiographic interpretation is constructed within this paradigm (see Figure 4).

In *Chapter Four; Selected Visitors Tell Their Stories: Idiographic Interpretation with Discussion*, I primarily focus on the individual interview interpretations and discussions of theoretical and management insights, which were in part co-interpreted by myself and my Ph.D. advisor, George Wallace. Substantial portions of each transcript are included with each case discussed to support the interpretations. An organizing system, which essentially serves as the interpretive analysis (Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 2002; Tesch, 1990), was developed and is presented for each case study (i.e.,

individual narratives). These individual interpretations were organized around two broad themes including (1) current personal project(s), and (2) the claimed identity presented by the person during the interview. These umbrella themes are described in relation to how they are linked to each individual's experience and construction of the setting. Each case can be thought of as a concrete example of visitor experience at RMNP.

In addition, implications for managers at the Park are discussed for each individual in relation to her or his organizing system in *Chapter Four*. Practical management insights are important to justify the usefulness of qualitative and interpretive research such as this, which highlights context over generalizations and employs traditionally smaller non-probability samples. Kvale (1995) referred to this as pragmatic validation of knowledge claims; if interventions based on qualitative interpretations produce changes in actual behavior, the interpretations, in part, show evidence of pragmatic validity.

*Chapter 5: Nomothetic Analysis of Interview Narratives* provides an interpretation and discussion across interviews of the predominant themes and inter-relationships identified in the twelve cases examined in the dissertation. The chapter provides a synthesized discussion of theoretical concepts and concrete management insights that emerged across research participants during the preliminary idiographic interpretation and the subsequent nomothetic analyses. The inter-relationships among the themes are the focus of this chapter because they go beyond basic description. This chapter focuses on dimensions of the experience, social constructions of wilderness, how relationships to places are formed, emergent management insights, the wilderness quality of RMNP, and some practical implications of these insights.

*Chapter Six; Conclusion: Implications and Evaluation* summarizes the main points regarding the evaluation and additional practical implications of the hermeneutic interpretation based on its persuasiveness, insightfulness, usefulness to managers at RMNP, its relationship to past recreation research, and its applicability to future research.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION

*“Science and knowledge are cumulative processes that benefit from a variety of perspectives and approaches.”*

Stynes and Stokowski, 1996, p. 452

### **Socially Constructed Place Meanings and Values**

Researchers who collectively study people who visit forests, parks, and other protected areas in the United States have documented varied and often competing values, ethics, attitudes, orientations, economic uses, recreation behaviors, etc. (e.g., Bengston, 1994; Bengston & Xu, 1995; Brooks, Warren, Nelms, & Tarrant, 1999; Cordell & Tarrant, 2002; Fulton, Manfredo, & Lipscomb, 1996; Manning, Valliere, & Minter, 1999; Steel, List, & Shindler, 1994; Vaske & Donnelly, 1999; Vaske, Donnelly, Williams, & Jonker, 2001; Virden & Walker, 1999). These studies demonstrate (among many other insights) that people can be diverse when their traits and behaviors regarding protected landscapes and setting attributes are measured. Additional recent publications have discussed variation in non-commodity, harder-to-define (and operationally measure), and often neglected, aspects of people’s attachments to landscapes and places that are protected for their social, ecological, spiritual, and symbolic meanings and values (e.g., Cross, 2001; Driver, Dustin, Baltic, Elsner, & Peterson, 1996; Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999; Hamilton, 2002; Henwood & Pidgeon, 2001; Ohta, 2001; Peterson et al., 2002; Virden & Walker, 1999; Williams et al., 1992; Williams & Carr, 1993; Williams & Patterson, 1996; K. Williams & Harvey, 2001). Given the diversity in the

public and among visitors' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences demonstrated by these studies as a whole, I would suggest that conflicts are sometimes created by differences in the way people and social groups construct meaning in their minds about how to make sense of protected areas and their experiences at them in relation to their life satisfaction. The meanings that are created are about what they consider to be important relative to these places and the experiences that they have there and share with members of their social groups (Page, 1992).

As an abstract theoretical concept, *social construction* can be thought of as “the active creation of meaning” (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002, p. 229). The environment, landscapes, and ecosystems have been theorized (in part) as socially constructed places (Fine, 1997; Greider & Garkovich, 1994; Hull, Robertson, & Kendra, 2001; Williams & Patterson, 1999; Williams, 2002). As Kleese (2002) and others (e.g. Fine, 1997) have pointed out, the concepts of social construction and culturally mediated people-place relationships, as addressed in this dissertation, do not deny the presence of a biophysical reality. Rather the dissertation views people and their institutions as inseparable from the environment. Human experience is shaped by cultural constructions of places and interactions with the physical attributes of places (Lane, 2001), but these constructions and interactions do not always mean the same thing to individuals and groups.

For example, even the very words that we use to represent certain places in the landscape can hold different meanings for people using a common language. For example, urban and rural samples in British Columbia, Canada were shown to differ on their perceptions of what constitutes wilderness; rural residents' interpretations of what wilderness is were more closely aligned with the “absence of humans and their tools”

view, than urban residents', who judged scenes of landscapes, which included signs of human activity, to constitute wilderness (Lutz, Simpson-Housley, & DE Man, 1999). Interestingly, these two groups showed no difference in general evaluative attitudes toward wilderness (as measured using an adaptation of the NEP scale, [see Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978]); both groups supported protection of their own independent constructions of what constitutes wilderness (Lutz et al., 1999). In addition, Shultis (1999) demonstrated divergence between political (i.e., officially designated) and popular conceptions of wilderness in a survey of the New Zealand public. When asked to name a wilderness area, 55% of this sample indicated undesignated national parks and specific places within them.

Studies that adopt a social constructionist viewpoint focus on explaining “common forms of understanding” (Gergen, 1985, p. 266). This type of inquiry asks: By what processes do humans describe and account for the landscape and themselves as they live there? In other words, “landscapes are the symbolic environments created by human acts of conferring meaning to nature and the environment ... from a particular angle of vision and through a special filter of values and beliefs” in this constructionist perspective (Greider & Garkovich, 1994, p. 1). Likewise, the following interview excerpt from a middle-aged, male day visitor to RMNP during summer 2001 rather broadly, but explicitly, demonstrates the socially constructed nature of the wilderness concept.

“I think until we really understand as many view points on this [wilderness] as we can, we really can't sort out where the public will is, and we can't necessarily find out what the value of wilderness is, because the value of wilderness to a great extent—if you take away the mining, the timber, those kinds of things—the [social] value of wilderness is in the mind. You know it's kind of like services and those kinds of things. It's whatever the people value, and if there are enough

people who don't value the things [meanings] that I just talked about, then I guess wilderness doesn't have a lot of value. But until you, or people like you, sit down and interview enough people and really look at the data, we won't know that.” (Josh; 08/08/01; 280-289)

These notions that landscapes and wilderness are socially constructed come, in part, from rural sociology (e.g., Greider & Garkovich, 1994) and environmental history, particularly the history of the wilderness concept in North America (e.g., Cronon, 1998; Nash, 1982). The above interview excerpt recorded at RMNP also makes reference to both meanings and values. This leads one to question the difference and relationship between the two phenomena. I was recently asked this very question during a departmental seminar at Colorado State University. A short obvious answer is that environmental meanings and values are related. Although not the primary focus of this dissertation, this question is important to my project of understanding visitor experience. The discussion that follows serves to frame an answer to the question, and it provides insight for “disentangling meaning from value” (Williams & Patterson, 1999, p. 142).

Champ (2002) proposed a broad conceptual model in which social values (Rokeach, 1973) serve as a linkage between greater/local culture and human behavior. Figure 1 expands on this idea to clarify the relationship between meanings and values. The right side of the model represents meanings that exist in the realms of culture, symbolic social interaction, and idiosyncratic personal constructions (Champ, 2002). These environmental meanings can be described as individual/expressive and cultural/symbolic (Williams & Patterson, 1999). They tend to be intangible to traditional (i.e., quantitative economic) assessment methodologies (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2001), associated with strong emotional bonds to place, and uniquely assigned to landscapes and their attributes by individuals, social groups, or cultures (Champ, 2002; Fournier, 1991;

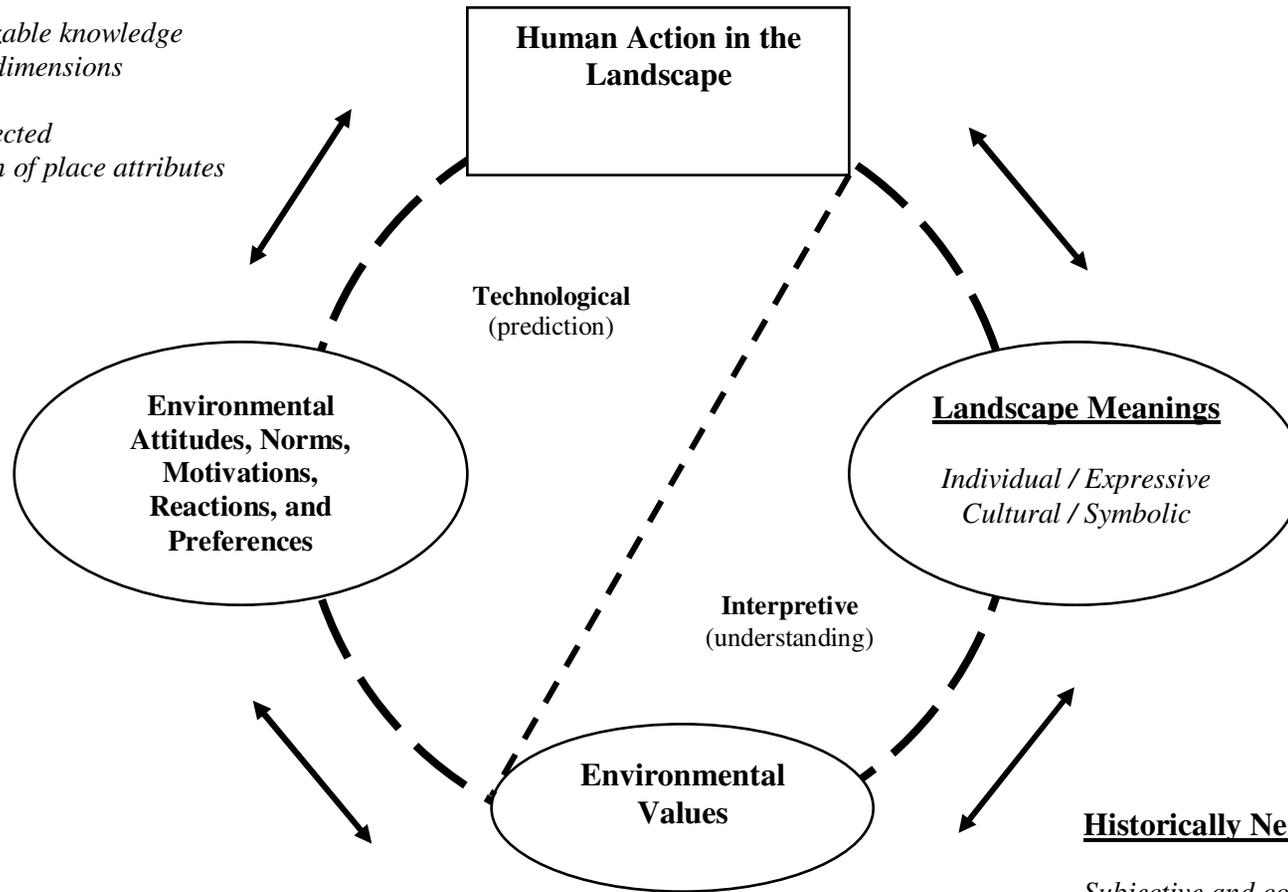
Williams & Patterson, 1999). Once the precursory symbolic and expressive meanings are assigned to places, valuation of the environment may occur (Page, 1992). The significance of what places mean to various people and groups is important because “meanings that are never perceived cannot be valued.” (Williams & Patterson, 1999, p. 142). In other words, entities such as wildlife, people, places in the landscape, and their attributes become valued when we as humans assign meaning to them, or express what they mean for our lives, our endeavors, and our cultures. Since place meanings ultimately translate into stakeholder values and behaviors, thorough investigations of their nature and complexity can help recreation managers direct their actions toward these values and behaviors (Presley, 2003).

Consider the seemingly straightforward case of contested meanings involved with the rare Florida panther, which is but a single feature of the South Florida landscape. It has been assigned symbolic and religious meaning by certain members of the Miccosukee and Seminole Native Tribes; to wilderness preservationists it may symbolize the last wild frontier in the southeastern United States (i.e., The Everglades and the Big Cypress Swamp). The panther probably means something all together different to the cattle growers in South Florida (e.g., economic threat), or to the old-timer who has never left the swamp (e.g., a mythical beast with a coat as black as night), or even to fans of the state’s professional hockey team, which took the name of the endangered predator for its mascot. In the same way, certain trail corridors in RMNP probably hold different meanings for first time day hikers versus long-term backpackers and residents who camp and ride horses there. These varied meanings are connected to individual and group



**Historically Researched and Applied**

*Objective and generalizable knowledge  
Tangible and common dimensions  
Aesthetic / inherent  
Instrumental / goal-directed  
Interest in or evaluation of place attributes  
(i.e., bundles of utility)*



*Subjective and contextual knowledge  
Intangible and unique dimensions  
Strong emotional attachment to place*

Figure 1. General relationship among environmental meanings, values, and behaviors based on discussions in Champ (2002), Fournier (1991), Page (1992), and Williams and Patterson (1999).

identities and can be the source of emotional ties, competing cultural values, divergent attitudes, and ultimately natural resource conflicts. This mirrors early conceptual work by Jacob and Schreyer (1980) where the sources of conflict in outdoor recreation were conceptually linked, in part, to different personal meanings assigned to recreation activities and specific resource settings. Recently, Williams (2002) argued that an understanding of how wilderness meanings and values are constructed by individuals, social groups, institutions, and larger cultures (and how we and our social systems agree and disagree about these meanings) is necessary for successful protection and effective management of wilderness landscapes.

However, the type of knowledge produced in scientific studies of the right side of the model (Figure 1) tends to be subjective and contextual in nature, and therefore historically neglected by human dimensions approaches to research and valuation, which grew out of natural scientific psychology (Giorgi, 2000; Mishler, 1979; Valle et al., 1989), cost-benefit analysis (Page, 1992), and the objective natural sciences of forestry, range management, and wildlife ecology. It serves to follow that many natural resource practitioners have been trained (in my view) to mistakenly discount expressive and symbolic meanings of wilderness experience as valid sources of natural resource conflicts (Williams & Patterson, 1996; 1999). In contrast, the left side of the model has traditionally received considerable scientific and applied attention within natural resource management. This is primarily the case because the type of scientific knowledge sought in this realm tends to be objective, generalizable, and amenable to traditional human dimensions research and natural resource practice (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2001; Williams & Patterson, 1999). Environmental meanings on the left side of Figure 1 are primarily

aesthetic and inherent in both the landscape and its attributes or instrumental and goal-directed, and have been quantified in studies of willingness to pay, motivation, satisfaction, and assessments of scenic beauty. The intention of such research is to provide predictable and technological answers to practitioners who agree about the nature of the problem (Allen & Gould, 1986; Saegert & Winkel, 1990).

There appears to be a contradiction between the objective nature of scientific reasoning found in the field of natural resources and the subjective and intangible manner in which people and communities view and experience places and attributes in the protected landscape (Williams & Patterson, 1996). To address today's management and social research issues, we must acknowledge and understand that for visitors and others, the communities and natural resources that they encounter in the natural landscape exist in a meaning-filled context, which includes both space and time (Williams & Patterson, 1996, p. 509). Accordingly, landscapes are beginning to be understood as socially constructed places with which people and groups can form emotional attachments to varying degrees (Greider & Garkovich, 1994; Hull et al., 2001; Williams et al., 1992; Williams & Carr, 1993). This dissertation concurs that our research and practice should represent the entire spectrum (all of Figure 1) of environmental place meanings to provide a more complete understanding of visitor experience.

Furthermore, research is needed on other meaning related and elusive (i.e., hard-to-define) phenomena such as nature-based spiritual experiences and related benefits<sup>1</sup>, for example (Driver & Ajzen, 1996; Driver et al., 1996; McDonald & Schreyer, 1991). According to Taylor (2001) Earth and nature-based spirituality and environmental religious orientations are proliferating globally. Also, traditional Western, Eastern, and

indigenous religious beliefs certainly can offer explanations for environmental phenomena, which may contradict science, but which give relevant meaning to human experience nonetheless (Malm, 1993). For example, metaphysical and indigenous beliefs surrounding sacred trees, groves, and forests have been linked to conservation of Earth's biodiversity because of the use and harvest restrictions associated with them (Hamilton, 2002).

In addition, spiritual inspiration has been linked to favorable social interaction (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999) and transcendent experience (K. Williams & Harvey, 2001) in national park and wilderness settings. Spiritual relationships to place and community have been described as intangible feelings of belonging that go beyond the cognitive workings of the mind (Cross, 2001). Schroeder (1992) provided a provisional definition of spiritual experience from the viewpoint of humanistic psychology (i.e., centered on intuitive experience and meaning, again, as it emerges in the lived world):

“Spiritual refers to the experience of being related to or in touch with an other that transcends one's individual sense of self and gives meaning to one's life at a deeper than intellectual level” (p. 25).

Such a definition may change through time and with alterations to the landscape. However, the view from a humanistic-existential psychology is appropriate for studying spiritual meanings. Insights about environmental spirituality may be constructed in the form of qualitative narratives about subjective experiences in wilderness or other special places (Schroeder, 1992). More applied and basic social science research is needed to identify the physical and social attributes of protected places that contribute to spiritual experiences (Stokols, 1990, p. 644).

Finally, special places and their associated symbolic attachments and meanings have explicitly entered into the discourse about ecosystem and public lands management (e.g., Eisenhauer et al., 2000; Mitchell et al., 1993; Presley, 2003; Schroeder, 2002; Williams & Patterson, 1996, 1999; Williams & Stewart, 1998). Identification of the factors leading to place relationships of this nature will prove useful to managers at protected areas such as RMNP. When unique attachments and emotional bonds exist at a place, people's concern and interest about management actions tend to increase and become priorities in the community; a clear understanding of these attachments and the reasons for them can provide insight into community reactions to decisions made by managers at protected areas (Eisenhauer et al., 2000). Management policies based in economic principles of substitutability, for example, will tend to be unacceptable to the public and communities where these complex emotional bonds to special places have been assigned and identified (Eisenhauer et al., 2000). Moreover, during qualitative, inductive social analyses of place meanings, diverse stakeholder groups tend to reveal shared values and commonalities, which facilitates relationship building (as opposed to highly polarized attitudes toward behaviors in the landscape, for example); then, this common ground can serve as the focus of public involvement aimed at resolving natural resource conflicts (Brandenburg & Carroll, 1995; Cheng et al., 2003; McCool & Guthrie, 2001).

Social science researchers (interested in integrated knowledge) should find that investigations of place meanings and attachments advance their work toward a more complete understanding of visitor experience. For example, in a qualitative interview study of emotional attachments to places in a river drainage in a national forest in

Washington State, repeat visitors were classified as having an “attachment orientation” that included (1) being intimately associated with a place, (2) being dependent on a place for ritualized activities, or (3) expressing a generalized need to return to a place to do and see something different each time (Mitchell et al., 1993, p. 34). Those who were not attached were thought to have a “user orientation” typified by repeat periodic visits to a place because it is good for doing preferred activities, or where new visitors who were exploring the place for its potential for pursuing preferred activities (Mitchell et al., 1993). Integration of concepts of place (and how we form relationships with places) with concepts such as use orientation (or mode of experience) increases understanding of the linkages among place attributes, emotional attachments, and recreation activities. Studies like this contribute to a more complete and integrated understanding of the recreation experience.

Effective management at the ecosystem level will be “guided by contextually rich understandings of social and natural history,” while a primarily abstract and reductionistic perspective will not succeed (Williams & Patterson, 1996, p. 518). Moreover, the human dimensions of ecosystem management require less abstract, post-positivist and post-utilitarian approaches to science and management because abstraction leads to a loss of context and meaning (Malm, 1993; Patterson, 1993; Williams & Patterson, 1999). To summarize the relevance and importance of landscape meanings and concepts of place for the human dimensions of ecosystem management today, I list verbatim six place principles developed by Williams and Patterson (1999, pp. 153-157). Each principle was explained in greater detail by these authors.

1. Ecosystems are socially constructed places.
2. As a socially constructed place, a given ecosystem can be described as the intersection of natural forces, social relations, and meanings.
3. Ecosystem management involves mapping the full range of meanings that humans assign to places.
4. Ecosystem management requires post-positivist approaches to science.
5. Socially constructed places are organized in a hierarchy of scales.
6. Ecosystem management involves managing the human system.

The emergent, subjective, and interrelated meanings of landscapes and special places within them implied by these principles and the above discussion are important for research and have implications for managers because they contribute to human well-being and can fuel a myriad of modern conflicts and controversies over resources and experiences in ecosystems (Schroeder, 1996; Williams & Patterson, 1999). The challenges, of course, are how to study and apply these less tangible place meanings and attachments to policy-making and wilderness management. Insights for meeting these challenges are discussed in the remainder of *Chapter Two* and in *Chapters Three, Four, Five, and Six* in terms of the scientific orientation, interpretive approach, findings, and insights that emerged during this interpretation.

### **Philosophical Assumptions of a Meaning-Based Interpretive Inquiry**

Social science research that investigates symbolic place meanings and strives to understand human experience in protected landscapes must expand beyond scientific methods solely guided by foundational rules, which seek objective answers (i.e., rationalism), to include a model that seriously discusses the philosophical and socially

constructed nature of science and human experience (Malm, 1993; Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 1998). This is particularly true when the management and policy applications to be informed by the science are rooted in messy social and political systems such as federal land management agencies and large tracts of public forest or wilderness administered by them.

The aim of this dissertation is to present an informative interpretation of visitor experience at RMNP for those who administer the Park. This goal presents a “wicked”, or hyper-complex, research problem because its various solutions (and how to arrive at them) are not consensual; moreover the unique problem is time and place dependent (Allen & Gould, 1986; McCool & Guthrie, 2001; Patterson & Williams, 1998; Rittel & Webber, 1973). The term wicked was not employed to imply malicious intent (Rittel & Webber, 1973). A wicked problem is messy, tricky, hyper-complex, and cannot be resolved by finding and applying a scientifically rational best solution; most often, wicked management problems are resolved by selecting a solution that is emotionally satisfying (Allen & Gould, 1986). The research problem addressed in this dissertation is of this nature because the knowledge sought is subjective, intangible, and highly individualized, requiring a non-rational approach and sophisticated qualitative methods that go beyond simple content analysis. As I began to discuss and read about qualitative research interviewing and paradigms of interpretation (i.e., Geertz, 1983; Howard, 1991; Kvale, 1983; 1996; Messer, Sass, & Woolfolk, 1988; Mishler, 1986b; Nicholson, 1984; Packer & Addison, 1989; Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 2002; Sarbin, 1986), I learned that I had to study more about the nature and philosophy of science<sup>2</sup> before I began this undertaking because these alternative paradigms appeared to me to be

operating under different assumptions than those with which I was familiar. These assumptions seemed to match the characteristics of wicked problems, however.

Having done this, I chose a qualitative scientific paradigm (grounded in hermeneutics and narrative psychology as discussed in *Chapter Three*) to understand visitor experience at RMNP. This approach to qualitative inquiry and similar paradigms (e.g., phenomenology) share a philosophical orientation (i.e. ontology) that is grounded by several key assumptions (Howe, 1991; Saegert & Winkel, 1990) about the nature of reality and the nature of human experience (Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 1998). These guiding assumptions, or normative commitments must be acknowledged before the specific methods of a study are discussed (Patterson & Williams, 2002).

“ Methods are the machinery of science, the specific tools used to collect and analyze data for a particular study. Normative commitments, on the other hand, are the principles that guide both the selection and operation of that machinery. Bypassing the effort necessary to learn and understand a paradigm’s underlying normative commitments by going straight to a discussion of methods ... is like trying to play a guitar without knowing how to finger the notes or read music. You are likely to make some interesting noise, but it will be a far cry from playing a song” (Patterson & Williams, 2002, p. 37).

Patterson (1993), Patterson and Williams (2002), and others have outlined the guiding assumptions for hermeneutics research on leisure experience and meanings of place, which can be summarized here in the following list of statements.

1. Meaning is lost when wholes are reduced to parts. This study attempts to be more holistic and less reductionistic than positivist methodologies. This mode of understanding strives towards exploring a more complete human experience of place.
2. Leisure phenomena are context and time dependent (i.e., these contexts may change over time). To deal with this, research participants are interviewed during their experience in the surroundings of the place. This is site-specific research, which highlights context over generalizations.

3. Multiple realities exist in leisure settings (Appendix D). “Each person sees the world differently to a substantial degree, and human phenomenon must be studied as they are subjectively lived and experienced” (Mick & Buhl, 1992, p. 318).
4. People are engaged in personally relevant pursuits to meaningfully enrich their lives (i.e., *current personal projects* as described in *Chapter Three*) while visiting leisure settings. People continually and actively take part in constructing a life and an identity (McCracken, 1987). Park visitors are engaged in active self-expression and construction of meaning (Patterson & Williams, 2002) during their visits to protected areas. While a particular personal project might include goal-directed behavior (i.e., instrumental meaning), the project as a whole usually entails a set of process-oriented actions that are practical and relevant to the individual within the context of her or his identity and/or social or family group(s).
5. Free will and constraints of the setting interact to determine human experience (Valle et al., 1989). “People are seen as having the capacity to react in distinctively individual ways within the boundaries of their social, cultural, and environmental backgrounds” (Patterson et al., 1993, p. 242). These authors refer to this interactive dialog between people and the world as ‘situated freedom’ (see *Chapter One*; Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 2002; Patterson et al., 1998; Valle et al., 1989).
6. In outdoor recreation settings, in particular, the person and the setting mutually define the experience. Meaning is thought to emerge through an interactive relationship between person and place over time (Mick & Buhl, 1992).

This list of statements provides the main ontological assumptions and epistemological framework that guides the qualitative methodology and interpretation used in this dissertation. These are normative commitments and valued characteristics<sup>3</sup> of the paradigm, which I believe will help us understand what the experience means to those who visit RMNP. Next, I discuss a conceptualization of human experience from the literature to clarify and lend support to these assumptions and my choice of scientific<sup>4</sup> paradigm.

## Fore-Structure of Understanding

No a priori model of human experience is actually tested in the traditional sense in this dissertation. This study does not desire to find cause and effect structural relationships among variables. It seeks emergent meaning, description, and understanding while following the assumptions and commitments stated above. Figure 2 is presented to illustrate a construction of a pre-determined model, or a priori conceptualization appropriate to guide a meaning-based hermeneutic investigation. In part, it can be thought of as my “forestructure of understanding”, which is the first step in a hermeneutic investigation (Patterson & Williams, 2002, p. 38-39). The intention of this figure is to expand upon the principles and assumptions, which guided this research and enabled the interpretation. This is a non-linear model that views experience as an emergent, acausal,

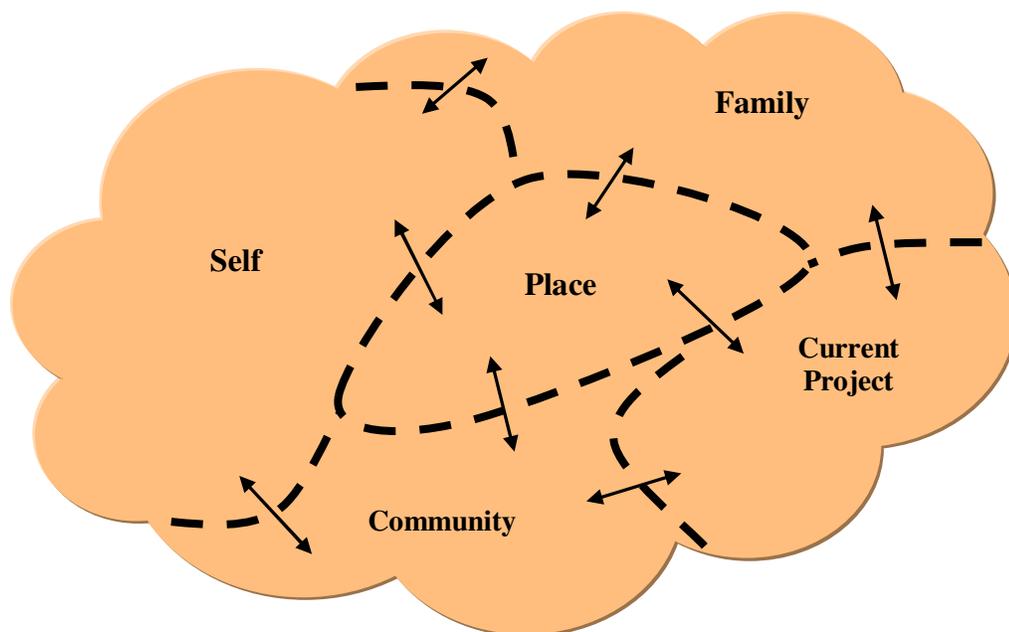


Figure 2. Non-linear a priori conceptualization of the “fluid mass” of human experience adapted from Hirschman (1986), Malm (1993), Patterson (1993), and Sampson (1988).

and holistic narrative not a predictable outcome (Hirschman, 1986; Mick & Buhl, 1992; Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 2002). The goal is to comprehend and interpret the phenomenon of human experience at RMNP in its relative entirety (i.e., the whole).

In the model, human experience is thought of as a mass, or socially embedded web of components (i.e., interrelated realms of human experience in which meaning is constructed and assigned) with highly fluid boundaries between the components, particularly between self and others and self and environment (Hirschman, 1986; Malm, 1993; Sampson, 1988; Sass, 1988). Page (1992, pp. 114-116) referred to this as “a blurred mixture” of our “inside world and our outside world.” Since life components do not exist apart from the self, they cannot be studied in the absence of other life components that may be relative to the self and the research problem, in this case the experience of and relationship to a place (Malm, 1993; Patterson, 1993), hence the hyper-complex nature of the inquiry. In other words, the self is always contextual and experiencing (Malm, 1993) and “inseparably intertwined” with its surrounding environment; “one has no meaning when treated independently of the other” (Valle, 1989, p. 258).

In their influential book, Bellah and colleagues (1985) advised against single variable analyses:

“Yet in the social world, single variables are seldom independent enough to be consistently predictive. It is only in the context of society as a whole, with its possibilities, its limitations, and its aspirations, that particular variables can be understood ” (p. 300).

Future research on visitor experience in wilderness, or other protected places, needs to seriously consider the relevant parts of experience together “to grasp its meanings in their entirety” (Hirschman, 1986, p. 240). For example, an investigation of park visitors’ self-

expressed identities during their visits would be incomplete without considering social and emotional ties to the park that develop over time, meanings of specific places at the park, and engagements in personally relevant projects (*Chapter Three*) while visiting the Park. This conceptualization of human experience serves as an important guide in this dissertation because (in addition to recreating at and visiting protected areas) when stakeholders become engaged in public involvement processes to resolve resource management conflicts, they do so as whole people or communities rather than parts.

### **Caveat Regarding Research Approach**

Alternative approaches (Stynes & Stokowski, 1996) to social science have been incorporated into the study of human experience. For example, consumer researchers have developed and applied meaning-based models of human experience to study consumer behavior (Fournier, 1991; McCracken, 1987; Mick & Buhl, 1992). Environmental psychologists have used grounded theory to investigate how symbolic and individual meanings are assigned to woods, forests, and trees within a specific cultural context (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2001), and they have used phenomenology in the study of landscape cognitions (Ohta, 2001). Peterson and associates (2002) applied ethnographic analysis in a study of cultural conflict regarding endangered species management in Florida. Howe (1991) discussed the advantages and considerations of using phenomenology in naturalistic leisure research. Moreover, recreation and leisure researchers have applied hermeneutics to describe and interpret leisure and wilderness experience (Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 2002; Patterson et al., 1998). The

bottom line is “wicked problems require nontraditional solutions” and approaches to social science (Allen & Gould, 1986, p. 23).

This dissertation draws insight from these closely related paradigms (specifically hermeneutics) to explore emergent human experience at RMNP to advance understanding of place meanings, contribute to a growing knowledge base, and to inform future research. Simultaneously, the dissertation discusses how the approach can inform decision-making and management at RMNP. Patterson (1993) stated the objective of the approach in the following passage.

“...leisure experience and relationship to resource, though not necessarily predictable, may be understood in ways that are managerially relevant and that a rich understanding of a small number of individual experiences may at times be more useful (though not a substitute for) more generic and abstract knowledge that meets the traditional standards of generalizability” (p. 124).

Here is the caveat. This dissertation is not an attempt to disregard or discourage traditional approaches to studying and applying the human dimensions of protected landscapes, or the knowledge produced by these. The constructionist argument does not intend “to replace all that has preceded,” nor does it wish to create new foundations of truth for science (Gergen, 2001, p. 807); rather, a post-positivist, constructionist human dimensions strives toward knowledge and understanding and toward practical and applied solutions that are meaningful for cultural life and societal well-being, while acknowledging the biases (i.e., prior conceptions), assumptions, and values that fuel the generation of scientific knowledge.

Now that I have stated this caveat, let us briefly return to the model presented earlier in the first section of this chapter (Figure 1 on page 30). The left side of Figure 1 is important and has proven useful when generalizable and objective knowledge is sought

to provide representative insight for resolving straight forward, technological, and agreed upon problems, but proves inadequate for solving interpretive problems that are embedded in a mass of intangible (and often highly emotional) landscape meanings (see Allen & Gould, 1986; Williams & Patterson, 1996). This dissertation moves away from the belief (or value) that the left side of Figure 1 is the only valid and credible approach to human dimensions research and application. Twenty-seven years ago, a human geographer named Edward Relph expressed concern over this one-sided model of science.

“Much of the recent discussion on environmental issues I have found both unsatisfactory and disquieting. Unsatisfactory because the analyses of behaviour ... are so frequently mechanical and abstract, simplifying the world into easily represented structures or models that ignore much of the subtlety and significance of everyday experience. Disquieting because these simplified structures often then serve as the basis for ... design of environments and the manipulation of people and places ... These discussions are usually couched in the scientific terms of objectivity, fact, and theory which appear to have become widely accepted as the only valid and rigorous terms for explaining and resolving environmental problems” (Relph, 1976, p. v).

Rational and objective approaches that conceptualize protected landscapes as “bundles of attributes and benefits” are of limited use (Fournier, 1991, p. 736) because they overlook subjective meanings assigned to these landscapes, which can be important sources of environmental values, human well-being, and conflicting experiences of place. In the face of the emergent uncertainty that is inherent in human experience (Kleese, 2002), alternative and complementary approaches are needed to answer today’s research questions and to effectively inform management decisions because there are many things about the human-environment relationship (e.g., contradictions in sustainable development [Dovers & Handmer, 1993]) that have yet to be understood. I think that

Giorgi's (2000, p. 60) description of science is the most reasonable and productive way to state this position.

“Science can be understood as the effort to gain the most precise knowledge about phenomena of the world, including humans, and so I can agree that strategies developed in the past should not be lightly discarded. But on the other hand, many advances in science are based on strategies rooted in a change in perspective, so resistance to new views and concepts should also not be arbitrarily maintained because of unfamiliarity or lack of tradition.”

The dashed circle and double-headed arrows in Figure 1 on page 30 indicate unknown relationships between people and the protected landscape and “imply influence moving in both directions around the circle” (Champ, 2002, p. 275). We must remember that the realms of meaning represented by each side of the model in Figure 1 can inform one another. This is why both information-based and meaning-based approaches for studying the social aspects of natural resources are necessary. The circle in Figure 1 does not imply circular reasoning but hyper-complexity and process. It can be metaphorically thought of as spiraling outward (Geertz, 1983; Hirschman, 1986) to eventually encompass an ever-increasing understanding (and expanded verification) of the relationships among people and landscapes, including protected (and often special) places within them. As a prelude, this idea approaches the notion of a hermeneutic circle or spiral of understanding; it is further discussed in *Chapter Three*.

## CHAPTER THREE: STUDY METHODOLOGY

*“A view of research as engagement stresses that research is not just a question of methodology, for method is but part of a wider process that constitutes and renders a subject amenable to study in a distinctive way.”*

*Morgan, 1983, p.19*

### **Fieldwork and Treatment of Data**

#### *Selection of Research Participants and Interview Collection*

Qualitative research interviews were conducted during the period June 16 through August 17, 2001. These dates were chosen because they represent the bulk of the summer visitation at RMNP. The author and three field assistants of mixed gender (two graduate students and one undergraduate junior all studying natural resource recreation) conducted and recorded the majority of the interviews. The team met twice before going to the Park to be briefed about the nature of the investigation and to be familiarized with the interview guide. A research associate and I facilitated these meetings. I coordinated sampling, interview collection, and brief training of interviewers in the field. After mutual observation and discussion about the method, interviewers independently conducted interviews and interacted with park visitors in the form of semi-structured and probing conversations.

We collected interview narratives during ten weekdays and six weekend days. Key feature attractions (e.g., waterfalls and alpine lakes) with associated campsites, where available, were sampled in combination with time of day in a random fashion. Appendix A lists specific interview sites at RMNP during summer 2001. The morning period was 0800 to 1100 hours; mid-day sampling occurred from 1100 to 1500 hours; the

afternoon session was 1500 to 1800 hours. For each day of fieldwork, a location by time of day matrix was developed to *guide* sampling (Table 1). This design was usually followed except when certain logistical constraints dictated otherwise (e.g., campground closures due to black bear activity or absence of visitors at location). Using a random numbers table (Bernard, 1994), three locations with corresponding day period were drawn for each team member available to conduct interviews that day. Two to three extra shifts were usually drawn to account for the absence of visitors or other logistical constraints.

Upon arriving at a sampling location, research participants were purposefully chosen to represent variability in gender and age. In some cases, an entire party wished to be interviewed. In these cases, we conducted individual interviews with each member of the group. A small number of joint interviews (i.e., two persons contributing to the narrative together) were conducted. On occasion, meeting times to conduct the interviews were scheduled with campers if the time of initial contact was inconvenient for an interview. Basic characteristics for the research participants such as age, education, and profession varied (see Appendix B).

Interviews were collected from both day and overnight visitors in five broad recreation places to efficiently sample a diversity of visitors at RMNP (Figure 3). We collected interviews from visitors at the Bear Lake/Moraine Park complex, Wild Basin, Mirror Lake camping area, East Inlet Trail/Lake Verna, and the Timber Creek Trail backcountry camping area. During randomly selected sample sessions, we approached park visitors and campers with informal conversation about the place and our study. When minimal rapport was established, we asked persons to participate in an interview.

Most visitors agreed, but we did record approximately ten refusals mainly due to time constraints associated with the length of the interview. A total of 73 visitors were interviewed. This effort produced 68 transcripts<sup>5</sup> that were analyzed during the overall study. Twelve of these were interpreted in-depth for this dissertation (see *Chapter Four*).

Table 1. Sampling matrix for July 13, 2001 for three interviewers at Wild Basin, RMNP.

Logistically available sites	Morning	Mid day	Afternoon
Ouzel Falls	01	02	<b><u>03</u></b>
Calypso Cascades	04	<b><u>05</u></b>	06
Thunder Lake and Camp	07	08	<b><u>09</u></b>
Ouzel Lake and Camp	<b><u>10</u></b>	11	12
North Saint Vrain Camp	<b><u>13</u></b>	14	15
Siskin Camp	<b><u>16</u></b>	<b><u>17</u></b>	<b><u>18</u></b>
Aspen Knoll Camp	19	20	<b><u>21</u></b>
Tahosa Camp	<b><u>22</u></b>	23	<b><u>24</u></b>
Pine Ridge Camp	<b><u>25</u></b>	26	27

Note: Cell entries were systematically assigned. Then, a sample was drawn from a random numbers table; bold face and underlined entries were drawn in this example. These were assigned to field personnel in a logical manner. In this case, three extra draws were made to account for visitors being absent at one or more locations.

The sampling design, or selection process reflected a desire to be systematic and broadly representative of RMNP as a place, but in no way was it a claim to be representative of the entire summer population of visitors to the park. A representation of this population was not necessary in this study. Many of our conversations with visitors conveniently occurred when and where they did simply because we as field researchers had been issued (by park administration) overnight camping permits for those locations and dates. This is in no way detrimental to this research paradigm or the meaningfulness of results.

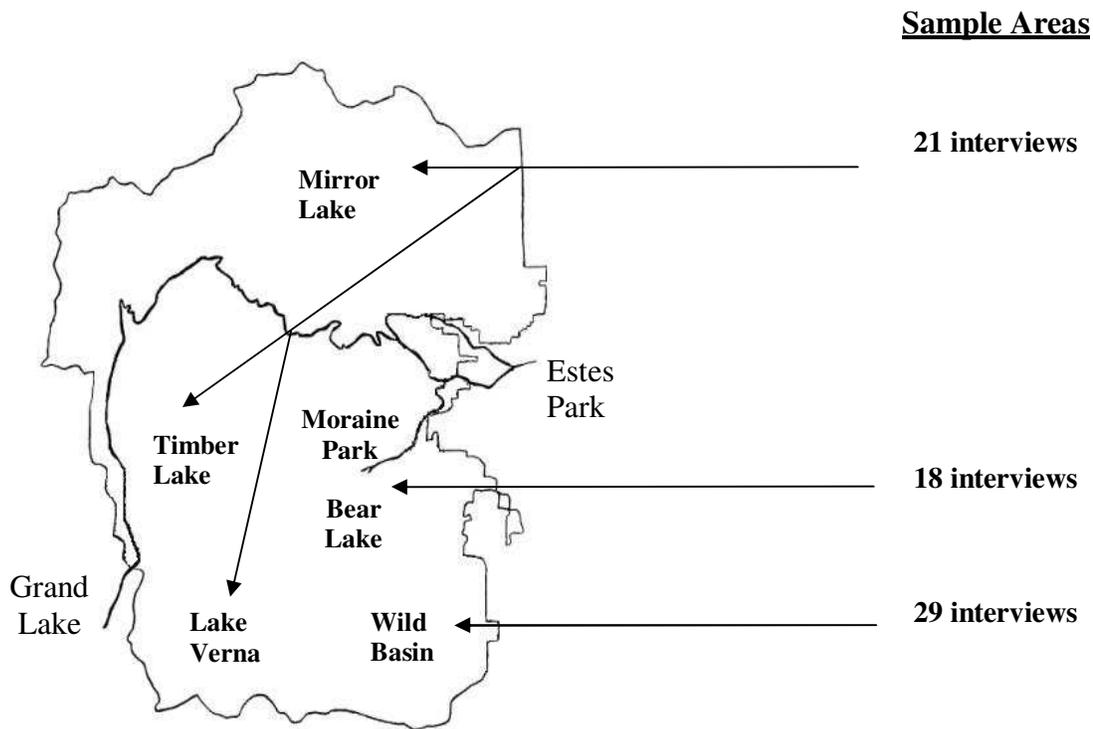


Figure 3. Boundary map and interview distribution for Rocky Mountain National Park during Summer 2001 fieldwork.

Qualitative research interviews (as generally discussed in Bernard, 1994; Kvale, 1983, 1996; McCracken, 1988; Mishler, 1986b) were in-depth, semi-structured (using probes), and audio-recorded to capture the symbolic, expressive, and subjective meaning of the experience in narrative form. Interviewers repeatedly (1) probed the individual's own personal history and current life situation and (2) sought to capture the experience from the individual's viewpoint in this meaning-based study model (Mick & Buhl, 1992). Research participants were guided by a flexible list of questions and possible probes,

which was adapted for use at wilderness areas, national parks, and other protected places from Kempton, Boster, and Hartley (1995). Prior to using it in the park, the interview guide was adapted, tested, and revised over a two-year period with a small sample of college students at Colorado State University. The guide questions used at RMNP explored important characteristics of the setting, special places, personal feelings while visiting the place, the relationship between people and wilderness, and the pros and cons of protecting natural wilderness areas (Appendix C). The interviews analyzed in the dissertation were interactive conversations between speakers as opposed to standardized sets of stimuli and responses (Mishler, 1986b). These qualitative research interviews are based on subjective understanding of meaning (Kvale, 1983).

### *Text Management*

Each tape recorded interview was transcribed verbatim into an MS Word document using a foot operated micro cassette transcriber with headset (Panasonic® RR-930). Transcribed narratives ranged from four to ten single spaced pages of text, or approximately 20 to 40 minutes of tape. Next, each narrative was converted to plain text and edited. The editing process was necessary to crosscheck the transcriptions and to clean the text of exaggerated occurrences of noise such as habitual interjections and other verbalizations (e.g., you know, um, ah, etc.). During the editing and interpreting processes, I repeatedly listened to each taped interview to make note of voice inflections and pauses in speech that may or may not have indicated meaning in addition to what was said.

Text narratives were stored, indexed, and coded using the computer software program Atlas.ti version 4.1 for Windows (Muhr, 1997). The use of this software package facilitated indexing and retrieval of meaning units (i.e., phrases, sentences, and longer excerpts) from the lengthy transcripts (Patterson & Williams, 2002). During the comparative analyses (*Chapter Five*), the query tool proved helpful for organizing individual quotations. The actual interpretive analyses were conducted by myself and reviewed by the principal investigator, my advisor. We discussed differences and similarities in each other's interpretations of the text, resolved disagreements through further discussions, and talked in-depth and wrote about the management insights of our interpretation for each individual research participant presented in the dissertation.

### **Interpretive Analyses**

*"Hermeneutic philosophy seeks to understand understanding as an ontological state, not to prescribe a method of interpreting texts in a set fashion."*

*Arnold & Fischer, 1994, p. 66*

#### *Introduction to Hermeneutics and Narrative Psychology*

In a qualitative study of place meanings and visitor experiences, this dissertation employed hermeneutics, which in its most general (and simplified) definition is concerned with the interpretation of the meaning of a spoken and/or written text (Denzin, 1984; Henderson, 1991; Kvale, 1983, 1996; Packer & Addison, 1989; Sylvester, 1990; Valle et al., 1989). This study was also informed by the closely related (but independent) concept of narrative psychological analysis (Mishler, 1986a, 1986b; Sarbin, 1986), which views interview texts as constructed discourses that can be interpreted (hermeneutically if desired) as personal or interpersonal accounts of meaningful experience. In a broad sense, hermeneutics can be applied to describe the interaction between subject and object

and between interpretation and understanding (Denzin, 1984). Accordingly, the approach taken in this dissertation is preoccupied with the problems of meaning, interpretation, and understanding rather than formal rules and standardized methods. Gadamer (1989) described the work of hermeneutics as clarification of the conditions that facilitate understanding rather than the development of a strict procedure of understanding. As in ideal natural resource policy-making and conflict resolution, listening, language, dialog, and discourse are central themes in these frameworks. According to Gadamer (1994, p. xi), “hermeneutics encourages not objectification but listening to one another—for example, the listening to and belonging with someone who knows how to tell a story.”

Hermeneutics originally developed as a discipline for the interpretation of biblical, legal, and classical texts and scripture between three and four centuries ago (Gergen, Hepburn, & Comer Fisher, 1986; Kerdeman, 1998). The term *hermeneutics* is (and sounds) foreign to the field of natural resources because its origins are in ancient Greek language and mythology; the god Hermes was charged with the tricky business of delivering (and translating and interpreting) messages to the Greeks from their gods (Arnold & Fischer, 1994; Packer & Addison, 1989; Valle et al., 1989). The term commemorates the name Hermes and his task of interpretation. Today, social scientists and other scholars employ hermeneutics to interpret meanings of human behavior and experience. This dissertation drew from the paradigm of productive, or applied philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1989; Grondin, 1994; Nicholson, 1984; Patterson, 1993; Sass, 1989). This branch of hermeneutics is strongly based in the philosophies of Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur (Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 2002; Sass, 1989). It is applied here to a natural resource recreation, leisure,

and tourism setting and builds on the work of Patterson and Williams (2002) and Patterson and associates (1993, 1998).

This approach holds to a constructionist and interpretive worldview guided by the philosophical commitments discussed in *Chapter Two*. Productive hermeneutics highlights an understanding of the nature of reality and everyday human experience rather than strict methodological rules. At the same time, it maintains that the interpretive researcher cannot sidebar, or “bracket” his or her preconceptions to truly recreate another person’s experience (Gadamer, 1989; Patterson & Williams, 2002). In other words, the reader of the text “cannot separate in advance the productive prejudices that enable understanding” from those biases that lead to misinterpretation; “rather this separation must take place in the process of understanding itself” (Gadamer, 1989, pp. 295-296). This stands opposed to phenomenological studies where researchers attempt to bracket their own understandings of experience in order to understand the experiences of their informants (Creswell, 1994; Kvale, 1983).

The concept of pre-understanding includes existing theories, research results, and the knowledge that researchers (and managers) share with their research participants regarding their culture and the phenomenon under study (Arnold & Fischer, 1994). Moreover, in a productive hermeneutics framework, the researcher(s) is believed to co-produce meaning while generating and interpreting subjects’ interview narratives (Nicholson, 1984; Patterson & Williams, 2002). There is no true interpretation out there waiting to be discovered. Rather the reader(s) of the text brings his or her previous knowledge and prior conceptions about the phenomenon and the subject’s culture (Mishler, 1986a) into the interpretation to co-construct meaning with the research

participant. That is, results come from the interpreter as much as from the text, and the pre-understandings of the interpreter serve as a crucial element of interpretation (Arnold & Fischer, 1994). This suggests that park managers might effectively serve as interpreters in addition to and in collaboration with social scientists.

Interview transcripts (i.e., textual accounts) served as the data for this interpretation, and are considered, in many cases, to represent narratives of visitor experience. Analyses of narratives, or stories are thought to be appropriate modes of understanding for studying emergent and contextual wilderness and leisure experience and relationship to place. According to Patterson and colleagues (1998, p. 423), a hermeneutical interpretation of narrative data “views recreation as an emergent experience motivated by the not very well defined goal of acquiring stories that ultimately enrich one’s life.” In other words, narrative approaches emphasize construction of emergent visitor experience in the protected landscape rather than the objectivist notion that experience can be predicted by certain attributes (or variables) of individuals and environments (Patterson & Williams, 2002). A narrative ontology and social constructionist approach to wilderness experience maintains that “people create shared meanings and understandings of a place,” which then guide social, political, and cultural behaviors at those places (Williams, 2002, p. 123).

When park visitors are interviewed (i.e., invited to speak) about how their lives relate to special places and experiences at them, individual identities and cultural meanings can emerge in narrative, or story form. Mishler (1986a) has observed a general tendency of research participants to tell stories during both structured and informal interviews. He defined story telling as the act of “constructing our understanding of our

experiences in narrative terms” (p.235). Theodore Sarbin (1986, p. 3) used the terms story and narrative interchangeably; he defined story as “a symbolized account of actions” of people, which includes a dimension of time. The idea of storytelling (and stories) about our relationship to nature is interesting and somewhat romantic, but what can this “storied” approach to visitor experience offer the fields of natural resource behavioral research and practice?

At protected places, managers are often faced with problems that could be addressed from several different angles. Moreover, solutions to these messy hyper-complex problems (Allen & Gould, 1986; LaChapelle, McCool, & Patterson, 2003; McCool & Guthrie, 2001; Rittel & Webber, 1973) are time and place dependent with little agreement about cause–effect relationships. Rarely do all parties agree as to which is the best approach for resolving the hyper-complex issue at hand. The only given is human dialog in which meanings are negotiated and contested. These contested environmental meanings can influence an array of human actions in the protected landscape (*Chapter Two*, Figure 1). “Survival in a world of meanings is problematic without the talent to ... [create and] interpret stories about interweaving lives” and experiences at protected places (Sarbin, 1986, p. 11). This dissertation proposes that a narrative understanding of visitor experience can inform decisions about many issues (e.g., maintenance of diversity and quality of the visitor experience, preferences for management practices, gaps in visitor knowledge, etc.) including the management of conflicts in a local cultural context. That is, competing meanings of place (once described) can be negotiated locally in small units of narrative knowledge where the

collective stories serve to uphold the values of the community (Kvale, 1996, p. 43), or at least serve to clarify which meanings may underlie conflicting values.

A brief and simplified review of Sarbin's conceptualization of narrative is useful for explaining why this approach to experience makes sense for tackling complex problems in the protected landscape. First, one has to accept the notion that people "think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures" (1986, p. 8); second, we have to think of collective human action (and practical interests that guide behaviors) as organized in narrative form. People live in and are informed by the great stories of their times, cultures, and social groups (Mair, 1988). We tend to make sense of life's infinitely complex experiences by formulating them into coherent stories (Sarbin, 1986). Sarbin defines narrative as:

"[A] way of organizing episodes, actions, and accounts of actions; it is an achievement that brings together mundane facts and fantastic creations: time and place are incorporated. The narrative allows for the inclusion of actors' reasons for their acts, as well as the causes of happening" (Sarbin, 1986, p. 9).

I believe that many of the interview transcripts generated during 2001 at RMNP fit this description. Sarbin's definition is appropriate for this dissertation and similar qualitative research in human dimensions of natural resources. I agree that interview narratives can represent coherent, meaningful, and chronologically ordered courses of human action. This makes them well suited for development of theories of complex and dynamic social processes and relationships (Mishler, 1986a; Sarbin, 1986). Theories of people-environment interactions and relationship to place certainly fit within this genre. However, standard research interviews that hold to the traditional stimulus response format of asking questions and quantifying content (as opposed to understanding

interrelated themes) tend to inhibit stories and narrative accounts. Mishler (1986a, p. 249) reminded us as researchers: “If we wish to hear respondents’ stories then we must invite them into our work as collaborators, sharing control with them, so that together we try to understand what their stories are about.” This study is an attempt to follow Mishler’s recommendation.

### *Within-Transcript Interpretation*

The overreaching goal of this analysis was to interpret and understand examples, or representative types (Patterson, 1993) of relationships between park visitors and the recreation setting with regard to their experience and construction of place. To begin, I attempted a thorough interpretation of individual interview narratives, which were treated as personal stories about the interviewees’ experience of RMNP. A within individual analysis (i.e., idiographic) is a critical first step because it grounds future analyses across individual transcripts (*Chapter Five*), which explore patterns, themes, meanings, and insights that go beyond individual participants (Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 2002).

For each case, substantial portions of the dialog were excerpted directly from the transcript and presented with the discussion to allow the individual to tell his or her story to the reader in his or her own words. This presentation of data allows the reader to make judgments about the claims made in the interpretations for each case based on the evidence. The reader plays more of a role in evaluating a hermeneutic interpretation than in a rationalist information-based study that employs statistical inference, for example (Patterson, 1993).

There are certain steps in this idiographic interpretive process (Patterson & Williams, 2002). First, the interpretation required explicit discussion of my pre-understandings of the phenomenon and human nature from which to begin the interpretation (Addison, 1989; Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 2002). This is termed the hermeneutic fore-structure of understanding, which serves as a guide to enable the interpretation rather than a limiting framework (Patterson, 1993). It was broadly presented in the preceding chapters (see Figure 2). Second, I repeatedly listened to and read the narratives in their entirety to gain an initial understanding of each text. Next, I conducted a deeper exploration of the parts (i.e., pieces of meaning observed in single statements made by the participants) while simultaneously referencing my preliminary understanding of the whole. Finally, I adjusted my understanding of the narrative in its entirety (i.e., the whole) based on my more detailed interpretation of the parts in a continuous and iterative process (Figure 4).

According to Geertz (1983, p. 69) the interpretive researcher must attempt to become engaged in a process that he described as “a continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way to bring them into simultaneous view.” This process, or “intellectual perpetual motion” (p. 69), describes the hermeneutic circle, which seeks no final ending point of self-reinforcement. Rather, the circle can be metaphorically thought of as spiraling outward (Gadamer, 1989; Geertz, 1983; Hirschman, 1986) to centrifugally encompass an ever-increasing understanding of meaning and expanded verification of the phenomenon. This “circle of whole and part is not dissolved in perfect understanding but ... is most fully realized” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 293).

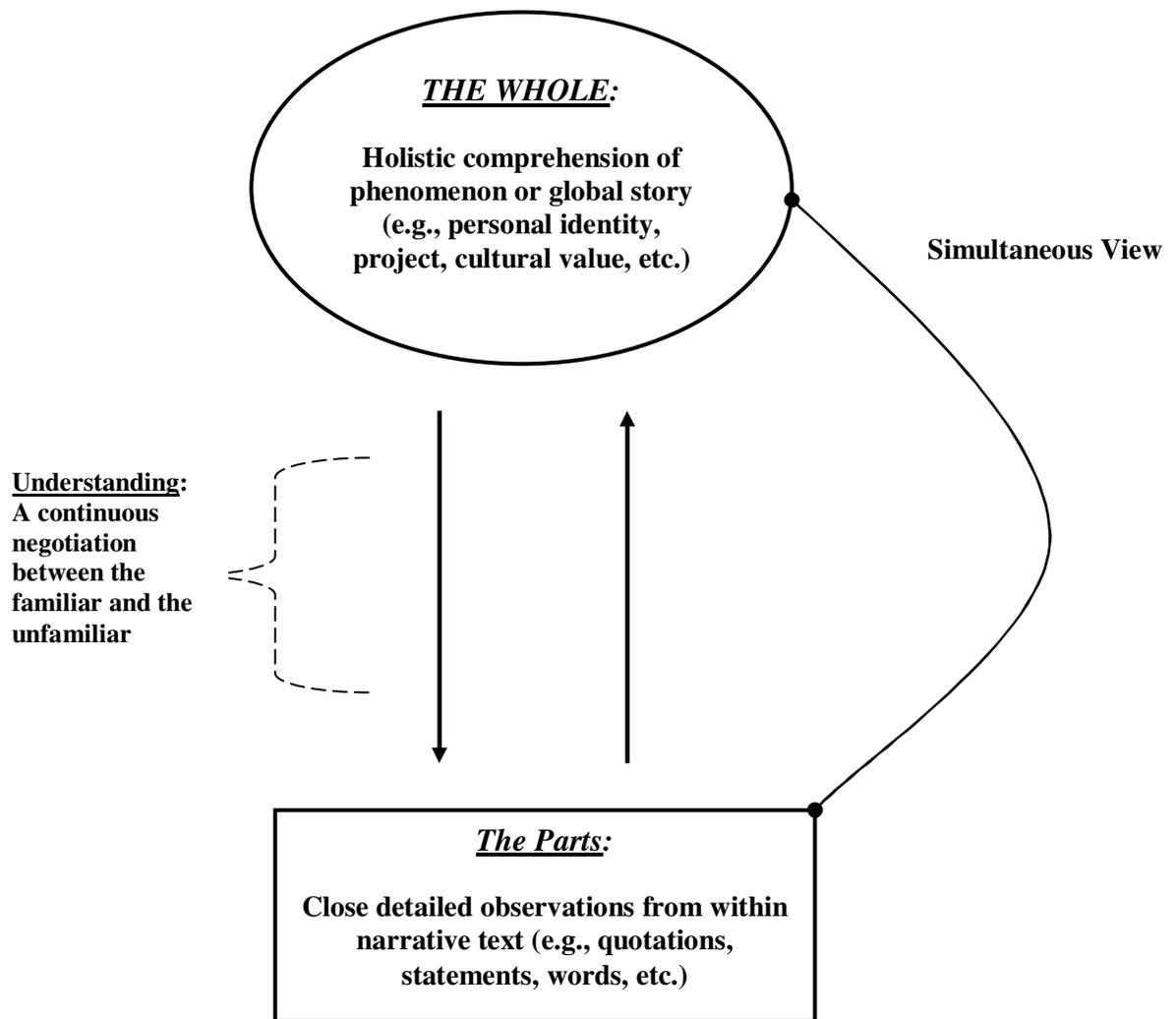


Figure 4. Schematic for how an interpretation is constructed in hermeneutics (based on discussions in Gadamer, 1989; Geertz, 1983; Hirschman, 1986; Kerdeman, 1998; Kvale, 1983; Patterson & Williams, 2002).

### *Organizing Themes and Sub-Themes*

My goal was to develop an organizing system for each participant's interview as a way to meaningfully order, interpret, and present each case (Tesch, 1990; Patterson & Williams, 2002). In general, interviews were conducted (and initially read) in relation to what could be learned about the life, social relations, and the thoughts, feelings, or cognitive state of the interviewee during his or her visit to RMNP (Nicholson, 1984, p. 147). There are two important assumptions underlying this analysis: (1) Interview narratives represent a personal presentation of self, or a particular *claimed-identity* and (2) most everything said during the interview expresses and confirms this identity (Mishler, 1986a, p. 243). Contradictions within narratives are certainly possible and should never be ignored, but investigated in detail to determine whether they hold new insight for understanding the phenomenon or provide alternative hypotheses. This issue is discussed further in *Chapters Five and Six*, which discuss insights and evaluation of the study.

To explicitly organize the interpretation, individual transcripts were examined for (1) presentation of expressed, or claimed-identity (Mishler, 1986a; Patterson, 1993) and (2) current personal project(s) (Little, 1983, 1987, 1989; Omodei & Wearing, 1990; Patterson, 1993). Interrelations between these umbrella themes regarding visitor experience can be thought of as the whole in Figure 4 for the idiographic level analysis. To specifically describe and interpret the relationship between park visitors and place, I focused the interpretation on how individuals understand their personal project(s) and how their project(s) is related to both their claimed-identity and their experience and construction of meaning at that place (Patterson, 1993; Williams & Patterson, 2002, p.

54). These two broad organizing themes are part of the fore-structure of understanding which guided the interpretation (Box 1).

Claimed-identity. These interview narratives, or texts are a form of self-presentation, which reference a specific self-identity claimed by the interviewee during the experience of place (Mishler, 1986a; Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 2002). The concepts of identity and self are central in hermeneutics and meaning-based study approaches. According to Arnold and Fischer (1994, p. 61), hermeneutic philosophy maintains that the text under study reflects the “contextualized personal expressions of an individual” park visitor, recreationist, or product consumer, for instance. During the interpretation, attention was paid to what if any identity was being claimed and how participants expressed it through the narrative. Examples of such identities at a place like RMNP might include members of specialized recreation groups (e.g., climbers, trail runners) or self-portrayals as the group leader or responsible parent or experienced wilderness purist, for examples. How a participant’s identity was expressed in relation to experience of place and their broader life aspirations was important for this interpretation.

Current personal project. As discussed in *Chapter One*, one way to conceptualize aspects of a person’s broader life situation is via current personal projects, which are also central to meaning-based autotelic approaches that emphasize involvement as the source of well-being rather than goal achievement (Omodei & Wearing, 1990). In this study, the interpretation focused on extended sets of relevant actions, over time, that allow a person to experience well-being as she or he progresses toward goal achievement (see Little, 1987, 1989) rather than specific outcomes or end states resulting from specific behaviors in the setting. Again, the concept of project is closely aligned with the view that

wilderness experience is an emergent narrative not a predictable outcome, and people have situated freedom, which is the capacity to interact with the setting in individual ways within the boundaries of their culture, social group, and the physical environment in which they find themselves (Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 2002; Valle et al., 1989). Visitors are engaged in active self-expression and construction of meaning for their lives while at protected places such as RMNP (Patterson & Williams, 2002).

### **Box 1. Organization of Interpretation Within Research Participants**

#### **Current Personal Project(s)**

- **Personal understanding of project(s)**
- **Relation to claimed identity**
- **Relation to construction and experience of place**

#### **Claimed – Identity**

- **Expression of identity through interview**
- **Relation to personal project(s)**
- **Relation to construction and experience to place**

Subject-centered and object-centered perception. Two sub themes also guided organization at the within-individual level interpretation. Subject-centered perception is at the common sense level of interpretive understanding; subject-centered interview

statements tend to focus on the research participant (i.e., interviewee), or what the statement says about the person who made it (Kvale, 1983). When the participant speaks about internal feelings while at the place, the nature of the experience can be considered subject-centered. This concept can help to clarify how individual statements in the text (i.e., the parts) relate to the participants' identities and experience of place. Passages emphasizing various forms of sensory perception such as smell, hearing, and visual experiences described as impressionistic and emotional in nature such as how seeing a panoramic vista from a peak or scenic overlook makes them feel (Patterson, 1993, p. 149-151) indicate an experience that is focused on the individual in the environment rather than the attributes of the setting. Patterson (1993, p. 169) proposed that a subject-centered, impressionistic mode of perception might reflect deeper spiritual meanings of the leisure experience. The experience of solitude (or being alone in the setting) may be linked to this type of perception as well.

Object-centered perception (also at the common sense level of interpretive understanding) refers to passages from the narrative that focus on what the participant states about the environment and its attributes (Kvale, 1983). When the interviewee focuses his or her attention on the environment, the leisure setting, or its physical attributes such as wildlife, plants, birds, streams (as described in interview statements), we have an indication that the experience is object-centered. This type of experience also can be visual in nature when focused on the details of the setting, for example bird watching or wild flower identification (Patterson, 1993, p. 139). Aesthetic appreciation of setting attributes and an awareness of the quality and characteristics of attributes while visiting a place are examples of object-centered perception (Patterson & Williams, 1992).

These two perceptual orientations represent ways of experiencing wild nature at protected places, and are not necessarily dichotomous. Visitors to protected areas most likely perceive their surroundings from both perspectives emphasizing the inseparability of the subject and the physical objects in the environment during everyday life (Page, 1992; Patterson & Williams, 2002). Visitors with strong attachments to places in protected areas certainly focus their attention on objects in the setting at times as well as on their internal feelings while visiting these settings. The implications of subject- and object-centered perception for the processes involved with forming relationships to places over time may be substantial. The relationship between these modes of perception and subjective well-being may be important for understanding the quality of visitor experience at protected areas. These sub-themes were explored in relation to personal projects and identities to meaningfully guide interpretation of visitor experience at the idiographic level (*Chapter Four*).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SELECTED VISITORS TELL THEIR STORIES:

#### IDIOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION WITH DISCUSSION

*“Narrative is a primary and powerful way by which to know about a whole.”*

Bellah et al., 1985, p. 302

*“It has become evident to me from my own and others’ experiences in a variety of studies, that stories are a recurrent and prominent feature of respondents’ accounts in all types of interviews.”*

Elliot G. Mishler, 1986a, p. 235

#### **Bob: Hard-working CPA from the Flatlands**

A major theme that emerged during the conversation with Bob was his claimed identity. Bob recurrently presented himself as a hard-working CPA from back east during the interview. Aspects of this are implicit in his story about how he discovered RMNP.

“Again I’m a flatlander from Indiana. I wasn’t even going to come here in 1967. I was going to go down to the Grand Canyon. That’s what I’d all heard about. A friend of mine from this area said “Oh Bob you have to go to RMNP and Trail Ridge Road.” I said, “Yeah, yeah, yeah.” And, so about a month before I went, he kept after me, and I said, “OK. Jon, I’ll go.” And when I drove up through Estes Park and along [Trail Ridge Road], and saw all those beautiful mountains, my life has never been the same. It has not been the same.” 71-78

In Bob’s discovery story, it is clear how quickly a wild land setting can begin to be life enriching and awe inspiring for one who is from such a markedly different place.

Bob’s construction and experience of the place are linked to his identity by sub-themes that recurred in the interview. First, the place provides Bob with a different

perspective from which to think about his life and civilization. Identity and current personal projects are intermingled for Bob; he is escaping work and civilization, while reevaluating his own identity as a member of that same civilization.

“It permits me to just think about everything. And away from—it permits me to think away from civilization, and yet I think about civilization; it's different. I'm not under the time pressure or constraints of what I do for a living, and I like my job. I mean, it's great but, I always fought for my one week in RMNP.” 19-24

His claimed-identity is closely associated with being a CPA. Being at the place also permits him to experience latent spiritual feelings that normally are not part of his identity. Bob has done this by transcending his everyday surroundings, which he refers to as “civilization,” and which the High Rockies defy with their presence.

*[Question: So, you would consider yourself to be a spiritual person?]* “In the sense—actually, how do I say this? I'm not much of a spiritual person. This'll be good if you [understand]. I'm a CPA. I believe in two plus two equals four, and don't give me all this other stuff in between in most of my life. I'm quite probably the other way most of the year; I'm functional, and I believe in ... that's a personal feeling but, that's not what I think of daily, like a lot of people do, the first thing when they get up. I don't. I had my focus on my profession; it's a wonderful profession, but it consumed me, basically all my waking hours ... so I'm not [spiritual]. So I'm not from the same point most people are. Even when I say that that's a feeling I get, but I'm not. This [place] brings me probably where I'm not most of the time.” 103-113

Bob also spoke of people and wilderness as being at odds since the arrival of Europeans, but he does not consider himself to be an environmentalist. He admits liking the comforts of modern society when he is not on these trips, which confirms his identity.

*[Question: Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?]* “Direct conflict. Direct conflict. ... White people, or ‘civilized people’ is maybe a better way of saying it, we don't live well with the wilderness. We like it, a lot of us like it, but then we want to—by liking it we destroy it. I mean it sounds crazy, almost like an environmentalist, and I'm not an environmentalist, understand I'm a person that lives in civilization, and then I like to come to the wilderness. There's a difference. ... (Laughs)—It's not my whole life. I do think there are two whole areas there where you exist, and I like all my comforts when I'm outside of this area.” 164-171

During his interview, Bob described being engaged in three interrelated personal projects while in the park. They included (1) escaping work/civilization, (2) day hiking, and (3) scenic driving (Figure 5).

*[Question: Could you please list for me the activities that you do while you're in, the wilderness at RMNP?] “Primarily, hike and primarily scenic hikes; of course there's climbing Longs Peak; I don't have a desire to do that, even though it's fine. I like a scenic hike where I have a strenuous workout, but not overwhelming, where I just get a nice workout, feel good and loose, stop, water, have a granola bar, and go back. So, I'm not multi-faceted in that regard; I don't even catch-and release fish here, though a friend of mine's trying to get me interested. And I may, that'd be fine, I have no problem. But right now on the wilderness area, strictly wilderness area, it's hiking.” 136-144*

On most days, Bob prefers to limit the difficulty of the hikes he takes (136-144). He confirms this aspect of his behavior in a story about his recent ascent of Mount Antero.

“I just climbed a fourteener, down in the Buena Vista area. Mount Antero, and that was beautiful. That sight was spectacular and was a rush of adrenaline. But it took so long to get there, and I was exhausted when I got there, quite frankly, the overall enjoyment of the experience, on a day-to-day basis, is much better right here in Ouzel Falls.” 28-32

The number of people and size of the groups that he encounters on the trail noticeably affect his enjoyment of these day hikes. He tells us about a time when he met a large group that was having a family reunion at RMNP. Managing group size is important, even for a front country day hiker.

“... might I say something else, that makes it important, which is really in conflict with what you're trying to do maybe, is that it's less people. And even though this trail has people, it's still less people than, I'll just say Mirror Lake and Emerald Lake. And a real quick one, I was there in June. I walked up, people—but it wasn't too bad. I got there, it was nice and quiet, a few people. All of a sudden fifteen people came, a group. But they were very friendly, they were chitchatting along; I said well I've had enough, I'll go back. I met another seventy-five people. It was a family reunion of a hundred people. Now, I'll remember that day, but not fondly. So I guess there's a balance, and I don't know how you, the National Park system does

it, but there's a balance between—I don't mind the crowds when I go along Trail Ridge Road.” 45-56

At the end of the passage (45-56), he makes a distinction between hiking trails and scenic driving with respect to crowds. Bob does not mind encountering large groups when he is driving and looking at scenic views from Trail Ridge Road. Furthermore, he seems to recognize that managers must provide both types of settings and experience opportunities for visitors.

When discussing why scenic driving at RMNP is personally meaningful to him, he compares it to a trip he took in Switzerland. He clarifies that riding on a train at a lower elevation and looking up at the mountains is not the same as the freedom of pacing your own drive and being at higher elevations where the scenery is unmatched.

“I should [mention] one other item. It's outside your thing. I like to drive also, and Trail Ridge Road is my favorite road in the world. It has the vistas, and it's better than Switzerland. And I've been to Switzerland but they cut you off, you have to get on a train, you don't go up eleven, twelve thousand feet. I don't want to emphasize that—it would be a separate thing than driving. RMNP has both. That's probably why it's so unique. It has the best road in the world, for scenic driving, nice pleasant two lane paved road, and then it has wonderful, quiet trails. You can put that back in the first part, because those really are the two areas, and two of the reasons why I come out here every year.” 56-66

Bob's distinction could hold implications for the visitor shuttles at RMNP. Managers at special places should be interested in how riding in a bus differs from the experience of driving one's car. For this day visitor, these two modes of experience differ greatly. Bob's story also holds theoretical implications. By stating in essence that being at RMNP meets his “behavioral goals better than any known alternative” (Williams et al., 1992, p. 31), Bob provides evidence of validity for the concept of place-dependence, which has been identified in the literature as a sub-dimension of place attachment (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981; Williams & Vaske, 2001; Williams et al., 1992).

By dividing the setting into two distinct areas based on his hiking and driving (56-66), Bob may be expressing that the place has a comfortable blend of wilderness and civilization that unites the parts of his own identity. The linkage between identity and activity is reinforced as he continues to describe the experience (89-102). Bob combines day hiking and scenic driving at RMNP to provide physical exercise and special spiritual feelings that enhance his favored identity.

“I feel like I don't have to do—I don't have the daily grind that we have in the rest of our lives, [that] I always feel when I'm working really hard all the time, again I always fought for one week in Colorado, and that week was RMNP area, and that includes the National Forest around it ... but no place in the world has the wonderful two-lane road with the fantastic views. ... I just tell you what, tomorrow's my off day, I have to take my wife, so what I'll do is take her up to the Alpine Village, but on the way I'm going stop at the Alpine Walk. I'm going to do that myself; she'll sit in the car. I'll take her to the shop, and then I'll walk up to the top past the Visitor's Center all the way to the top, and that does two things. One, it gives me my spiritual feeling for the day. A really special spiritual feeling, and two, it gives me exercise that I wouldn't otherwise get, and that just kind of wraps it up.”  
89-102

In the passage above (89-102), Bob tells us what his day with his wife will be like at RMNP. One could imagine a similar experience with developments and shopping back home in ‘civilized’ Indiana, which would be very comfortable for both Bob and his wife. However, even on his “off day,” Bob engages in scenic driving and day hiking to “feel special.” Trail Ridge Road is Bob’s cathedral and being there enriches and completes his life. (78-88).

“When I either hike, or drive Trail Ridge Road, and I go up there quite a bit in the morning by myself, I feel special, I feel like that no place else in the world. [*Question: What kind of feelings or emotions would you say you experience when you're here?*] “I don't have a good vocabulary (chuckles a little while talking) in some of that. Sometimes it's euphoria. Just walking along the trail here and I'll just feel ... it just overtakes me almost. And, it's a—everything is right with God. However you want to say that. I mean your own God. Just however you feel, spiritually, you feel better, you feel cleaner, and again the words I'm using aren't the

words that a person with a good vocabulary would use, but it's how I feel. I just feel complete.” 78-88

Again, we find that his spiritual feelings are related to activity, or project at the place. In a study done in southern Utah, emotional connections with place were related to the activities people engage in at places they consider special, but these activities were not the reasons that places were considered to be special (Eisenhauer, et al., 2000).

In the above excerpt (78-88), Bob’s perception while hiking or driving Trail Ridge Road is subject-centered; his interview statements are focused on himself (Kvale, 1983). Passages that focus on internal feelings indicate that the nature of the experience was subject-centered. This type of experience can be visual, but is not focused on the physical details of the setting, but rather the visual experience would be “more impressionistic, holistic, and aesthetic in nature” (Patterson, 1993, p. 149-151).

When hiking trails at lower elevation, Bob experiences the place from an object-centered point of view. Object-centered perception refers to what the interviewee states about the world (Kvale, 1983; Patterson, 1993). Bob focuses his attention and experience on the physical details, or attributes of the setting such as wild animals, trees, and streams. He finishes the passage by telling us that he also enjoys the sounds of the streams because it brings him to a state of peacefulness. Bob experiences these quiet hiking trails from both perspectives.

*[Question: Would you say in your opinion that wilderness is important to you?]* “It’s very important to me.” *[Probe: Could you elaborate some on what traits, or characteristics of wilderness make it important to you?]* “Probably just like—I call it a chipmunk, it’s probably a ground squirrel. *[Right.]* I just like the wildlife and the birds, the Stellar’s Jay, the Clark’s Nutcracker. I think it has to be quiet. I like quiet. Away from cars and civilization. I like a, quite frankly being very particular; I like this trail because it’s along a river. It makes it less dusty. And the sound, especially the water falling, just helps me to be in a more of a peaceful state, as I’m walking along.” 11-19

Figure 5 summarizes these themes for Bob’s narrative to organize the idiographic interpretation.

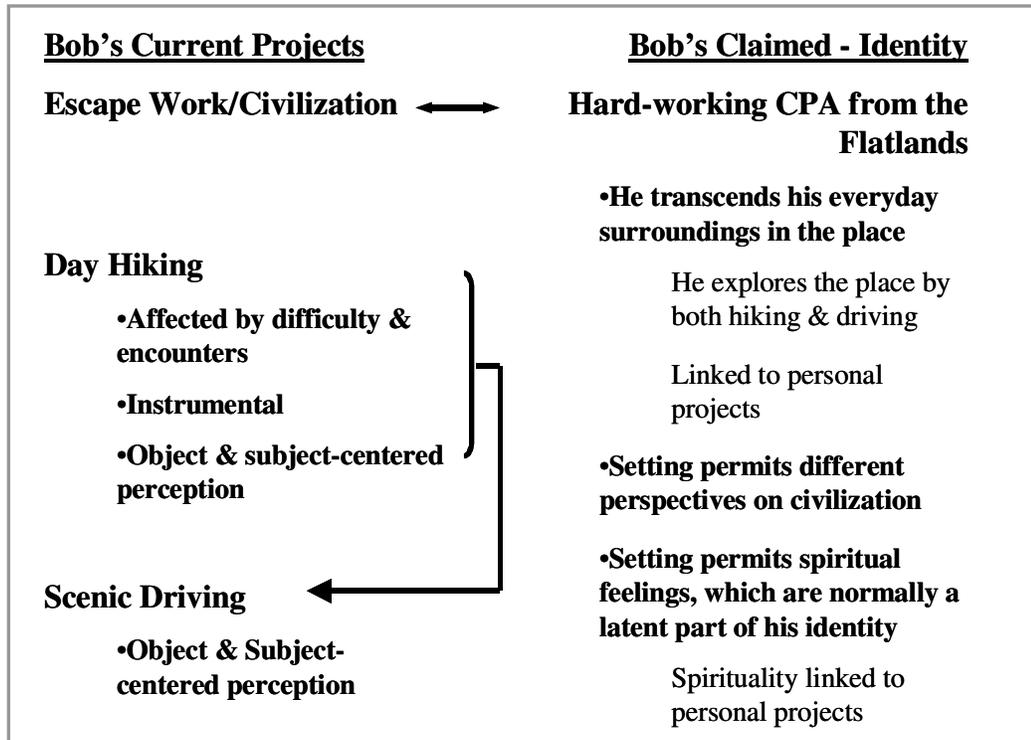


Figure 5. Organizing system for Bob.

While he was able to appreciate the larger landscape and scenery from Trail Ridge, Bob was not able to focus on the details in nature in the same manner that he was able to do while hiking. Some of the roadside wildlife viewing done by other visitors bothers him because of its impacts on wildlife. Bob elaborates this in a story about a wildlife disturbance that he witnessed.

“Now in the other area, again I want to emphasize, I like, and don't take away from me, Trail Ridge Road. I mean—and people would, some don't do that. However, I would support, some way of moving the road away from the sheep lick down there, because I can see those people stop and you're trying to push them, but they're still just stopping, and right at the edge where the road—and they're scrambling across the road, and bothering the [sheep], they're bothering them! I like to be able to see them, but in some way or another, we should be forced away from where their habitat is. So it's hiking in the wilderness area, and that's tied in with looking and

seeing the trees, or the birds, or just the squirrels. By the way I've never seen a bear in RMNP. *[I haven't either.]* Oh. (Both laugh a little.)” 145-155

Earlier in the interview (56-66), Bob reemphasized the importance and special nature of having a balance of quiet trails and scenic highway as the reason why he returns to RMNP. For Bob, these places are conjoined with his self-identity as a hard working CPA from the flatlands and meaningful activities, which allow him to enrich his life. This analysis has demonstrated the rich meaning-filled nature of Bob's experience as a repeat day visitor to RMNP in relation to his claimed identity and his personal endeavors while at the place.

### **Jane: Passive Explorer**

Jane was an overnight backcountry camper (JB13) interviewed at Slickrock Camp on the western side of the park. She is a 31-year old white female from Denver, Colorado who was camping with three males, one her husband. Jane is a child and family therapist and counselor with a master's degree. She and her husband have volunteered for the National Park Service, but give no money to environmental organizations. They do support "city [Denver] based things". Jane claims "on and off" membership in a Unitarian fellowship. She has studied Buddhism and Judaism.

In the interview narrative, Jane expresses an identity of passive explorer. She describes her experience as a passive recreation. Furthermore, Jane expresses object-centered (Kvale, 1983) perception in this passage. As she “moves through the space,” her attention is focused on living things and other attributes of the setting.

*[Question: Can you list all the activities that you do while in the wilderness at RMNP?]* “We walk and walk and walk and walk. (laugh) My husband takes pictures. I'm not a photographer, and I tend to use the time when he is

photographing—I try to slow down to the same pace, and I'll end up watching bugs and butterflies and rocks. I really never got into fishing, not really a rock climber, not really at all. Sometimes I'll bring a book, sometimes I'll practice some meditations, but only if it is warm. If it is cold, I tend to keep moving. You know, the activity is just moving through the space. I wouldn't say we bring along a lot of other—can't bring quilts up here you know. (laugh).” [*Probe: So do you feel the hiking and the walking through the woods and the trails is satisfying for you?*] “Yeah, combined with a lot of stopping, watching, and gasping for breath. I tend to move slower than they do. It's funny if I were at home, I can never just walk around and do nothing all day and be nearly as relaxed and satisfied and content to just be there, but I find I am just endlessly fascinated by what is right in front of me. It totally, totally fills my needs to be out there and not be—not try to hit peaks, trail running, fishing--no it doesn't ... I never missed it.” 102-117

Being at the place and simply walking through the space is more important to Jane than doing specific activities at the place (102-107). Activity and setting are blurred for the passive recreationist. She contrasts her contentment with being at the park with her life in the city, where she indicates that she is more focused on getting things done and less relaxed.

Unlike Bob, Jane and her companions also hike off trail to create a sense of wilderness, which she believes can be experienced in less remote places. She expresses a broader, more inclusive definition of wilderness that is socially constructed (Greider & Garkovich, 1994), or dependent on one's state of mind during the experience. Exploring other places away from designated trails is important to Jane's experience. Managers at RMNP are reminded that individuals seek recreation opportunities that may ultimately impact natural resources at special places.

“I have spent a lot of time at Glacier Gorge, probably more than anywhere else. But what else comes to mind, a lot of places that I really couldn't name that are sort of off trail ... finding our own sort of routes. [We] tend to hike with a photographer. We just go off when we go looking for places that interest us, and not necessarily [on trail]—actually done very few peaks and stuff. When I think of wilderness, it's not necessarily a matter of remoteness, really sometimes almost what we bring to the experience. Soon as you get off the trail no matter how close the trail might be, it feels more wilderness-like. Walking unguided—[*Probe: Just you and the*

*setting?]*—[with] maybe a topo[graphic] map and a sense of where you are, but basically not following the ‘sort of point A to point B version’ of doing things. But, just getting out into it, and it doesn't necessarily have to be all that remote to be wilderness.” 6-17

Jane indicates above (6-17) that a wilderness experience involves some level of adventure and exploration for her and her companions and not necessarily remoteness.

In the excerpt below, Jane experiences a slower more relaxed pace, but this time in terms of internal feelings. At the same time, she acknowledges that the realities of nature (e.g., weather) can be serious and non-relaxing. Near the end of the passage (19-33), Jane begins to reveal hints of a personal project. Being in wilderness permits Jane to reinforce and strengthen personal life commitments such as conservation behaviors (Figure 6). Visiting the place reminds her of the importance of conservation and preservation of resources while living back in the city.

*[Question: Would you say, in your opinion, that wilderness is important to you?]* “Yeah, Yeah I would, in a lot of ways.” *[Probe: Can you elaborate about some of the traits or characteristics that make it important to you?]* “Gosh one of the things we were just talking about the other day that comes to mind in wilderness is the sense of slowing down; unless you are running to get the hell off the mountain because you are getting stormed off or something. That often it seems like a matter of speed and living in the big city, I live in Denver, it’s like a necessity to get away from all that and slow down and remember the speed at which things really happen, which is geologically slow. I think that it's hard to get that experience in the city and it’s hard to get those reminders even just walking the trails, maybe. I don't want to say that trails won't do that, but just the sense of really slowing down and just going where you go. [It] tends to help me bring [that feeling] back to the city—when I get back there, the reminder of what is important, the scale of things, 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.” 19-33

Jane reiterates the subject-centered nature of her experiences at RMNP over the years in her statements below. She seems to have developed more positive feelings about the place with the passing of time. Familiarity and comfort with the setting develop as a

result of return visits, which may lead to stronger emotional bonds to place. Familiarity and repeat experience (Williams & Vaske, 2001) and frequency of visitation (Moore & Graefe, 1994) have been positively associated with place attachment.

*[Question: Could you please list for me all the feelings that you have when you visit the wilderness at RMNP?]* “Sure, years ago when I first started coming to [wilderness], it would have included a lot more petrified and terrified and overwhelmed. I remember the first time having to cross a snowfield I thought I was just going to freak out. But also a sense of real relaxation, of simplicity—I don't know if simplicity is a feeling word, but I would include it, appreciation of the simpler slower pace, definitely a good amount of joy, and laughter. I've cried out here, so I guess that I have been sad out here—a lot of different things.” 171-178

In the passage below (35-55), Jane mentions a hard-to-define spiritual connection to the place for the first time. Jane also tells us that she was married in the park. Again she states that the experience of the place reinforces her conservation behaviors. Jane links these behaviors to the spiritual in terms of religious rituals. By visiting the place, Jane recommits to personal relationships and other aspects of her everyday life such as her hobby of quilting.

“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 I got married on an overlook, overlooking Rocky Mountain National Park—way outside sort of the traditional organized religion paradigm, there is something very both humbling and expansive about being out in wilderness. I also think that it is important to take that back to my daily life. *[Probe: So would you say that you are a spiritual person?]* Yeah, although I have a hard time defining that. *[Is your spirituality related to these types of settings, quite a bit?]* Yeah, definitely ... I'm not wearing my wedding ring, or I'd even show it off. Yeah 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, it feels like 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 and I appreciate the importance of what you can carry in with you, [and] the luxury that we live with on a day-to-day basis back in the city. It seems like 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 relationship that I have with people; I think that it gets into an awful lot of things. And there is nothing like staring at the night sky going ‘its endless, holy cow’ and that whole thing.” 35-55

Jane describes her wedding ceremony at RMNP and the group hike that followed in a story. She presents the wedding party hike as a spiritual metaphor for her marriage. On the surface, Jane is expressing close social ties that resulted from the experience at the place (i.e., social identity), but in a deeper sense, she compares the realities and level of commitment involved with marriage to the difficult physical realities of a backcountry hike (80-100). Being at the place allows Jane to recommit to her nuclear family.

*[Question: Do you associate Glacier Gorge with family, friends, memories, or beliefs?]* “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 we and—probably 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 Dad's were there, some of our cousins, a lot of our friends. [A] number 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. This particular place being rather broadly RMNP and the Front Range—northern Front Range. But, then actually to take--bring those people with us, and show them 'this is what we are talking about.' And not just get the post card view, which we got at the wedding [ceremony] 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—(laugh)—and [to] say this is what we are talking about, it is that whole thing of being up there. So yeah, I have a very big spiritual tie to that area and also just great conversations that have happened over the years [on] different hikes up there often in the fall. So yes.” 80-100

Jane's story about her wedding day hike (80-100) is an example of the 'fluid mass' of human experience (Figure 2, p. 44). Self, family, friends, and personal project are closely connected with place and the landscape of the region, namely the Front Range. Such “rootedness” and spiritual ties to place are natural human feelings, which are certainly associated with strong attachment (Relph, 1976). Additionally, the wedding party story holds management implications. For example, if such larger groups, of socio-cultural importance, were not allowed to hike together in this part of RMNP, Jane's life

enriching experience may never have been realized. The methodological approach applied in this paper was necessary to capture this more complete picture of human experience without sacrificing meaning.

Jane believes that people are connected to wilderness and natural forces whether they know it or not, and that includes various parts of the landscape outside of protected wilderness areas. She uses a story from her work to illustrate this.

*[Question: Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?] “People ... with a capital P?” [Probe: Or do you believe there is a relationship?] “Yeah, I think there is a relationship, but what I think I would say is that many of us, I would even include myself, even when I think that I am trying to reconnect with it, [we] are pretty disconnected from it. We don't realize how much we're tied into cycles and the seasons—weather. I see it in the littlest things. I'm a youth therapist. I work with kids year round, and sometimes kids will come in on a windy day and they are all jumpy and can't concentrate. ... It's not like the day before school is out, it's just blowing hard and it just gets into us in a way. We are so connected to the natural forces and the natural cycles that we're very unaware of living in the city, and when I think of our relationship to wilderness, I almost think that it is our job somehow to strive to re-find that. ... Sometimes that means coming up here into the wilderness and sometimes it means not paving over your lawn but planting zeriscapes instead. ... I realize that it's not an option for a lot of people to come up here. They're held by their physical status, their schedule, their whatever it is. Their financial situation does not allow them to have this. I think it's a luxury to me to be able to come up here and do those things. ... We are very connected but we don't realize it.” 119-137*

By linking her relationship to nature back to her life and job in the city, Jane reconfirms her project to strengthen her life commitments through the experience of the place. One of these life commitments is to “re-find” that connection, and Jane tells us that visiting wilderness and practicing conservation at home are ways to do this.

Jane's relationship to wilderness while she is in RMNP makes it easier to recognize and utilize those ties in her therapy room or backyard. She is committed to periodically reconnecting to special places where natural forces and cycles are evident. Then, she

uses this reconnection to nature to add meaning to her home life and career. Traditional studies of instrumental meaning have described similar offsite effects as “benefits” of outdoor recreation that continue, but which are difficult to detect (Driver, Nash, & Haas, 1987). Through the interview process, Jane specifically expresses how these carry-over effects bring meaning to her daily life. However, they are more than outcomes of goal-directed behavior; they are part of her larger personal project and self-identity.

Jane revisits the human connection to places like RMNP when asked about the disadvantages of protecting wilderness. She expresses concern that designation of wilderness areas somehow promotes a separation between people and special places. Jane is concerned that designation may give people a justification for eliminating anything that is not wild or natural from the rest of the landscape. However, Jane also recognizes a double standard involved with protection and allowing access to these places.

*[Question: Do you think that there are any disadvantages in protecting wilderness?]* “This is a long standing discussion at my house. I think that there is always the possibility of—I don't know if it is a danger or not—there is a possibility that we end up separating out protected wilderness, minimal human use areas from areas that we can do whatever the hell we want to with—like the city, or the corridors between cities. ... I don't want to see people use wilderness areas more than the way we use cities. I'd like to see the reverse effect happening, so I wonder about if you set aside an area as wilderness, it somehow says we humans are not a part of that. I don't want that separation to be there. I'd like to see wilderness used in a way—people have always been moving through these spaces and they will continue to move through these spaces for a huge variety of reasons, ... but on the other hand conservation of natural spaces and re-vegetation, saving so many species, and biodiversity, all these things. It is very difficult to do with lots of foot traffic and RV's and the whole sort of spread of human use. So, I have mixed feelings on that. I am so glad that you can't drive to this space. But on the other hand, my grandmother has been able to visit me a few times, and when we drove up to Bear Lake it was kind of like the highlight her travels. She [rarely] ever gets to see a natural space like that. And you really have to unwildernessify a place in order for that to happen, so mixed reviews. Ask me when I am eighty. (laugh)” 139-157

Jane’s conception of wilderness informs some of the zoning issues facing managers at protected areas. She hints that special places like RMNP backcountry/wilderness have a history of some human use that is good and should continue as long as it does not degrade wilderness resources or experience. Indeed, it is highly probable that “natural processes have interacted with human activities for hundreds of years” in most contemporary national parks (Bratton, 1985, p.132), which highlights the importance of time for understanding the human relationship to place. The dimension of time is again referenced in Jane’s narrative. In a brief story about her grandmother, Jane recognizes a need to have portions of the park accessible to people who cannot hike in or off-trail, access for every stage of one’s life. She reinforces the need for a front country/backcountry distinction and thinks ahead to how she (similar to her grandmother’s current situation) may continue to reconnect with RMNP at age eighty.

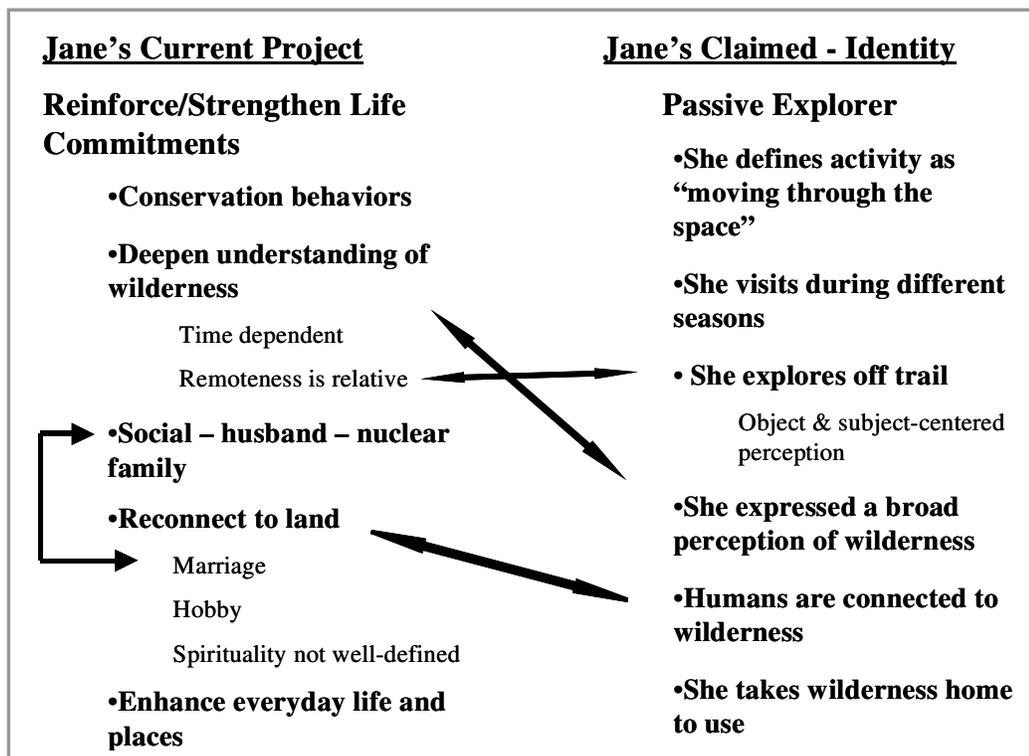


Figure 6. Organizing system for Jane.

The passage below (159-169) provides further evidence of Jane's expanded view of wilderness and desire to include wilderness values to some degree across the larger landscape. She indicates that finding a balance between protection and use of resources can do this.

*[Question: Do you think there are any advantages or beneficial reasons for protecting wilderness areas?]* If I can define wilderness outside of park boundaries and include broader ecosystems, I think it's important when we talk about protecting wilderness to include the regions outside the areas that are set aside as road-less or trail-less or stoves only, no fire wood camping. Whatever the definitions are that define that as a specific wilderness area. I think if we can encourage a broader thinking so that we spread out to the fringe areas of ecosystems in protected areas. Then yeah, we need to, we need to wake up to how important it is to protect biodiversity, to protect the purity of the water, and to protect this place in of itself as it is. And not allow the 'fingers of civilization' to creep up into it, but to allow something of the aspect of what it is to sort of affect us. I think that it is incredibly important. I wish I knew more about how it would work best." 159-169

Jane visits the place during multiple times of year, which may contribute to her emotional attachment and holistic view of wilderness. She actively does her part to preserve and care for the place while visiting RMNP, thereby confirming her commitment to conservation and her rootedness in place (Relph, 1976). Finding trash or seeing people feed wild animals makes Jane sad. The lack of respect or understanding it demonstrates is sharply felt by someone with her spiritual connections to a special place. Finally, she recognizes that education must be coupled with the experience of place if people are to become more protective of their environment.

*[Question: Of the kinds of places in RMNP that you have listed as wilderness, are there any particular places that have special importance for you?]* "Yeah, like I said Glacier Gorge is part of the park that I know best. I've traveled it the most. ... I know that Glacier Gorge gets a lot of traffic. 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. I haven't ever been there in the spring (laugh). ... it's an ironic thing because it's so accessible—makes it easy to get up there, and easy to do a quick day trip. Yet also it seems that it gets ... we tend to pick a lot of trash, we always come back with pockets stuffed with trash. We pick

up a lot of trash at Glacier Gorge. [We] see a lot of people feeding chipmunks, and kind of want to go 'Don't do that! Actually we do tell people sometimes not to'— [Probe: *How does that make you feel seeing people behave those ways?*] “Sort of the round about--the feeling is disappointed and sad. But the long term up shot of it is that I want to write to President Bush or whomever and say we need more money for education in the parks and national forests, and for vigilance ... because I think that people walk in the park the same way as in the city. They don't have any—they're not just concerned about throwing trash behind them, and it is equally unacceptable in either place but it is damaging here in a way that it's not in the city. It makes me wish that we prioritized these places more. I don't know very much on how that would work. I don't know whether funding would do it, education would do it. I think that it's important that people have the access. I wouldn't want to cut that out, but I think they could do it in a more informed way. Maybe that starts back in the city and not at the ranger station/visitor center.” 57-80

In sum, the interpretation provides a concrete exemplar of a rather complex relationship to place and holistic conception of wilderness while highlighting the connections between Jane's identity of passive explorer and her everyday life commitments. Transference of outdoor recreation experience to everyday human life has been documented for women who engage in wilderness recreation (Pohl, Borrie, & Patterson, 2000). These linkages to identity and everyday life direct a meaningful experience and construction of place for Jane and should prove insightful in future studies of visitor experience.

### **Jon: Wilderness Purist and Protection Advocate**

Jon is informant MH4 interviewed at Slickrock Camp on the West Slope, July 22, 2001 during the morning. He is a 52 year-old white male and a resident of Colorado with 18 years formal education. Jon is a high school teacher of natural science at an all female Catholic school. He was actively donating time and money to environmental organizations in the past, but currently he only donates occasionally. Jon was raised Episcopalian, but he is not currently practicing any form of organized religion. He claims

to be a very spiritual person with great respect for organized religions, but his narrative did not reveal any environmental or wilderness connection to his spirituality; the interviewer did not probe this. Rather Jon highlighted the social and ecological values and the psychological benefits of wilderness as his narrative developed.

He was backpacking with Jane and her husband during this particular visit, which is his first time in the East Inlet Trail corridor. Jon has substantial experience at RMNP, however, including visiting Wild Basin during the winter seasons. He told the story of his discovery of the place, his history of visiting, and how he came to reside in Colorado during the interview (19-30).

*[Question: Of the kinds of places in RMNP that you have listed as wilderness, are there any particular places that have a special importance for you? For example, is there a wilderness area that you associate with your family/friends, or with your beliefs that makes the place more significant to you than other places?]*  
“Yeah, I think back to when I first came out here by myself in 1971, came to Rocky Mountain Park and did a bunch of day hikes. I never been out West before so there are certain images of—I was going in on a number of trails that I particularly remember out of the Bear Lake area—long day hikes out of there, and ... images of that area were really significant to me, partly because it was the first time out to the West, so it was such a dramatic landscape. But also, that became sort of this driving image that then about a year and half later I moved out to Colorado, at that point from Cleveland.” 19-30

Jon indicates that visiting RMNP and experiencing such different landscapes from those in Ohio may have stimulated his subsequent relocation to the state of Colorado. He also described some personal family history that he associates with hiking at the Park (30-40). These past experiences most likely have contributed to his many return visits and his general relationship with wilderness in personally meaningful ways.

“And I did a number of backpack trips a while back, in a marriage that have some really fond memories. You know some of those areas I go back to now and it’s been twenty years or so some cases as much as almost 28 to 30 years ago. And qualities are all the same in those areas. Um, trying to remember I mean specifically before the Lawn Lake flood, I used to go up in that area some, and

actually even though its not backcountry wilderness some of the drives like the Fall River road the one-way road—doing some of the day hikes off that road—can't remember the name of the areas, but there are only a few up in there with designated trails, and this trip, which I've never been in this East Inlet area at all. The couple that I'm here with has been here a fair amount. It's remarkable.” 30-40

Jon portrayed himself as a wilderness purist who is also a strong advocate of wilderness protection during this interview (Figure 7). What I mean by a wilderness purist is entailed in Jon's description of how he sees wilderness. First, he does consider parts of RMNP and the surrounding area to be wilderness (3-6), thereby supporting local designations and reaffirming dialog about the wilderness quality and potential of portions of the Park.

*[Question: When you think about wilderness, which places in RMNP do you think of?]* “I definitely think of this place now, so this is the East Inlet area, ah Never Summer Range—I think in some ways the Wild Basin area, because I go up there a lot in the winter.” *[Any others?]* “I think that's it.” 3-6

Also, Jon tends to hold to the standard ‘Big W’ notion of wilderness where there is little to no sign of people and their activities (except for some well maintained trails) and where one can experience the challenges of living in the outdoors without the comforts of human civilization, even to the point of not seeing or hearing airplanes flying over wilderness areas (95-123). He admits that he may be escaping civilization to the point that he experiences a fantasy while in wilderness.

*[Question: What characteristics of wilderness do you think make it worth protecting?]* ”I certainly think keeping it as natural as possible, and well maintained trails [and] so forth are nice—they're handy. I think that management agencies also have to be careful about not managing things so much to the point that they're protecting us too much from all the qualities that are wilderness, which are the real life struggles of being back here and not being too protected from those. Because management agencies, I think, have a tendency to want too do that. ... Oh I think, definitely getting away from any kind of human made—man made amenities. Minimizing those things. Trail markers are great, but I think that if we rely too much on all the things that keep us oriented in the city when we're in the wilderness, that diminishes some of that wilderness experience. I

think certainly getting away from light and sound of cities is an amenity that's really a big part of wilderness—the clear air, clear skies. I would like it if airplanes couldn't fly over wilderness areas, frankly, because that's always a reminder that there's this giant big world out there, and maybe I am playing some fantasy game by being in the wilderness, but I try to avoid the fact that stuff is really going [on] out there. ... every step should be made to manage wilderness in such a way—which in and of itself sort of plain old paradox—to manage wilderness in such a way that it continually minimizes any kind of human artifact. Does that make sense?” *[I think I understand, kind of keeping the wild?]* “Keeping it as wild as possible. And, resisting—management people—I think need resist the tendency of a lot of humans to try to make it increasingly comfortable in certain ways, even if it’s like improving trails to the point that they’re like sidewalks. I think that management agencies need to be careful to not respond to all those desires by urbanized people to make them increasingly comfortable. That diminishes part of what wilderness is all about.” 95-123

Jon speaks directly to the managers of RMNP and similar protected areas regarding how wilderness should be managed, which in his mind is kind of a paradox (which supports his identity as a purist). He perceives that there is pressure from some groups of people to develop these areas into places that are more ‘user friendly’ and convenient for the urban population while reminding Park administration that doing so would be contrary to what wilderness is.

Jon tells about a particular day hike, at high elevation, that he and his companions did during this trip where despite his desire to escape into a wilderness fantasy, he finds evidence of civilization in an otherwise wild setting (228-249). Furthermore, he indicates that one type of human sign, summit registers, is acceptable in wilderness areas indicating that he may be somewhat of a flexible purist.

*[Probe: During this visit to RMNP, have you seen any negative signs of people visiting here? And if so, please list all the negative human signs that you have seen.]* “It’s amazing we saw—the only thing that I saw—we didn't find any trash except that when we were way, way up high I found stuff in a tree, a deflated Mylar birthday balloon, but it probably sailed from some place and got too high and popped—happened to find that, which I brought out. And I was amazed—that part of it might have been where we went off trail—that you wouldn't see people or any signs of people. We did see a—we signed a register for one smaller peak

that we went up, and there was a register there. And that is a human influence that's kind of a fun one. I saw names of people from early in the nineties that I knew. One of the guys here who had been up here in '94 his name was on the register. So there is some kinds of interesting little archival things I think that those are worth preserving. I know some people don't think that we should have any of those things around. I don't know I mean in this particular visit it was really ideal I mean trail maintenance was minimal. A lot of trail we were on was marked as unimproved trail and it was great to be able to ... have a trail that was a primitive trail through the woods ... it was probably more of an elk trail than a human trail, let me put it that way. Humans have probably adapted to using that trail because ... [it was a] natural way for wildlife to move up and down through the same kind of rugged terrain that we were going through.” 228-249

As introduced above, it is clear that Jon considers himself to be an advocate of wilderness protection as well (167-175; 208-213). He spoke of two values of wilderness that make it worth protecting including (1) long-term societal benefits and (2) the ecological value. He clearly explains that limiting most use in some areas is an effective way to manage for future ecological and societal benefits, and he does not feel bad about not being able to access these areas (208-213).

*[Question: When people try to protect wilderness, do you ever feel that other priorities may not be satisfied? For example, some people say that protection of wilderness shouldn't make people lose jobs and shouldn't raise the cost of living. How would you feel about those kinds of things?]* “I guess I feel pretty harsh by that. I tend to be really compassionate about a lot of environmental issues. And the possible negative impacts on people, because things are often seen as kind of elitist, environmentalist kind of moves. But for some reason it's always been the case for me with wilderness that the long term benefits to society far out weigh any kind of short term economic impacts to people.” 167-175

“But there are huge ecological benefits that have nothing to do with whether humans ever go into these places or not. Like the Paradise Valley area that's inaccessible from a camping standpoint. I mean I think that is a great way to limit things for the long-term benefit of other things that are important to people. I don't feel deprived that I can't go in there and camp.” 208-213

Jon implies that he is somewhat sympathetic toward the needs of people regarding issues of environmental protection (167-175). He is not an environmental extremist, but when it comes to the issue of wilderness he advocates protection above the short-term

needs of people. Jon is a purist, but would probably like to avoid any elitist associations that may be involved with wilderness protection. He does this in a straightforward manner by putting the long-term benefits for society that are realized from the ecological functions of wilderness areas above economic values. This is logical for human survival in his mind.

This is an interesting observation for researchers and managers alike in that we see a case of a wilderness purist who is sensitive to the needs of people when it comes to many other environmental issues that are not “black and white” as is the case of wilderness protection. For Jon, it is essential to protect what little wilderness remains. Jon would most likely score high on a survey of protection value orientations and low on utilitarian orientations, for example (e.g., Fulton et al., 1996; Vaske & Donnelly, 1999). However, where he placed himself on this bipolar continuum would not represent Jon’s complete story; regarding protection of wilderness, he reveals more complexity and context in his narrative (i.e., richness) regarding his orientation toward protection. The narrative approach allows flexibility in response, which enables richness, or substance in the qualitative data, which informs and compliments the psychometric scale in this example.

He seems to have a fairly well developed relationship to wilderness, at least with his conception of it. Jon believes that peoples’ relationships with wilderness vary; some are part of it and others really do not care about wilderness (56-66), but ultimately he believes that we are inseparable from the physical environment (66-83), and that this realization comes from experiencing the wilderness. This is another interesting insight in that his notion of being part of wilderness contradicts protectionist and maybe some

purist notions that humans are merely visitors to wilderness areas. Jon expresses a slightly more holistic conception of the human relationship to wilderness where we actually can become more than visitors. He describes how the experience emerges for him when he is immersed in it for relatively longer periods of time.

*[Probe: Would you consider people separate from wilderness, in the sense that they don't normally live in the wilderness?]* “Well I would like to think not. I mean I think that the urbanized world that most of us live in—like I said before, there are some important contrasts there that allows us to appreciate both of those things, or try to understand both of them. ... I know one of the states of mind that I like to get into when I'm in the wilderness, and [it] takes 2 or 3 days to do that, is to remember that you are really not just kind of out camping that you're living outdoors. And it's kind of immersing yourself in [the] fact that you're living outdoors, and you deal with whatever comes. Whether it's great weather or bad weather or physical issues that you may be dealing with, things like that, that's part of the challenge. Once you immerse yourself in it, you realize that you become less and less separate from it—you adapt and adjust to whatever the physical conditions are of the place. I mean I like to think that people come out of the wilderness understanding that as a species we're totally inseparable, of course, from the physical environment. I'm not sure from my experience that many people grasp that.” 66-83

*[Question: Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?]* “Well I think that a lot of people don't care about wilderness at all. It's of no value to them at all. But I think that there are an important number of people that benefit in a lot of the ways that I've been mentioning from just getting into the wilderness. Even if it's short walks like you see these people that are parking down below in the parking lots that are just walking up just a half hour or so into the so called backcountry like the Adams Falls or maybe a little bit beyond, in some ways that's a relatively important experience, even though it's not as in depth or as wearing as going on a backpack trip. But in some ways it certainly plants a seed of what that kind of contrast from their own life and places that are relatively untouched.” 56-66

Another related aspect of his identity and conception is his preferred mode of experience or travel while visiting a protected wilderness area. For Jon, the only true way to get a wilderness experience is to work for it by exerting oneself. Spending more than one night is essential because the experience takes time to evolve. Traveling to places on foot and immersing oneself in the setting through strenuous hikes allows for an

authentic experience, which forms the basis of his current personal project for this visit (Figure 7). Above (56-66) he explains the importance of the shorter less strenuous hikes as valuable to some visitors, but these really are not what he seeks. Jon's testimony lends support for the front country/backcountry zoning distinction at RMNP and other protected areas. He confirms his position that the type of experience that one has depends on the mode of travel. Jon essentially describes a positive interaction effect between mode of travel and the degree to which one can experience scenic views of the landscape, for example (152-165). The experience of the glacial landscape as seen from high elevation is significant for his career as a teacher of natural science as well.

*[Probe: Any other emotions come to mind?]* "Well, I mean yesterday, because of the physical geography and geology is something of particular interest to me. I teach at a high school, I teach some classes related to that, and we got into some views up there that are the only possible way you could ever get to those is by kind of this strenuous hike that we did as a day hike. And some of that glacial landscape was for me it was almost emotional. It was emotionally moving to be able to see some of that under the conditions of getting there. I mean if we had driven up there and seen those kinds of views, let's say from a Trail Ridge Road, it wouldn't [have] been nearly as rewarding. Even though it would have been rewarding, there was a relative gain in the significance of that because of how you got to that. You could only have achieved that because of a wilderness experience. I mean going there by road or flying over it, as magnificent as that would be; it wouldn't have the same depth and value for somebody like me, as getting there by your own power." 152-165

During this visit to RMNP backcountry/wilderness, Jon seemed to be engaged a personal project of seeking an authentic wilderness experience, which is closely related to his identity as a wilderness purist. This experience has three dimensions that emerged in Jon's narrative including (1) the stark contrast (66-83; 125-143) between the setting and the developed cityscape, (2) gradually adapting to the natural flows of the physical place (125-143), and (3) having philosophical discussions with those in his party about

wilderness and what it means for greater society, which were prompted by the experience of place (49-54).

*[Question: Can you try and list for me all the feelings that you have when you visit the wilderness at RMNP?]* “Some of them kind of come on gradually, but certainly a slowing down of a kind of the hecticness and the over stimulation that you can get in the city. You begin to get into a much more natural flow with the daily cycles or longer-term period cycles—that are the natural cycles of the place. I think sort of the curiosity of about what's around the bend, if you're not totally familiar with the trail. What's coming up next? Is it uphill, is it down hill, is it going to be rocky, are there logs that [you] have to scramble over, or stream crossings?—those kinds of things. I think that I find that I think a lot about people like family members ... that that aren't here. And I find myself almost sort of an interesting process for me, psychological process where I kind of go through kind of a feeling of—I mean the contrast of getting out here and getting away from the stimulation and the hurriedness of the typical urban life. It allows other feelings to surface and other thoughts to surface.” *[What kinds of feelings?]* “Some of those have to do, I think, with oh may be I was to impatient with my son, something like that. And, so you get out here and now I can realize why he was getting pissed off with me about such and such. So I found out and write out in my journals thoughts about that, so I can talk to him about it when I get back.” 125-143

He talked about the adventure associated with being at the place and getting into the flow of the setting and how he gradually adapts to these. His observation that the highly noticeable contrast between areas developed by humans and wilderness areas is important for understanding the experience was a recurring theme in the narrative. This contrast allows people to appreciate both types of places, and it allows certain feelings and thoughts to surface, which may be overlooked at times during the normal life course, but which can be taken back home and used to improve that everyday life. For example, Jon describes how he sometimes thinks of other family members (his son in this case) while visiting wilderness, and how he gains a fresh perspective for understanding his relationships with them (125-143). This is an example of individual expressive meaning associated with being in this wild setting. From a benefits-based perspective (see

Manning, 1999, Chapter 7), Jon is telling us exactly what kind of off-site benefits he receives and what they mean for his life. The contrast of the setting with his home in the city relates to Jon's search for an authentic wilderness experience, and it allows him to assign these kinds of meanings and values (i.e., expressive and social) to places like RMNP.

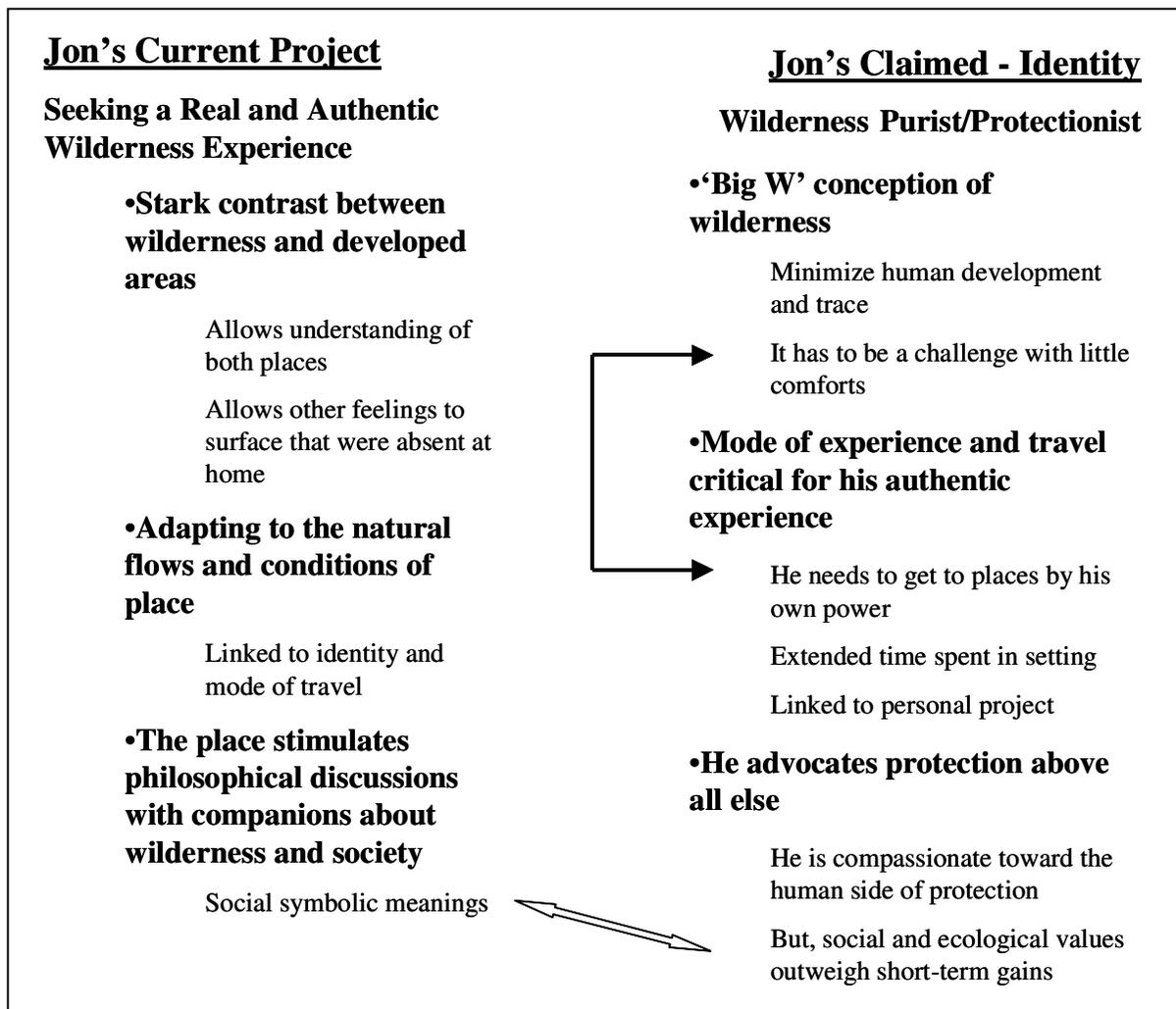


Figure 7. Organizing system for Jon's narrative.

The third dimension of Jon's authentic experience is realized when he talks to others at the place during the experience, in this case Jane and her husband. Several times during the interview he mentioned having discussions with his companions. In the

example below, Jon shows us how meanings about wilderness can be constructed in the form of dialog between visitors during the actual experience (49-54) highlighting the social aspects of this particular trip. The place holds symbolic cultural meaning in that it serves to stimulate these shared experiences and conversations about human society.

“And there always tends to be I guess you can call it an activity. I mean it seems like every time whether I'm by myself or whether I'm with a group we get into discussions about [the] value of wilderness and the spin offs that have to do with the larger human civilization and the directions that we are going. And these kinds of places often become philosophical, these places become kind of catalysts for those philosophical discussions.”49-54

Jon summarizes what places like RMNP mean in the larger scheme of things to conclude the interview. He reiterates the social and ecological values that justify wilderness protection giving higher priority to the ecological function. Places like RMNP symbolize natural areas today, at least in the United States. According to Jon, this may be the ultimate value.

*[Question: Did we miss anything important about wilderness that you would like to add?]* “I don't know I think that it was really thorough. I'd probably just be repeating myself, belaboring myself. I mean it's just so important to me that people grasp the value of wilderness not just from a human recreational standpoint, which is important, but to me it's only one small facet of it. Larger value of wilderness has to do with ecological stability and ecological diversity, and giving us some framework of comparison to places that aren't natural that we've changed. We're beginning to not grasp what is natural. What is a natural environment? So these kinds of places give us some kind of benchmark to measure these kinds of changes. I think that there is some inherent value in that. I think that [there are] some philosophical—psychological values to humans whether they ever come in and do what we are doing right now or not.” 350-361

He also states that he thought that the interview was complete regarding its content over wilderness issues. Figure 7 above summarizes the interpretation of these main themes that emerged in Jon's interview.

In review, Jon spoke about the contrast between the developed areas such as cities and wilderness areas as a reminder of what natural areas are like. He believes that to get out into the wilderness/backcountry on foot and to backpack and do strenuous hikes and work hard gives one more of an authentic experience of wilderness than developed camping for example. As a purist, Jon defines the wilderness experience as one of little comforts and amenities. He wants to be immersed in the setting and live in wilderness for a few days to obtain what he considers a real experience. Also, Jon recognizes the importance of studying these issues for policy making (340-349), which in effect supports the usefulness of this research inquiry.

*[Question: What is your overall reaction to the things we've discussed today?]*  
“I'm really positive about it. I'm really glad that—to me its really helpful—people are, in a formal academic way, looking at topics like this. I hope that they can go beyond the people who are vehemently and first hand involved, and that they affect policy decisions and influence ... there's some positive political fall-outs of these kinds of things. When politicians ... are searching for answers to these kinds of dilemmas that we are facing as a species, these kinds of information that you get from people and these kinds [of] experiences somehow that trickles down because most of the time it doesn't. So I think it's really great.” 340-349

### **Pete: Experienced Long Distance Trail Hiker/Runner**

Pete (JC8) was interviewed on August 16, 2001 at Ouzel Falls in the Wild Basin region of the park during mid-day. He was a day hiker engaged in a conditioning hike to prepare for longer hikes to be taken near the end of his vacation. Pete is a sixty year-old white male approaching retirement. He has sixteen plus years of formal education and is currently working in public housing for the elderly. Pete has worked in the Armed Forces, law enforcement, the air-space industry, the private sector, and in the "energy-related industry.” He claims to be a fairly strong and active Presbyterian. Currently, Pete

does not give money to any environmental organizations, but he “donates resources to the church.”

Pete was visiting the area with his extended family from Connecticut. Pete’s family has a long history at RMNP. He and his wife have been visiting the place every year with their children for many years. His parents built a cabin just outside the park boundary about fifty years ago. In the excerpt below (55-65), Pete refers to the cabin and the place as a “legacy” that was left to him and his family.

*[Question: What would you say are beneficial reasons for protecting wilderness?]* “Well you hear all the obvious platitudes; the legacy for our children. My parents and my in-laws came here fifty years ago and built a cabin, and it’s their legacy to us. I’m here because of them. My children will be here because of them, and my grandchildren will be here because of them. I don’t think anyone has a family history as our family does. We have acquired fifteen acres at the edge of the park, three homes, or three summer cabins that have become a meeting point—a place where it satisfies all of our interests—hiking; some have got engaged in trout fishing. As families we’ve come and picnicked up along the Wild Basin ranger trail. So that’s one of the most important things to me is the legacy that we handed off to our children.” 55-65

A long and rich family history at RMNP affords Pete significant social identity with the place. His years of experience and familiarity with the national park and surrounding area suggest strong place attachment (Williams & Vaske, 2001). The summer cabins in relation to his desire to reconnect with family emerged as a recurrent theme during the interview for Pete’s current visit. At the end of the passage (55-65) he also indicates that the place satisfies the recreational interests of the entire family. For Pete, hiking and knowledge of the place and the trail systems emerged as a part of his identity at RMNP.

*[Question: When you think about wilderness, which places in RMNP do you think of?]* “I like—I hike a lot of the trailheads out of Wild Basin, but I also like the Longs Peak area; Chasm Lake is one of my favorite trails; I also like the Bear Lake trailhead, so most of that area I hike and enjoy, and that’s kind of what I

think of when I come out here.” [*Probe: Where do you go when you go up in Bear Lake?*] “I went up to the Loch and all the stops in-between. Next week, I’ll hike all the way up—plan on hiking up to Flattop and then Hallett’s Peak. I’ve also been to Alberta Falls on some of the shorter hikes. I do those for conditioning before a longer hike.” 3-11

During this trip, Pete was engaged in two personal projects, which are activities linked to his claimed identity (Figure 8). He was (1) conditioning (3-11; 28-34) for longer hikes and (2) living out the ritual of reconnecting with his family at their summer meeting place (55-65).

Pete repeatedly presented himself as an experienced long distance trail hiker and runner in his narrative, despite the fact that his wife no longer accompanies him (28-34). Pete’s cabins provide quick and easy access to the hiking trails, which allows efficient acclimatization and conditioning for longer hikes. Both the park and the summer home contribute to his sense of place, his personal projects, and the richness of his experience.

[*Probe: What activities do you do when you are in the wilderness?*] “Mostly day hikes, I don’t do backpacking, my family is grown up, and my wife doesn’t hike anymore. So, we have a cabin at the very edge of the of the park and just barely a mile or two from the Wild Basin entry point, so I just slip in here to do conditioning hikes, and then later in my stay I pack in a little longer one.” 28-34

In the passage below (21-28), he reconfirms that he is a serious trail hiker, who is in the process of conditioning for longer hikes, while at the same time expressing appreciation for the well-maintained trail conditions. Pete depends on certain physical attributes of the setting to express his identity and to engage in his projects.

[*Question: Are there places in this park that are of particular importance to you, or are special to you?*] “Well I think I’ve always been appreciative of the fact number one that there is a park and number two that the trails are well maintained and very accessible to the public. It means that I can come out here for two weeks, it will take me a few days to get acclimated to the altitude, and I can see and do so much in the remaining time. There are so many different trails—because they are well maintained, I can get up very quickly sometimes even the point of being able to run them [the trails], because I can get farther and see more in a day.” 21-28

On the surface, it appears that he solely hikes or runs for the instrumental reason of physical fitness. In an object-centered manner (Kvale, 1983), Pete appreciates the variety and changes in elevation, topography, and scenery while experiencing the trails at RMNP (13-19). However, from a more subject-centered point of view, Pete revealed latent personal feelings about wilderness (i.e., his “personal passion”) and the uniqueness of the experience. He admits that he often hikes at places in the eastern United States too, but none compare with RMNP (13-19). Dependence on the uniqueness of a place (i.e., place dependence) has been conceptualized as a dimension of place attachment (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981) and has been positively associated with stronger levels of overall place attachment (Williams et al., 1992; Williams & Vaske, 2001).

*[Question: Would you say, in your opinion, that wilderness is important to you?] “Absolutely, my personal passion.” [Probe: What about it do you enjoy so much?] “There aren't that many places—I mean I'm from the east there's no place in the east even in the Appalachian's upstate New York and Maine where I spent a lot of my time; there's no place like this. There's no place with the elevations—variety and atmosphere, where you can go from timberline to tundra to bare mountain top, glacier. The variety is incredible and the beauty is beyond words.”*  
13-19

Pete’s narrative progresses from instrumental meanings of the experience to spiritual meanings, which are intangible and suggest greater levels of attachment to place than instrumental meanings (Williams & Patterson, 1999). At the end of the above excerpt (13-19), Pete tells us that the beauty of RMNP cannot be adequately described with words. In a study of spiritual inspiration during a wilderness experience at the Grand Canyon and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Fredrickson and Anderson (1999, p. 34) also found research participants to express spiritual experiences as “something beyond words.” Pete continues (36-42) by saying that visiting RMNP

affects a person's soul, and that he feels a sense of God's creation at the place. The concept of "sense of the divine" has been theoretically linked to spiritual benefits of a wilderness experience (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999).

*[Question: How would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?]* "Ah, you're getting into—you have to believe that there's a connection with the soul. If you really believe in God and believe that there's a creator who is responsible for this beauty, you can't help but feel close in spirit when you stand here and look at something like this. I think that it takes us back to who we are in alternative times. I don't know of anyone that has been here, and then fails to appreciate what it does to the soul." 36-42

Pete added later in the interview that he is humbled while in wilderness. Feelings of humility have also been empirically associated with spirituality in wilderness settings (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999).

*[Question: What types of feelings do you have when you are in wilderness?]* "Very humbled, I feel very humbled." 67-68

Spending time to reconnect with his family at the summer cabins and in RMNP is a priority for Pete. He expresses a desire to spend more time at the place with his family. Pete indicates that he will be able to do this once he retires. He also once again confirms his identity as an experienced hiker by sharing his intentions to hike parts of the Appalachian Trail.

*[Question: If most of the wilderness in our country disappeared, would you and your family feel the consequences?]* "Yeah we would. We set aside some of our time each year to come here and get kind of reconnected and rejuvenated. When I retire in a few years, we will spend more time out here. Part of my family just retired. [They have] gone from spending a few weeks here to a couple of months now. My guess is when I retire we will probably spend upwards to three months out of every year here in Colorado. My plan is to—I live very close to the Appalachian Trail—my plan is to probably hike at least portions of it before my legs give out, so if you asked me if the wilderness disappeared, I'd say yeah it would be a travesty for our family, absolute travesty." 191-200

The importance of wilderness settings to Pete and his family is made clear in the above passage (191-200). The park and his property hold spiritual and individualized meanings expressed through Pete's personal understanding of his family's legacy as it relates to his life and plans for retirement. Park managers and planners can begin to ask, what physical or managerial changes at RMNP, or in the surrounding landscape, would most likely create a sense of loss or conflict for Pete given his particular attachment to the park.

Even though he appreciates easy access and good trails in relation to his personal projects, Pete describes the establishment of the park as a public good "for all time" that provides opportunities for many to appreciate nature and get in touch with the land and self. He understands the park to be fragile and in need of careful protection. He tells us that he has come to appreciate this fragility by spending time at the place and by interacting with the people who live in the area. He may be suggesting, at this point in his narrative, that deep concern for the landscape may require, or at least is enhanced by experience and rootedness in a place.

*[Question: Would you say that people have a right to use some wilderness for their benefit?] That's a hard question. But I understand why—for instance RMNP was created—it was not for special interest or any single interest. It was to benefit the public in general, and to provide for all time a place where people come and see it—visit to get in touch with themselves, get in touch with the land to appreciate wildlife and appreciate the fragileness. You can only appreciate the fragileness of this area by coming and visiting repeatedly and talking to the people that live here and who support the park. It helps you understand that you have to be very, very careful how you use these resources. I don't believe you can just turn people loose to use them for their own benefit."* 85-94

Pete implies that since not all people are experienced, careful management of human activity is critical at a place like RMNP. When pressed with the question of the limits to use in wilderness, he summarizes his specific beliefs about what should be

allowed at RMNP (96-122). He interjects brief stories about his personal and his family's histories of recreation and experiences in wilderness. Pete's behavior and understanding of the fragile nature of wilderness have evolved with time and repeat visits. Near the end of this excerpt, he indicates that careful management and regulation at the place allowed him and his family to develop a rich history and emotional ties to RMNP and the surrounding landscape.

*[Question: What are the limits to human uses of the wilderness? Things that people should not do.]* "I take it that you are talking about within the confines of the park itself, or in the surrounding areas?" *[Yes, I mean some people have said absolutely no motorized vehicles for example, which in a wilderness area is part of the law already, so I guess it's open to interpretation. Some people have been real broad about it--no extraction or no--.]* "Oh we absolutely know how devastating motorized vehicles can be. I have to admit I used to ride dirt bikes [during my] younger years up in national forest in Wisconsin. I wouldn't do that now; my son used to build and operate all terrain vehicles, he doesn't do that now. I think it has to be limited to particular activities that minimally impact what we have here because it's just so easy—It took me a long time to realize how little replacement growth occurs at these higher elevations. You have to understand that when you start getting off the trails and damaging this environment—you know how fragile it is—It's not going to grow back like California in two years after the fire—you have green again. That doesn't happen. In 1978 you're up here and you see the damage that the fire did, and you barely, barely have overgrowth up here, in all those years. So, it's got to be I think it's got to be limited. There has to be rules; there has to be self-discipline. You bring out what you take in, you keep it to cooking stoves, and I would not care to see open fires anywhere. I think overnight tent camping—I think that's certainly a permissible thing. As long as you get farther into the wilderness areas, there's a real sense of self-esteem achieved, I think, when you go and live off the land for a number of days or even a weekend. I mean when we were younger—I had a younger family—we would spend ten days hiking in national parks around New England and the Northern Midwest and Arizona. My children now—they love it, now they take their children...going around the country kayaking and tent camping and backpacking. So, what would have happened if there had been no rules from the very beginning? What would be left of this place if there hadn't been? 96-122

In sum, Pete cares deeply for the place. He demonstrates, however an emotional attachment that seems to predate contemporary knowledge about ecosystem management and the role of natural disturbance for creating landscape and biological diversity

(Bratton, 1985). He says that he is disturbed by natural impacts, such as fire (96-122) and the effects of insects and disease in RMNP (122-130).

*[Probe: Have you seen negative signs of people visiting here, on your visit today?]* Well this is an extremely popular and well-traveled trail, so it's hard to tell. I've been coming up here for years, and years, and years, and I don't I really get off the trails, so it's hard to tell. I have over the past few years seen restoration signs, so I know that they have to close down some sections we used to hike. So I know that there's probably damage occurring. And some of it's natural. I mean it's obviously had a lot of damage to the natural conditions, blights that have hit the trees. And that's an awful shame, just an awful shame. But you know you put up with it. But yeah it's obvious that it's more heavily traveled every year." 122-130

The rather profound implication for managers here is that even long-time, well-educated and experienced visitors may not understand the role of natural disturbance. Pete's socially constructed ideas of natural processes in the landscape are most likely different than those of modern ecologists. His experience at the park and attachment to place may be enhanced if he were to understand that fire, insects, and disease often contribute to the health of ecosystems. Such information can serve to guide educational and interpretive strategies at RMNP. For example, large parks and wilderness areas that find it appropriate should feature the drama of changing landscape structure, and how that in turn provides for a host of organisms that otherwise might not be present.

Likewise, Pete's testimony informs management that some visitors with an active mode of experience (Jacob & Schreyer, 1980), like Pete's seemingly instrumental hiking and trail running project and attachment orientation (Mitchell et al., 1993), also experience nature internally (i.e., subject-centered) and can be highly dependent upon a specific backcountry/wilderness setting. Moreover, these types of visitors will most likely defend regulations to reduce or minimize visitor impacts. Managers are

empowered to say, “Other visitors inform us that they appreciate and support the stoves only rule (96-122) in this part of the park”, for example.

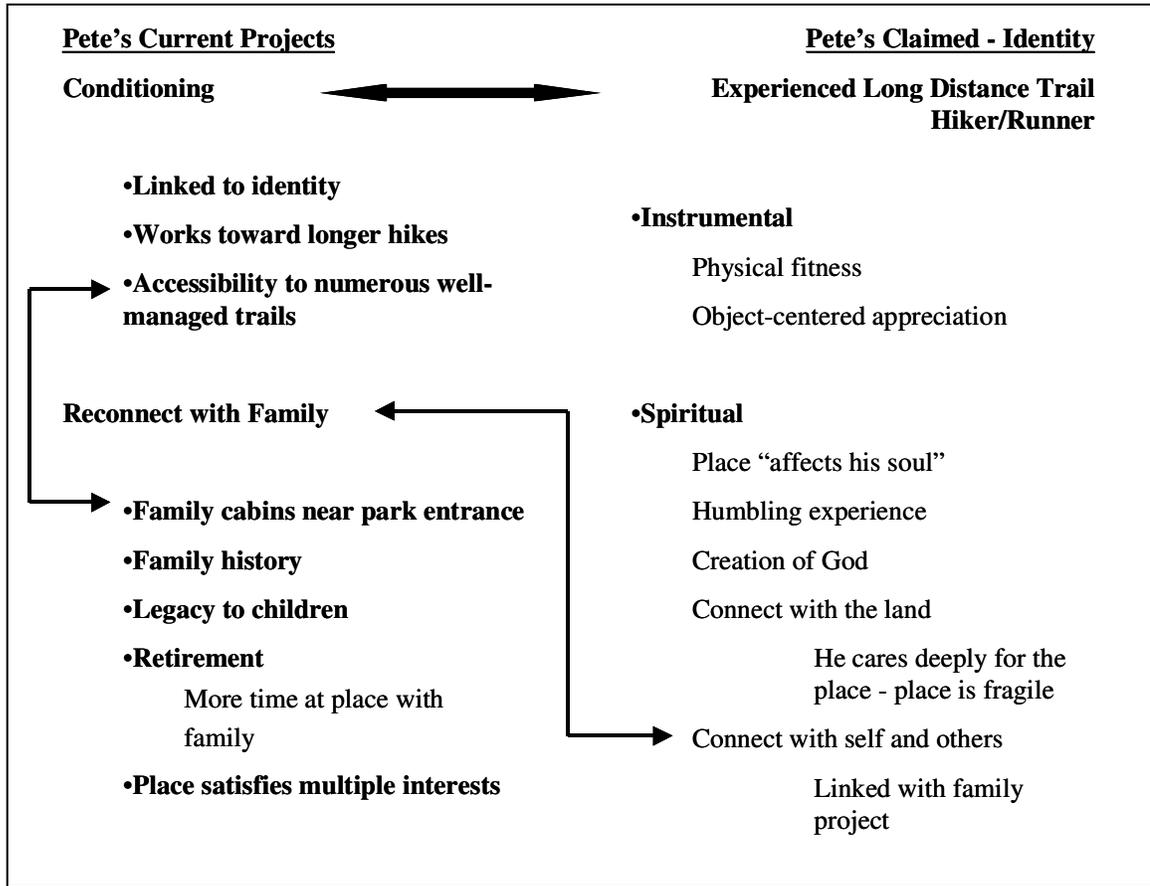


Figure 8. Organizing system for Pete.

Finally, RMNP has a “related lands” program that attempts to communicate with people, who own property near the park, regarding the issues that affect the experience of place such as fences, night lighting, landscaping, pets, and visual impacts. This type of research has provided evidence for the importance of outreach to property owners and the potential to involve longer-term residents in educational efforts directed toward newcomers to the area. Pete’s powerful description linking the family cabins and their legacy as being based on their proximity to the park once again empowers managers to

continue their cross-boundary or landscape approach to management. In passage 222-226, Pete explicitly tells us that he is willing to help the park by giving his time, and that he has deep feelings for the place.

*[Question: What is your overall reaction to the things we've discussed today?] "If what I said to you and what other's have said to you helps you in any way to beneficially redirect your resources, or the park's resources, then I'm glad that I spent the time. I certainly have the time. I'm glad to have given you some insight about how deeply I feel about this area, then its good, and I hope that it is put to good use."* 222-226

### **Sam: Experienced Outdoor Person**

Day visitor JB2, pseudonym Sam, was interviewed on June 17, 2001 on the trail between Loch Vale and Alberta Falls in the afternoon period. Sam is a 28 year-old white male resident of Colorado. He has sixteen years of formal education and works as a research programmer and computer scientist. Sam indirectly supports the Colorado Division of Wildlife through purchases of annual hunting licenses; he said that he occasionally makes contributions at park visitor centers as well. Sam stopped giving money to PETA and Green Peace because he feels that they are too politically radical to be helpful. Sam has a diverse religious background.

*[Question: What is your religious background?] "Boy, I always answer that question with all. I've had a vast spiritual experience. I was born into a Christian family, but the church that I went to was incredibly liberal, and actually the church I went to introduced me to some Native American beliefs, which in turn introduced me to sort of the European paganism, which in turn introduced me to Hinduism and Buddhism. I definitely have an open mind as far as that [religion] goes, and that definitely plays a part about how I feel." [Probe: So you would say that you are actively spiritual now?] "Yes, yes, a human spiritualist or whatever."* 252-259

Sam presented himself as an experienced outdoor person (Figure 10). Sam was engaged in two life enhancing personal projects during this trip to RMNP: (1) learning

and studying the natural history of RMNP by identifying plants, animals, and wildlife viewing and (2) enjoying the experience in a holistic and subject-centered manner (Figure 9). The wilderness experience completes his life and provides balance to his career, which occurs entirely indoors.

[Question: Would you say, in your opinion, that wilderness is important to you?] "Oh yes, definitely." [Probe: What traits or characteristics of wilderness make it important to you?] "Well mostly because I spend most of my week inside, and it is sort of that balance in life to get out and to be able to clear the head and get some fresh air." [Probe: Are you tired of the office job?] "Not really ... I really like what I do, but like I said you got to have that balance." 18-23

Connected to his pursuit of enjoying the experience, Sam speaks about what his visit means for his life in the above passage (18-23). The experience of RMNP also gives Sam a sense of mental rejuvenation. The importance of a balanced life and balance in nature recur in Sam's narrative. He continues by telling us that he enjoys the experience from a variety of perspectives and places. Sam's experience at RMNP is sensory and holistic.

*[Question: Of the kinds of places in RMNP that you have talked about and listed as wilderness, are there any particular places that have a special importance for you?]* Not particularly, ... they are all special in their own way. You can see stuff in one place that you don't see anywhere else ... when you get up on top of a mountain and you look over the whole vast thing, and then you are on the top of another mountain and you look over it—of course it is a different perspective. So yes, they are all pretty special, really." *[Probe: Do you associate any of these places with your personal beliefs or your family or friends?]* "Yes, I grew up in Colorado and I've been hiking and camping all my life, so this is just sort of a part of me, sort of something I do." 25-34

At the end of passage 25-34, he claims to be an outdoor person with much experience recreating in Colorado. Sam enthusiastically lists the activities that he enjoys while at RMNP (36-47). He begins to develop his rich history and experience at the place by telling us about the multiple ways in which he recreates at RMNP.

In a brief story about seeing signs of moose in the Park (36-47), he reveals another personal project, which is to learn more about the natural history of the park through activities such as wildlife watching. Sam is aware of places on the landscape where he can go to increase his chances of seeing moose, thereby enriching his experience. Moreover, Sam's knowledge of the place relative to this project confirms his identity as an experienced and aware outdoor person.

*[Question: Well, could you please list for me all the activities that you do while in the wilderness at RMNP?] "In Rocky Mountain specifically?" [Probe: Well you know wilderness ... we are interested in this park, however.] "I hear ya. I do a little fishing, a lot of hiking, camping, back packing, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, so yes, I am a year round user definitely. Pretty much all the outside stuff, bird watching, animal watching, I try to identify the plants that I can identify." [Probe: Do you see a lot of wildlife here?] "Yes ... mostly the elk and the deer. I saw—last winter when I was up here, I saw a giant moose print in Green Lake. It was a big old mother down in the ice there. It was really wild." [Probe: Wow, that must have been incredible. It would have been nice to see the animal.] "Yes, exactly. I have not seen any moose up here. That's one reason that I want to go up to Long Draw [reservoir] because I here that the moose are a lot of times up there by the CDT." 36-47*

Studying the natural history of the place is an object-centered activity that enriches the experience for Sam, thereby increasing his enjoyment. Although he focuses on attributes of the setting while learning natural history, he creates substantial personal meaning at the subject-centered level. For example, in the passage below (96-108), Sam tells a story about a group of cactus that he saw in the park and how it made him feel.

“Plus, also back to my selfish reasons—I just like to be out here and see this stuff and identify plants ... gee, I was hiking last year and I saw this growth of cactus, it was whole generations; there was the dying part over here and it was black and starting to rot and there was the older part here, and it was withery and the spines were kind of hanging down and it looked like one big organism, and over here were new little bulbs coming up. It was like a rainbow, a cactus rainbow there ... and seeing stuff like that ... you can describe it to somebody, but I can't impart to you what it was like to see that.” *[Probe: How did it make you feel, seeing something like that?]* “It made me feel like I was part of the life cycle, a part of the biosphere—like here I am, I'm a person and I'm growing older and I used to be

this little baby thing here, now I'm here and one day I'll be that." [*Probe: You'll be on the black rotten end.*] "Definitely, worm food." 96-108

In Sam's cactus analogy, he expresses a sense of his own mortality and an understanding of the natural life cycle. The experience provided a personal sense of his position in the living world. This analogy serves as an example of the emergent nature of human experience and place meanings. Most likely Sam had no intention of experiencing a sense of his own mortality, or even a sense of the natural life cycle, when he took this trip. Visitor studies that solely focus on goal-directed behavior and instrumental meaning (e.g., traditional assessment methodologies) most likely would have overlooked Sam's more complete experience the day he discovered this growth of cactus. At the same time, Sam's story about the cactus growth compliments these traditional strategies for understanding experience. For example, Sam provides meaningful substance for well-studied, instrumental domains of experience such as "to learn about nature" or "spiritual benefits."

Related to his experience as an outdoor person, Sam expressed significant family history and social identity with the landscape. He associates the wilderness experience with memories of "special times" spent interacting with his Father.

*[Question: If most of the wilderness in this country disappeared, would you and your family experience any consequences?] "I would. I'd be unhappy." [Probe: You would not be able to go out hiking and hunting anymore?] "Yes, I wouldn't be able to do that—you know, some special times that I've had with my Father—just he and I on top of a mountain having a conversation ... not a lot of people get to do that with their parents. People can have kind of strained relationships, and boy I'll tell you when you're walking up a 14,000 foot mountain, the world's problems seem pretty small, and you can sort of drop the walls and let the bullshit go and just have a talk, and that's something that I've experienced. People talk about doing that fishing or hunting too—so, there's big consequences there, definitely." 229-239*

Sam indicates that the place and the experience of hiking a mountain together has fostered an openness between him and his Dad that may not have developed outside of a backcountry/wilderness setting (229-239). Sam continued to describe his family history and experience at RMNP by telling us how important it is to protect wilderness for future generations in the passage below (108-139). He expresses a desire to show and teach his children about RMNP someday. As an experienced outdoor person, he suggests that he is qualified to do this. Over the years, Sam has seen the place become more developed, which he thinks could possibly jeopardize the experience for future generations. Although not directly probed here, the issue of adjacent land development near the park gateway would seem important to how the experience of place changes over time, and differs across generations. In this passage, Sam further develops his family's history as outdoor people, which demonstrates a social dimension to his claimed identity as an experienced outdoor person. His interest in passing the experience down to his children may very well stem from the influence that Sam's parents had on him.

“So, yes definitely, I think there's definite selfish reasons to protect stuff [wilderness], but I think that there are also ... how do you say it? ... bigger reasons, more altruistic reasons to protect it too.” [*Probe: Do you think that it is important that this stuff be around for future generations?*] “Well, I would like to bring my children up here. Earlier today I was hiking with my family and some friends of our family, and the last time my friends were out here, they've got some children, and the last time they were out here their daughter was nine months old and now she is seven, and we are hiking the same trails and she is seeing this stuff again, of course she doesn't really remember it, but it is neat to see that. ... Yes, future generations—I would love to bring my kids up here. My Dad moved out here in '70 from Jersey, and he and my mom, they were both campers out there, avid campers up and down in the Appalachians and did a lot of outside type of stuff, and then they moved out here, one for the job, and two because of this, and so as I've grown older, I've seen it change and get developed and I've seen a lot of growth here, and all that kind of stuff, and I just hope to be able to bring my kids up here someday and show them what I saw. You know, there is something special about a Dad passing that on to his son or daughter, and even like on the trail we were teaching them [the girls] to use their *wilderness voice*, and be quiet

and listen, ‘What is that sound? You know, what that sound is, is water falling down, we are getting closer because it is getting louder’, and so that develops the kid's logical skills and reasoning skills. Geez, maybe the selfish hope is to develop their out door wilderness skills, camping skills, and that kind of stuff ... you know geez, we've got a huge society, not to be a doomsday or anything, but rolling blackouts and this that and the other—what would happen if all that stuff stopped working one day? What would 90% of the people do? I know what I would do. I'd be fine, that'd be OK with me.” [*Probe: So, do you feel pretty comfortable in these natural wilderness settings?*] “Definitely. Definitely.” 108-139

In Sam’s account of the hike earlier that day with his friends’ children (108-139), they interacted with the kids to teach them how to behave in wilderness. Sam explains how people develop a “wilderness sense” over time by repeat visits and an actual socialization process. Outdoor people do more than introduce their children to the outdoors; they actively teach them how to behave, which helps them to develop “wilderness skills” and a sense of the importance of certain elements of the experience such as quiet and natural sounds. In Sam’s mind, these skills and appreciations could one day be critical to their survival if we have a technological breakdown or other such disaster. He referenced current events such as power shortages in California to indicate the importance of environmental knowledge in a time of eminent environmental crises. He expressed a personal confidence in his skills and knowledge regarding wilderness at the end of this excerpt. Faced with a technological disaster, Sam subtly indicates that he would survive by relying on his knowledge of the natural world and his wilderness skills, thereby reconfirming his identity as an experienced outdoor person. Sam is engaged in an active expression of self and construction of social meaning at the place (Patterson & Williams, 2002).

Sam’s construction of wilderness settings includes a role for people as stewards of the protected landscape. Sam’s idea of the present relationship between people and

wilderness is one that we created ourselves. Humans have developed and moved into (or near) so many wilderness areas that we are, by default, part of the natural landscape. Sam personally feels connected to the landscape when he visits the place, and he reveals his orientation toward stewardship, which recurred as a dimension of his claimed identity.

*[Question: Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?] [Probe: For example, most people don't live in wilderness, do you consider humans to be separate from wilderness?] “Personally, I don't think so, but I probably have a different take on it than a lot of folks.” [Probe: I'm interested in your take on it and why you feel that way.] “I definitely think that we are a part of it, we are part of the Earth, we are part of this area. Unfortunately, we've gone through a stage where we've developed so much of the wilderness that it needs to be managed and managed carefully and protected definitely. So, in one sense—in that sense, we are a part of it when we are managing it and when we are good stewards of the land. That's being a part of it, that's taking care of it. I am not one of those guys that has a four by four and drives it up as far as I can go on the fire roads or anything like that. I'd much rather mountain bike or hike, take my gear with me.” [Probe: Get a little closer to the surroundings?] “Yes, I definitely feel like when I'm out here, I'm definitely reconnecting you could say, or definitely more a part of it.” 49-63*

Sam considers himself to be a good steward, and he expressed an understanding of a balance between use and protection. In Sam's mind, this is knowledge that an experienced outdoor person should possess. Sam continued to describe our relationship to nature using the analogy of a pendulum in our society that swings from over exploitation to complete protection (65-82).

*[Question: Do you think that there are any disadvantages in protecting wilderness?] [Probe: In your opinion, do you feel that there are any reasons why we shouldn't protect wilderness?] “Disadvantages to protecting wilderness well—A lot of people say that there is economic impact, which is probably true. I mean loggers need jobs and we all need furniture and paper and stuff so. I mean there is a delicate balance there, and I think one thing that we do, just like everything, it's like a pendulum, it swings one way and back the other way, and so sometimes when we protect too much of the wilderness that has an economic impact on people that need jobs. Then it swings back the other way and they clear-cut. I don't know if you have ever been to Oregon but—[I was there once for two days; I did not get out too much.]—some of that is sad, I forgot the name of the national forest up there but, you come around the corner—it's just like this [RMNP] there's*

trees, big stands of pine everywhere—and you come around the corner and it's just stumps everywhere, and man it brings a tear to your eye and that's the other end of the pendulum where it is over cut, and of course that has huge environmental impacts—we don't even know the scope of it. So, it goes both ways, there is a balance there.” 65-82

To illustrate the extreme exploitation end of Sam's balance continuum, he tells a story about a clear-cut that he observed in Oregon (65-82). This type and amount of tree harvest made Sam feel sad and maybe frightened of the unknown consequences for the environment that he associates with clear cutting. This experience was in conflict with his identity as a steward of the land, and therefore Sam experienced negative affect while hiking in this forest in Oregon. It is not clear whether Sam understands that certain U. S. National Forest lands are designated as multiple-use, including timber harvest by clear cutting as opposed to no harvest policies on U. S. National Park lands. Interpretive programs should inform visitors about how land use practices vary at public parks and forests. However, knowing that the clear-cut was legal (which Sam may have known) probably would not have reduced the negative affect of the experience because clear cutting is not a part of Sam's construction of the landscape. It conflicts with his notions of aesthetic enjoyment, balance, and stewardship. Moreover, as an experienced outdoor person, Sam is also environmentally aware, and he expresses ecological concern and an orientation toward protection as evidenced in the passage below (85-95).

*[Question: What characteristics of wilderness make it worth protecting?]* “Well a lot of it is that—like I was saying—we don't know the environmental impacts of clear cutting forests or even chopping down 1000 year old trees. There could be micro- organisms in the insides of those trees that we let out and who knows what's going to happen. There's also—geez what is it? Down in like Brazil, there's how many species of this and that are going extinct just because their environment is gone, and I have to believe that if steps are not taken to protect at least parts of the wilderness everywhere that stuff is going to go away and, I know enough science to know that bio-diversity is key to survival. So, I think definitely

the more plants and the more stuff that we allow to grow freely is really good.”  
85-95

He also reveals another aspect of his identity as an outdoor person. Sam is a hunter who believes that people must manage certain wildlife species because we have usurped so much of their habitat (155-168). Sam sees himself as part of the landscape, and he believes that this comes with a responsibility to be a good steward. I would argue that when hunting, Sam might be engaged in the personal project of stewardship. When in RMNP not hunting, he expressed stewardship as a dimension of his claimed identity. This demonstrates a close linkage between project and identity and flow of meaning between these, which may alternate depending on place, activity, and time for Sam's experience and construction of place (Figure 2).

In an increasingly developed and un-natural world, it could be suggested that more people desire to witness places, which they believe to be natural and take care of them and participate in that stewardship. From an instrumental and goal-directed perspective (see Figure 1), this desire to be a good steward becomes sought after as an experience opportunity providing desired psychological outcomes. However, when we hear Sam speak about how being a good steward of the land is linked to his claimed identity, personal project, and his idea of our relationship to wilderness, it is clear that he is not seeking a bundle of utility know as “the opportunity for stewardship” or an associated outcome of that opportunity. For Sam, stewardship is a life theme (Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979) or personal project (Little, 1983; 1987, 1989; Nicholson, 1984) that is closely connected to being an experienced out door person. In this case, a traditional motivational approach to visitor experience employing psychometrics would miss much individually expressive (and possibly cultural) meaning.

*[Question: Would you say that people have a right to use some wilderness for their benefit?]* “Definitely, well yes, I’m a hunter, so I take animals. That’s definitely not protecting the wilderness. That’s taking animals.” *[Probe: Well how do you feel about these wildlife agencies that say a managed deer hunt is the best way to protect the herd?]* “There is a lot of logic to that argument because like I said earlier, we have developed so much wilderness area that every inch of land that we take is every inch of land that they [wildlife] don’t have anymore to survive. So, when you take all that land away from a herd, you have to manage that wildlife somehow, and a managed deer hunt is a way to do that. ... “Oh, look right behind you, there’s a Stellar’s Jay sitting right on that pine.” *[That’s a pretty one.]* “That’s a beautiful bird.” *[They are pretty neat aren’t they?]* “ Uh ha, “Hi buddy, boy you are getting right up close.” *[Probe: Do you enjoy wildlife viewing?]* “Oh yes, definitely. I’m learning more and more animals and more and more plants all the time.” 155-168

At the end of the passage, he confirms that he is actively engaged in learning about the natural history of the place. Finally, Sam’s personal project was also confirmed on site by the interviewer as he and Sam mutually shared a wildlife viewing experience. This is an example of how this type of interactive research positions the observer as part of the phenomenon being observed.

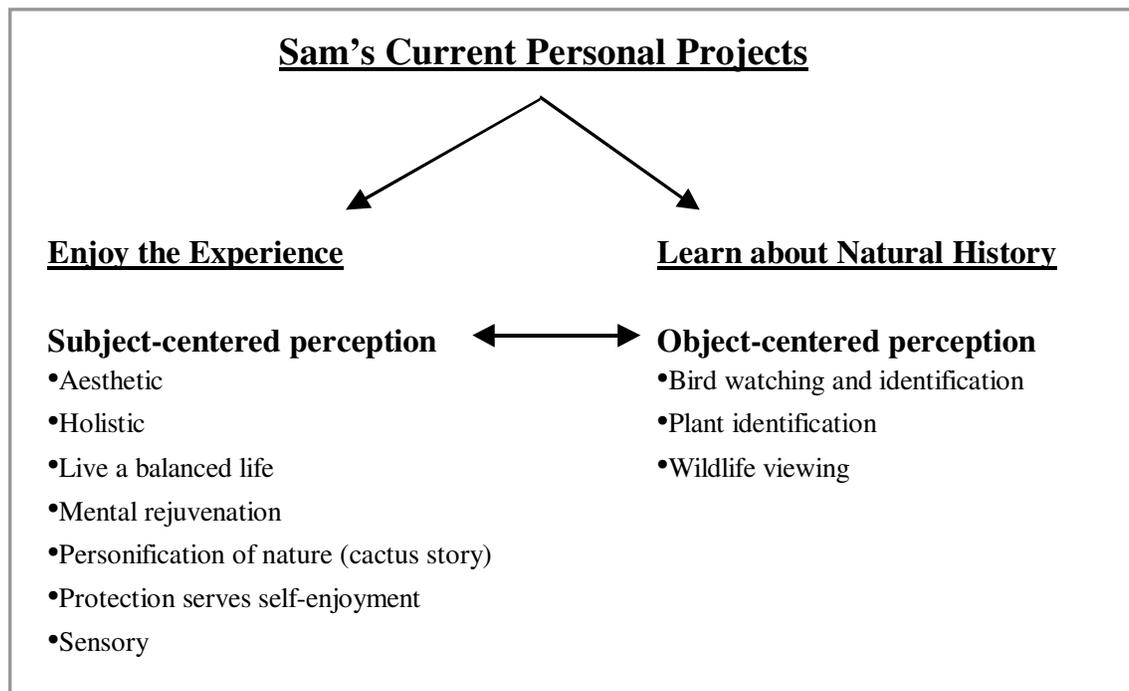


Figure 9. Organizing system for Sam’s personal projects.

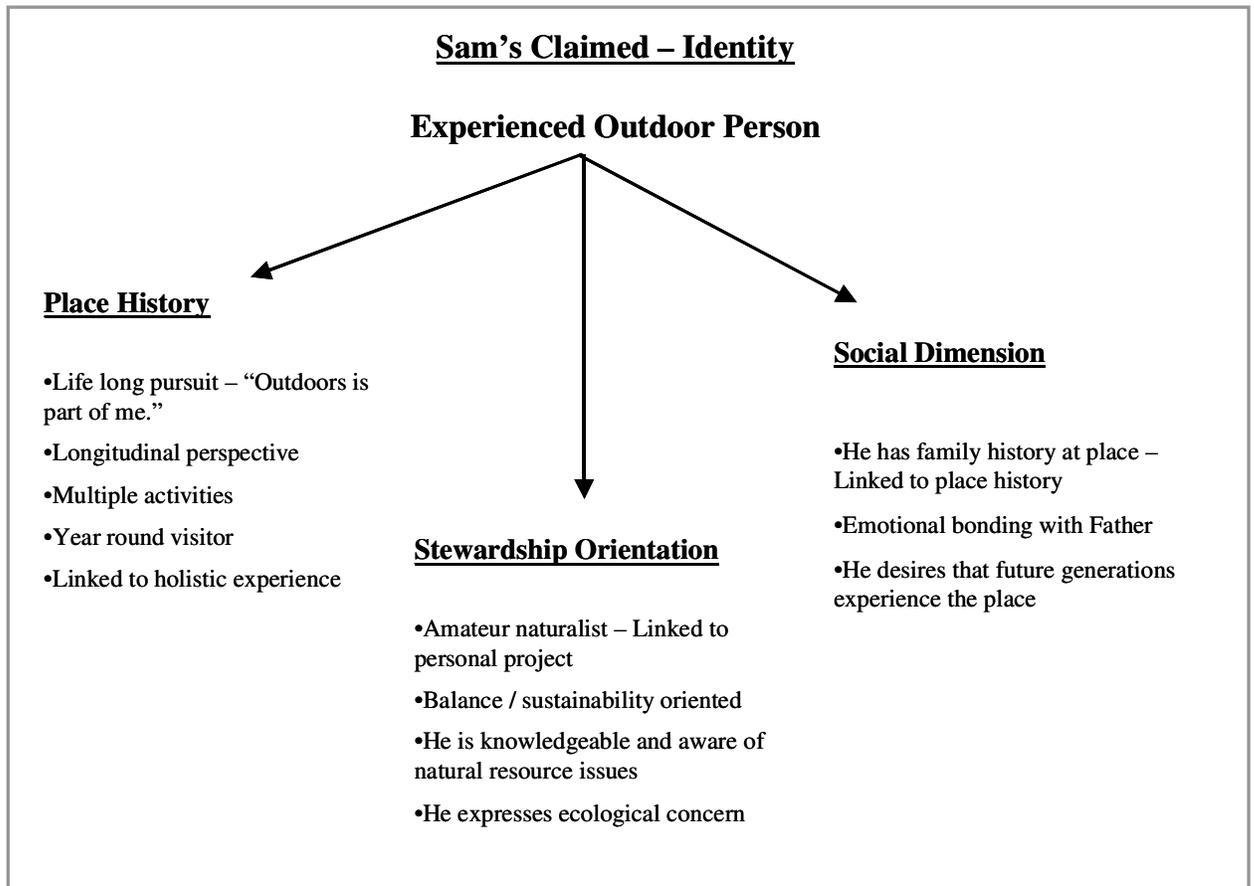


Figure 10. Organizing system for Sam’s claimed-identity.

**Josh: Pragmatic Wilderness Person who Enjoys Solitude**

Josh is research participant JC6 interviewed at Alberta Falls on August 8, 2001 during the morning. He is a semi-retired electrical engineer holding a master’s degree and living in Boulder, Colorado. He is married with a son and a daughter, who are roughly college age. He donates money to environmental organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, and The National Wildlife Federation. Josh is 55 years old and was raised Catholic, but now he is not a member of any organized religion. He spoke about blending traditional religion with nature spirituality during the stages of his life. At times Josh thinks of wilderness areas as sacred. In an analysis of the dimensions

of wilderness value, Rolston (1985) described a religious value for some individuals in which the openness, awe, and solitude of wild lands is preferred to the confines of the indoor church setting.

*[Question: What is your religious background?]* “I think that when I was much younger; I was raised Catholic. I found the Catholic Church a little bit too rigid for my liking. I've been a member of a church from time to time. And sometimes in my life I feel like I need that. Other times I feel like I can get as much religious experience out in the wilderness as I do in the cathedral. So, I guess yeah I have a religious background, but I'm probably less into organized religion now than when I was raised.” (263-269)

Josh expressed himself in the narrative as a wilderness person who is conservation-minded, practical about wilderness protection, and who enjoys the outdoors (Figure 11). He did not indicate that he thinks of himself as a wilderness purist or staunch environmentalist, but does tend to define wilderness as undeveloped and as places where people are scarce. For example, he was interviewed at a high traffic day use area, Alberta Falls, which he does not consider to be wilderness (3-14). Josh's conception of wilderness is aligned with the view that wilderness is a place where humans and certain types of their tools and activities are absent.

*[Question: When you think about wilderness, which places (in RMNP) do you think of?]* “Not here (laughs heartily). I think in terms of wilderness in the park it is more like—what's the name of the canyon? It's down off Trail Ridge Road.” *[Oh yeah!]* “Down in that area ... [Forest Canyon], and certainly a lot of the stuff that's on the western side of the park are certainly much more wilderness than this area here for example. I mean there are a lot of places in the park that have very few people in them. They are very undeveloped. So, I mean, those are the places that I think of in terms of wilderness at least in RMNP.” *[Probe: So low numbers, and low amounts of development?]* “Yeah, right. There are some places where you can't even find a trail sometimes you know they're used so infrequently. You got to go quite a ways to get to those places.” 3-14

In his conception of wilderness, Josh reveals that he views trails as development. He associates trails with the presence of people, which at high densities conflict with his

view of wilderness. Josh acknowledges the trail maintenance and stewardship efforts of park staff when asked about seeing human impacts at RMNP (172-179). In this excerpt and when probed about worldwide threats to wilderness (200-208), Josh reconfirmed his idea of what constitutes a wilderness area, namely low densities of people per given land area.

*[Question: During your visits to RMNP have you seen negative signs of people who visit here?]* “Oh during this visit, no not yet (laugh). It’s pretty early on the trail, but in general no. This may not be the people that use it as much as the people who maintain it, but this area has been kept fairly natural and it’s kept clean, people seem to pick up after themselves people don’t seem to do—you don’t see all the ruts in the road from off trail use that kind of stuff. So no, other than the fact that there are trails and a lot of people, I think that they do a pretty nice job here, but again I don’t think that this is wilderness in the area that we are in right now.” (172-179)

*[Question: Have you heard that many types of wilderness are being lost around the world?]* “Yeah, I read about that. I guess I don’t know a lot about what is going on in the rest of the world in terms of wilderness. But I can’t help but believe that there is an awful lot of this world that is falling to the plow every year. And I think that is inevitable. And I think that’s why it’s now more than ever important to set aside certain areas. I don’t want 90% of the world set aside as wilderness, but I think that we got to have enough that the people that want to take part of the wilderness experience can do it. And if we have too many people and too little wilderness then just by definition that will never happen [taking part in the wilderness experience by people who wish to do so]”. (200-208)

In the excerpt 200-208, a fatalistic dimension to his identity emerges, which was expressed again later in the interview and discussed below. Josh’s concerns for wilderness conservation seem to be shrouded in beliefs of inevitable destruction and doubts about sustainability. Indeed, several contradictions inherent in the concept of sustainability have been identified (Dovers & Handmer, 1993). For example, humanity’s propensity for technological development has made it possible for us a species to impact our environments to a greater extent than any other species on Earth, but (as Josh indicates in the interview) conservation technologies such as alternative energy

development and recycling may be key for wilderness preservation both now and in the future. A dilemma in the use of conservation technology is inherent in this observation.

Josh sees public protected areas as places for everyone (28-39). He is sympathetic toward multiple types of recreation, even those that he does not prefer. He realizes that some people have limited ability to access places that he may visit, for example those places that require a willingness to “work for the experience”. Josh seems to recognize the importance of a front country/backcountry distinction, and he engages in what he considers typical backcountry activities where quiet and solitude may be part of the experience (41-43). He demonstrates support for setting classifications and zoning, and he associates some non-motorized activities with solitude at protected areas.

*[Question: In terms of wilderness, are there places in this park that are of particular interest to you then?]* “I think the areas that I have mentioned, I mean, I'd like to see those areas preserved in such a way that only the people who are really willing to work for the experience can do it. I know that's not fair to people in wheel chairs and people with other disabilities. But I think my view of public lands in general [is that] there needs to be something for everybody. I think that we have to strike a balance. I know that's hard to do sometimes. But we need to strike a balance between making the land accessible to everyone—making it available for people like the snowmobiler or four-wheel driver. And yet making sure that there are other parts that are kept for people who prefer the less developed less mechanized forms of recreation and who want the solitude those kinds of things tend to bring.” (28-39) *[Question: What activities do you do in the wilderness?]* “Well I backpack and I hike and I snowshoe and I cross-country ski. I guess that's pretty much it. I like to take pictures and fish and I like just being outside.” (41-43)

Below, he confirms that uses that disrupt his quiet introspection and sensory experience do not belong in wilderness. At the same time, however Josh recognizes the value of diverse experiences at protected places.

*[Question: What do you think are the limits to human uses of the wilderness?]* *[Things that people shouldn't do in the wilderness or some uses that you would think are unacceptable?]* “To me, because of a lot of things that I have said about the sensual experience—things that create noise, things that create smells, are

things that I think are a real problem in a wilderness area. We have plenty of natural forest areas where we have Jeep roads, where we have roads where you can go snowmobiling. I don't want to see it everywhere, but I think that people who like that kind of stuff need a place where they can do some of those sorts of things. But in terms of real wilderness, I think that some of our land needs to be set-aside for that [wilderness]. Things that create noise, things that create smells, things that mar the beauty, things like mine tailings and drilling rigs and that kind of stuff don't have a place in the wilderness.” (161-172)

In addition to Josh's support for maintaining a diversity of experiences, an obvious management implication of the interpretation of this dialog involves conflict between motorized and non-motorized recreation at protected areas. Although not an issue inside RMNP, this is a common problem at other places such as on national forest lands surrounding the Park. There are real differences (e.g. noise, resource impacts, and exhaust emissions) and perceived incompatibilities (e.g., ATVs have no place in the wilderness) between these two modes of recreation. Solutions for managing these conflicts necessarily (but too often) focus on these differences while excluding possible similarities. A less obvious implication involves the social construction of wilderness and recreation experience, specifically the common meanings assigned to wilderness by people who do different recreation activities. The concept of solitude, for example, can serve as a point of commonality between groups who experience conflict while participating in different activities at the same place. Josh's idea of solitude may not include motorized use, but I would argue that some visitors who participate in motorized activities such as off road jeep use, jet boating, riding snowmobiles, or fishing using a motor boat can enjoy solitude and remote settings similar to those who engage in non-motorized activities such as backpacking, snow shoeing, or fishing while paddling a canoe. In the Australian outback for example, on and off road four-wheel driving plays a significant role in cultural identity formation and social construction of wilderness

(Bishop, 1996). Emotional and symbolic attachments to place and ‘authentic’ wilderness experiences, and alteration or sense of loss of these, are not necessarily limited to people, who exclusively participate in certain types of recreation or who use or avoid certain technologies in outdoor settings.

Related to this identity, Josh continues to portray himself as a person who enjoys solitude. He seeks the solitude experience and escape from social interaction for the purpose of introspection. His current personal project for this front country trip is to enjoy the experience in a subject-centered manner. Also, Josh repeatedly speaks of a sense of recreation renewal and getting in touch with "the real position of humans in this world" (19-26). From a spiritual perspective, Josh’s ability to contemplate his own thoughts relative to his place in the universe is most likely enhanced by a sense of solitude in a natural setting (Long & Averill, 2003). He hints that it may not be possible to experience our true place in the universe, which can be a humbling experience, while in a human dominated cityscape. Josh seems to be engaged in this very project while visiting places such as RMNP.

*[Question: Would you say that wilderness is important to you?] “Yes, very.”*  
*[What traits make it important to you, if you could name them?] “I think the solitude and just getting away from all of the—just getting away from civilization really. You know kind of the sort of idea that we control our environment. You know if you are in the middle of the city it’s sort of the way you feel right?*  
*[Right.] Getting out into the wilderness makes you appreciate at least what I think of as the real position of humans in this world which is—you know (chuckle)—we are just part of this world we’re not it. We’re not the center of the world.” (19-26)*

He develops dimensions of his identity and personal project to reconnect to his position in the world more fully when asked about the advantages of protecting wilderness areas. Josh is engaged in this “recreation renewal” (95-104) as a way to make

sense of humanity's position in the world. In a form of social commentary, Josh speaks about what the experience means to him personally, while at the same time he reveals symbolic meaning for greater society. This passage provides evidence for a cultural construction (with spiritual connotations) of wilderness as something greater than us as individuals, which provides perspective for society about our place in the world. When Josh assigns symbolic meaning to wilderness, he is essentially saying that it is valuable for greater society, which Rolston (1985) referred to as social good value.

*[Question: What would you say are some advantages to protecting wilderness?]*  
“Again, I think it's having a place where people can understand what their relationship to the world really is. Having places of solitude, having places where— (long pause)—maybe this is of a romantic notion, but we have [spent] most of our past has been lived in the wild, and I think sometimes we just need to get back to that once in a while. Lots of people, my self included, really feel a sense of renewal with going out into the wilderness and being out with nature. And I think that is why all these people are here to look around. They're all here to see the beauty, to enjoy the smells, the sounds, and you know why are these people not at the mall? Because there's something about the wilderness that attracts people that appeals to people, and that's why they're all here. So, this is a form of recreation renewal.” (95-104)

In addition, when asked about his reaction to the interview, Josh revealed the socially constructed nature of wilderness. He reminds us that the meanings that we as humans assign to wilderness make it valuable, but these meanings are incompletely understood so this type of research is necessary.

“I think until we really understand as many view points on this [wilderness] as we can, we really can't sort out where the public will is, and we can't necessarily find out what the value of wilderness is, because the value of wilderness to a great extent—if you take away the mining, the timber, those kinds of things—the [social] value of wilderness is in the mind. You know its kind of like services and those kinds of things. It's whatever the people value, and if there are enough people who don't value the things [meanings] that I just talked about, then I guess wilderness doesn't have a lot of value. But until you, or people like you, sit down and interview enough people and really look at the data, we won't know that.” (280-289)

He elaborates the internal nature of the experience when questioned about his feelings while visiting RMNP. Again he compares the experience to the city (or with being at a shopping mall [95-104]) and concludes that it is not the same for him, the experience of the cityscape may be less authentic. Josh describes having a holistic sensory experience while in wilderness. Again, he talks about introspection and escape from social interaction in terms of the solitude that may be found at these protected places. Josh explains that humans experience life from different realms, or “dimensions” such as the social, but that we also can value solitude, which can be private.

*[Question: What kinds of feelings do you have when you visit wilderness?]*  
“Wow, relaxation—one of the things that I like about the outdoor experiences, is the fact that it’s just all the senses come into play. I mean the sounds, the feel of the cold breeze and the hot sun, and smells and the sounds and the sights. I mean it’s just a wonderful sensory experience to be out in the wilderness like this. I guess you can argue to do the same thing in the city, but for some reason it’s just not as pleasant to me personally. So I think its very much a sensual, a very sensually experience for me when I’m out in the wilderness, and it’s a time to reflect and get away from social interaction, and that dimension of our being, and we are social beings, but there’s also another dimension that I think values solitude as well.” (117-127)

The experience is individually meaningful and self-expressive for Josh. His introspection about his/our place in the universe and his notion of going back to an earlier time in human history carry religious and spiritual overtones. The construction of the experience as similar to what it must have been like for earlier humans resembles writings about authentic experience, namely a sense of timelessness (Rahilly, 1993). His observation that humans are not the center of the world (19-26) may indicate that Josh feels a sense of smallness in the overall scheme of things. Schroeder (1992) conceptualized a spiritual experience as one in which a person realizes or encounters something bigger than self. Josh’s awareness of internal feelings while visiting RMNP

has been associated with transcendent spiritual experiences in wilderness settings as well (K. Williams & Harvey, 2001). Josh has assigned cultural and individual meaning to wilderness and natural landscapes, which are part of, but go beyond his personal identity and projects to a larger society. These assigned meanings enable him to value protected places and their conservation (Page, 1992; Williams & Patterson, 1999).

In the excerpt below, Josh describes our relationship with wilderness as a difficult balance, or double-edged sword (45-71). Again wilderness is seen as a place with few people, or at least a place that maintains the illusion of few people in Josh's conception. He believes that we can maintain the wilderness experience by spreading the people thin across the landscape to maintain the correct people to wilderness "ratio." This is more than an idea. It is an observation for managers to act on. Josh thinks that the management at RMNP has done a good job of maintaining this ratio with their backcountry permit system, thereby demonstrating support for group size limits and trail head quotas. He also informs the interviewer that he should study this question of balance during his career. Josh believes that through science, technology, and management we can probably maintain, or conserve the wilderness experience in the face of rising population, but he suggests that this will be difficult.

*[Question: How would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?]* (long pause) "I think that's an uneasy peace (laugh). The problem that I see is—the real difficulty with all this is that if you sort of take the position that people need wilderness, then the people going to the wilderness sort of make it not a wilderness, and it's one of these things where it really is a difficult balance. I think that we just have to watch out that there's the right ratio of wilderness to people. I know as the population grows, particularly near urban areas that will be harder and harder to achieve. But, I think that we have to do that, because if we have too little wilderness and too many people, then we won't have any wilderness. And so that's something you can probably study when you're writing and thinking about your career. How do you achieve that? Are there ways of spreading wilderness out more or something so that everybody can

[have the experience]? I like what the park has done here in terms of the backcountry permit system. They really have done a good job of spreading people out—hiding the campsites, so that you can, with in a very short drive of Denver, have an experience that is pretty much a wilderness experience. You have to sort of give up being able to camp anywhere your fancy suites, but by doing that you really can be pretty much alone without having to drive to Alaska (laugh) or whatever. And I think it's that kind of stuff that if we can do more of that in the wilderness system, it would really improve it for everybody. When I think of wilderness areas that aren't very wilderness—if you go up into Summit County around in the Dillon/Silverthorne area. I mean yeah it's a wilderness area, but it's like the New Jersey turnpike on a Saturday or Sunday. It's hardly a wilderness experience, although if you get off some of the more common trails you really can be alone in that area as well. But that is sort of the wilderness that I don't think of as wilderness. Just because of the extremely heavy use. I've appreciated the fact that you can't drive motorcycles and that sort of stuff up there, but still it's not exactly what I would call wilderness. *[Because of the shear number of people?]* Right. (45-71)

The importance of solitude, for Josh, in a wilderness experience is re-confirmed, he thinks that one can find that experience in the backcountry at RMNP. Near the end of the passage (45-71) he reminds us that experiencing a high concentration of people essentially negates the wilderness experience for him even at areas that are considered to be true wilderness. The perception and enjoyment of solitude that may be found at RMNP might in part result from conversations that occur between the staff at the backcountry permit office and visitors entering backcountry/wilderness where they discuss the different types of experiences the person(s) want and attempt to match that with a particular place.

Next, he explains that there are trade offs between commercial uses and preservation of wilderness areas, but Josh advocates conservation and reuse of natural resources over extraction of new resources. For example, he thinks that we are far from the point where we need to extract oil for national security. If our nation arrives at this point, Josh indicates that he might support extraction as a last resort after we have

reached the limits of conservation technology. His idea that humans can preserve natural landscapes through conservation technologies may reflect his training and career in engineering and western notions of environmental control.

*[Question: Do you think that there are any disadvantages in protecting wilderness?]* “From my own personally standpoint, no not a whole lot. I think that there are a lot of people who would like to make money off of the land. I'm sure that wilderness designations hurt those people, I mean it closes it off to timber, the mining, to rental of snowmobiles all these kinds of commercial activities. So I think that there is probably a fairly large segment of the population that would agree that there are some real costs to expanding the wilderness too much—in terms of cost to society of not having those resources available and that sort of thing. But, I'm one that believes pretty firmly that the conservation is a much better way to deal with those problems than necessarily just destroying all the wilderness areas. Once we've done everything that we can do in terms of conservation ... reusing of building materials for example. Recycling of metals and plastics and some of these kinds of things. Once we've done everything that we can do to deal with those issues, then if national security or whatever demands that we go in and start drilling for oil in some of our wilderness lands and our national lands that's fine, that's great. But we're [a] long, long way from that at this point. And, sometimes I think its just people who have the most to gain financially, at the expense of the common good. I mean if you look at biodiversity, if you look at the ability of forested lands to absorb carbon dioxide and other forms of pollution, then there are all the benefits of leaving the land natural. And we never give credit for that in terms of figuring the common good. We have too many people who just want to say well, 'everybody benefits from having more gasoline' well you know...? *[Hiding the expense of that?]* Yeah.” (73-94)

Josh holds a kind of pragmatic but liberal view toward wilderness protection; he is conservation oriented. He thinks that wilderness is a common good because it provides environmental services and solitude that reflect ecosystemic value, social, and individual good value (Rolston, 1985). The common good provided by wilderness areas outweighs the desire for more oil in Josh's view. At the end of the excerpt (73-94), Josh subtly indicates that popular notions of everyone benefiting from more gasoline, for example, may not be true, or are at best questionable.

However, Josh expresses a fatalistic view that we may eventually have to sacrifice more wilderness areas in the future. This should be disconcerting to advocates of the principles of sustainability given that many conservation professionals base their work on assumptions that what they do promotes long term preservation and sustainable natural resource management. The question arises about how to approach interpretation and environmental education for people who recognize environmental services, cultural meanings, and social values of RMNP and other protected areas but who have doubts about how these can be sustained. Josh repeats this fatalistic view and confirms his personal construction of the wilderness protection-use issue below (150-159).

*[Question: Would you say that people have a right to use some wilderness for their benefit?]* “Oh sure. I think that the issue there is how do you preserve the wilderness not necessarily can we use it. Because I think that we can use the wilderness without destroying it. Is that the question you were asking?” *[Well I think that is fairly open, I mean it could be using it meaning mining, or it could mean using it leading a trip in there.]* “In terms of using it for mining and that kind of stuff, again, once we've done all this other stuff I mean we may have to do that some day. I'm enough of a pragmatist to know that when the time comes I think we may have no choice. I don't think that time is anywhere near, as far as the general good of the nation is concerned.” *[So you are saying wise-use?]* “Yeah.” *[Conservative uses, ok?]* “Yeah.” (150-159)

Josh does not see this issue as a strict dichotomy of either use or protection. He does not accept the bipolar argument that wilderness means no jobs or that jobs and economic well being come with a price to wilderness (129-143). His predominant frame of reference is that we are not doing all that we can to address social problems and economic stability. He is not convinced that protecting wilderness landscapes and their potential resources makes the nation suffer in any substantial way. Josh restates his pragmatic but fatalistic view that tapping into wilderness resources should be a last resort after we have exhausted alternative industries and technologies.

*[Question: When people try to protect wilderness, do you ever feel that other priorities may not be satisfied?] [Probe: For example, some people say that protection of wilderness shouldn't make people lose jobs and shouldn't raise the cost of living. How would you feel about those kinds of things?]* (pause) “I think that's too bipolar of an argument. It's kind of like if we keep preserving wilderness, then all these other things are going to happen. There are other ways of creating wealth. I mean there are ways of creating goods and services that will lower unemployment, increase the standard of living this kind of stuff. I'm not an expert on this, and I haven't studied all the numbers, but its hard for me to believe that our society is going to become significantly poorer or significantly less well off in terms of the real important things in life if we preserve our wilderness. I just don't see that. There are lots of other industries—there are lots of other technologies that we can develop that will help people out. Maybe someday we will have to start digging into our wilderness reserves as a last resort. But I just don't see that we're there now; personal opinion.” (129-143)

When we consider Josh's entire story, as revealed during this interview, it is plausible that the foundation of his environmental conservation values is the personal, cultural, and spiritual meanings that he has assigned to wilderness as a place for solitude, introspection, and connecting with our position in the universe as human beings. For Josh, these meanings are believed to be more important than economic development of the protected landscape, or its associated meanings and values (e.g., capitalism, The American Dream, etc.).

Josh revisits his common good argument and his belief that a federal system of public lands and wilderness management is appropriate for protection. Places like protected areas enhance the common good. Josh feels that many other places exist that are open to individual exploits and do not provide that type of meaning.

*[Question: Do people living in our country have responsibilities toward wilderness?]* “Yeah, I think that they do although it's kind of hard to say who is the right repository of—here we're getting into political science. But I think that people in this country are very much into individual rights. And they really spend a lot of time and effort exercising their freedoms. I think that it's the role of the government to really protect the common good. I mean it says that in the preamble of the constitution. And, I think it's—really to me—the role of the government to protect the common good. And I think wilderness to a great extent,

its part of the common good. Particularly in the sense that anybody who wants to use it on terms of wilderness, right I mean preserving what it is for everyone and anyone—I think that's a common good kind of a thing. Once somebody comes in and files mining claims, builds a hotel it's suddenly less for everyone and more for particular property owners." [Probe: *It's a little bit of loss for many people a lot of gain for a few?*] "I think that we've got plenty of individuals who are taking full advantage of their rights that this country provides people and that's good and healthy. I think that the government has to look out for the common good. And some people are supportive of that. Some people will champion that. But ultimately the jurisdiction of that goes to the government. How's that for a liberal?" (181-198)

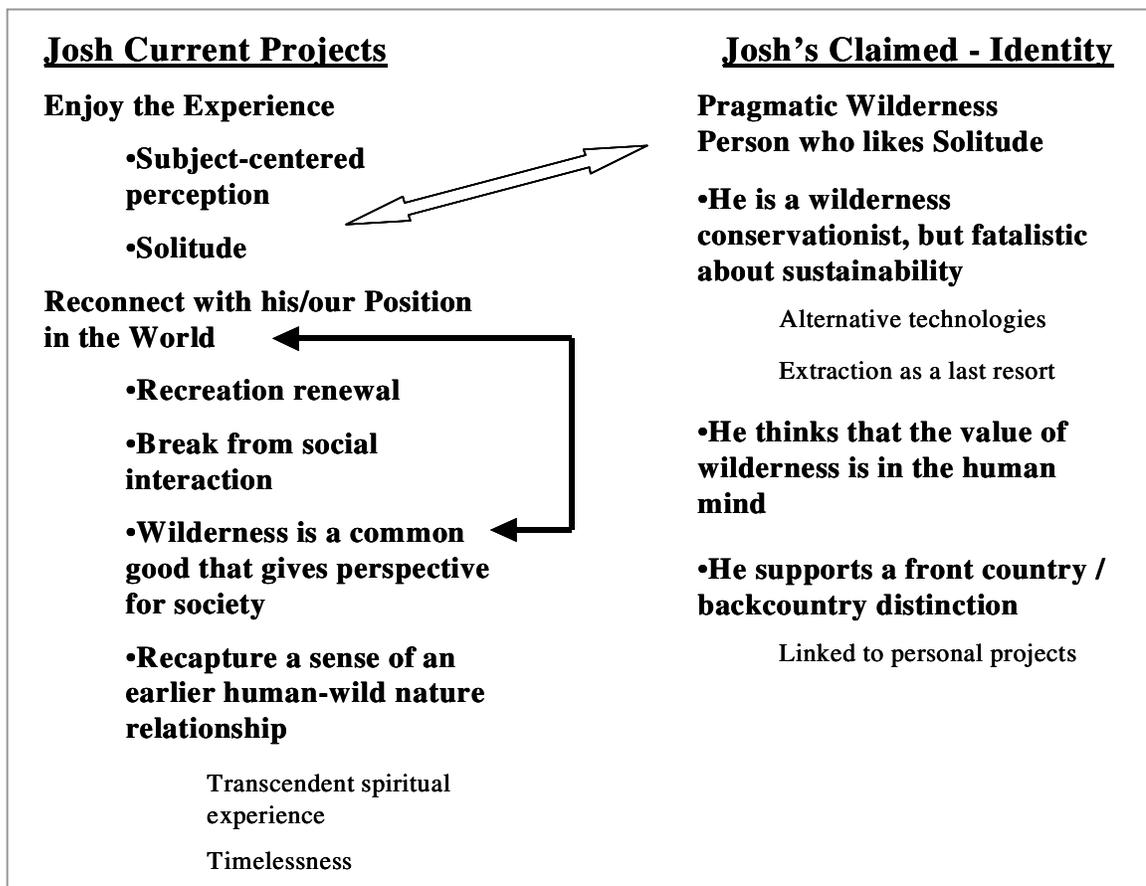


Figure 11. Organizing system for Josh.

In sum, Josh sees himself as a pragmatic person regarding protection of wilderness who enjoys the solitude of the experience. He is conservation minded, and he

tends to rely on technology to solve problems both in society and in the protected landscape. I would suggest that his views are rooted in western notions of science and environmental control as reflected in his western training and life experience as an electrical engineer. In a fatalistic manner, he acknowledges that some lands will have to be developed, but we should do this conservatively. During this visit to RMNP, he was enjoying a front country experience in a subject-centered manner while at the same time reconnecting with his position, as a member of society, in the world (see Figure 11).

### **Pam: One Who Enjoys and Cares for Nature**

Pam is research participant JB16 interviewed on August 15, 2001 on the trail to Bluebird Lake in Wild Basin during the afternoon period. Pam is a returned visitor to RMNP from her home state of Nebraska. She indicated that she had visited different parts of the park, namely Alberta Falls, before for “family outings”. She was day hiking during this visit with her two young nephews, who had hiked ahead of Pam to Bluebird Lake. They were communicating with walkie-talkies during the interview. It seemed that Pam was concerned about their safety while they hiked alone. During their brief electronic transmissions, she asked them twice if they were okay, and one of the boys asked of her about the weather and an approaching rainstorm. Pam considers the backcountry at RMNP to be wilderness, and she usually participates in day visitor activities such as day hiking while in the area (6-8; 23-25).

*[Question: When you think about wilderness, which places in RMNP do you think of?] “Probably the backcountry, which I don't even really get to—but off the beaten path, that would be wilderness to me.” (6-8)*

*[Question: Could you please list for me all the activities that you do while you visit the wilderness at RMNP?] “All right, mainly we hike, and picnic, and we do horseback on the trails some, that’s about it.” (23-25)*

Pam is a practicing Baptist. She believes that the natural environment is God's creation to be enjoyed, cared for by people through stewardship, and used responsibly (Figure 12). Pam is a 38-year old white female with a four-year college degree. She is employed as an accountant. She does not donate money to any environmental organizations. Pam said that she is spiritual in the sense that she tries to live according to what Christ would have her do in her life, and she believes in creation. She also considers being religious and being spiritual to be different but interdependent concepts, mirroring conclusions from a recent study in American society, which concluded that most Americans consider themselves to be both religious and spiritual (Marler & Hadaway, 2002).

*[Question: What is your religious background?] “I am a Baptist.” [Probe: Do you consider yourself active in that religion now?] “Definitely.” [Probe: Would you consider yourself to be a spiritual person?] “Not so much in the way people use the term.” [Probe: How do people usually use the term?] “Well, I mean—to me humans do have a spirit, but my spirit is supposed to be—is supposed to be based on my knowledge of what Christ would have me do, and a lot of times I think when people talk about their spirit, they're talking more about being free and that type of thing though.” [Probe: So would you say that your Christian spirituality relates to wilderness or the environment?] “Oh yeah, definitely. I meant (pause) God created this Earth and ... it's just incredible.” (209-218)*

Pam thinks that many people respect the wilderness by following the common rules of stewardship, most of the time, such as leaving little trace of their presence. She admits to breaking one of these rules by feeding wildlife. Pam expressed some disagreement with this policy at RMNP, possibly because it interferes with her enjoyment at times. Namely, not being able to feed wildlife “down low” in the high-use areas where the animals are already habituated. She recognizes the front country backcountry

distinction in her explanation, and that feeding the wild animals probably should be discouraged in the backcountry because there are no people there to care for and feed them in winter. Related to park management, Pam suggests that having designated sites where feeding was permitted might discourage people from doing it at less appropriate places where it may be detrimental to their survival (27-41).

*[Question: Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?]* The vast majority of people is very caring, take care of it, and then there's a few that don't seem to worry too much, but the vast majority follow the rules, to a certain point anyway (laughs heartily). I've been guilty too of breaking some of them but, yeah, you pack everything out and try to not ruin anything that's important." *[Probe: Do you think there are any rules that you don't understand or agree with, as far as these types of settings go?]* "Probably not so much don't understand, probably the worst one we're guilty of violating is feeding the wildlife to a certain point. [We] try not to do that in areas, like when you get this far out. *[Right.]* Where you know that you might be causing problems. But in some of the lower places, you can pretty much tell they've been fed so much that it seems like maybe the Park can probably take care of them if that does in fact cause problems, or in the winter months or something. And so maybe if we had select sites where that was acceptable, it might actually keep people from breaking the rules in areas where maybe it's worse [to feed wildlife]." *[That's an interesting point!]* (27-41)

Pam expresses an understanding that some human actions at protected places can negatively affect the place. For example, she states this below regarding number of people and trail impacts, but I think that she sees the human-environment relationship as a balance between caring for it and enjoying God's creation (42-61).

*[Probe: Back on the relationship with people and the wilderness, in the sense that people usually don't live in the wilderness, do you consider humans to be separate from it, or part of it?]* "Probably separate. Once we're there, it's (chuckles) probably not wilderness so much anymore." *[Probe: Could you list for me any behaviors that people do that would make a place no longer wilderness?]* "I'll have to think about that one." *[OK.]* (Talks on walkie-talkies again to nephew.) "Oh wow—that don't make it ... *[Well you know, things that—]* "Yeah. Probably just the sheer number of people, you do tend to beat a path around some of the lakes. You really don't have that untouched part. You go down to Ouzel Lake for example, where it's so marshy, you really don't have people hiking around it, so when you're looking at the lake, I mean although there's people on

the one side, what you're looking at across looks pretty much untouched. So, I think just we have an impact on the environment that's long-term, that we don't always think about because we're trying to enjoy the moment.” [*Probe: Do you think that it's acceptable for people to enjoy these types of places?*] “Oh, I think you have to. I meant, I guess I believe in God so I believe we're here and this is sort of our Earth, so within reason I meant. [*Right.*] I think there are some dos and some don'ts, and I think you have to draw a line to try and balance things, but I meant yeah, we want to be able to enjoy it. I want people be able to go out and backpack; I don't want to say no you can't go high country, and do something like that. I think if they're up to it, great.” (42-61)

Pam rather passively indicated that protection could at times limit the enjoyment of the experience. She again stresses that she thinks that we need to maintain a balance between protection and enjoyment.

[*Question: Do you think that there are any disadvantages in protecting wilderness?*] “Well, probably--maybe you cut down on the enjoyment aspect of it, or (clears throat) I don't know. Probably I meant again, there has to be that line there [*Right.*] or you're going to ruin it for everybody, so I meant I think it's [protection] basically a good thing. It's just a balance.” (63-66)

She further elaborates her notions of balance below, but now she extends her account to include human consumption of natural resources for survival. Pam indicates that where she lives farmers depend upon the environment to sustain food production. Fine (1997, p. 76) refers to this worldview as the “humanist vision” where nature is to be for human uses, however, we as people have an obligation to prudently use nature so as to conserve it for future generations and not “ruin it for everybody” (63-66).

She tells us that she is middle-of-the-road concerning the use-protection dichotomy. If presented with a standard attitude scale, Pam would more than likely respond at the midpoint, or neutral region of the scale. Below and in her narrative as a whole, she reveals some insight into why she might answer this way. It may be that her personal conception (i.e., social construction) of our relationship to nature is not a simple dichotomy at all, but more a state of responsible dominion and Christian stewardship

(Genesis 1:28; Petersen et al., 2002), which is evident in her expressions of balance and moral responsibility. That is, nature is here for people to use and enjoy in a responsible fashion as caregivers because God made it that way (see Fine, 1997). Pam seems to purport some sense of having dominion over the natural world (see Kellert, 1980 in relation to wildlife), which may be rooted in her religious background (42-61; 209-218).

*[Question: When people try to protect wilderness, do you ever feel that other priorities may not be satisfied? For example, some people say that protection of wilderness shouldn't make people lose jobs and shouldn't raise the cost of living. How do you feel about those kinds of things?]* “Well, I'm from Nebraska, so I—you get a lot of that with the farmers needing irrigation, and that type of thing, and it's just again, you have to find a balance, so that one doesn't totally outweigh the other one. So, again I'm not pro one—all the way one way, or pro all the way the other. I can see both sides of the coin, and I think you just have to look for both of them. And (quietly) you know sometimes, I mean, when you get quite a few years where rain hasn't come down, sometimes the environment has to give for the people. But vice-versa, sometimes people get greedy, and just are looking out for themselves a little bit too much. I guess the only other thing I was thinking ... do you know that area down over the Alluvial Fan, which has all the rocks and boulders?” *[Hmm. It's in Rocky?]* “It's in Rocky; it's right before that Old Fall River Road. *[OK.]* ...

... And it's where the flood brought all the rocks down.” *[Right, OK. I remember hearing about the flood.]* “Anyway it's a great place to climb on rocks if you love to just jump across rocks and climb on them. So, again I meant I think on one side they sort of want to try and maybe get it back to its natural state, and yet on the other hand, it almost seems like it's a place where you could just let everybody have fun on it because it's just a great place to—*[Right.]* and I don't know how much damage we do to rocks as much as we do to the fauna and everything.” (68-88)

At the end of this excerpt (68-88), Pam (gaining more confidence with her part in the conversation) speaks about another place in RMNP where she feels that the regulations diminish the enjoyment of the experience. It may be that she desires the sense of adventure and exploration (Brooks & Titre, 2003) involved with the experience of getting off the trail onto these rocks, which she sees as essentially resistant to the human footprint when compared to other places and features at the Park. Pam indicates

that this area may be undergoing restoration, but she is not sure. It is also possible that the closure pertains to issues of visitor safety. Whichever the case, an interpretive display or other information (if not currently available) explaining NPS policies at this place could alter Pam's perceived sense of loss of enjoyment. Maybe presenting such information from the perspective that the park is acting as a responsible caregiver would be effective in Pam's case.

While playing on the rocks and feeding wildlife at RMNP, Pam seems focused on enjoying the physical interaction with the setting and its attributes (i.e., object-centered perception). She also briefly talks about how she enjoys the place in a more subject-centered manner. Pam experiences a sense of the divine or perhaps an appreciation of God's creation while at the place (110-113). The place seems to have significant religious meaning and value for Pam as it did for Josh. Again, this echoes the words of the environmental philosopher Rolston: "For wilderness purists intensely, and for most persons occasionally, wildlands provide a cathedral setting" (1985, p. 30). In a recent essay, Lane (2001) proposed that a multidimensional understanding of sacred places requires study of socially constructed meanings and the physical particularities of a place with which people actually interact. Both of these concepts seem important to Pam's experience and are evident in her narrative.

*[Question: Could you please list for me all the feelings or emotions that you have when you visit a place like this?] "Oh, I just feel close to God. It's awesome. It's peaceful (exhales deeply). It seems untouched, natural, and beautiful. I don't know if I can come up with more (laughs)." [No that's fine.] (110-113)*

Pam reconfirms her notion that we should protect nature as well as enjoy it. She seems to favor protection of wilderness for the sake of wildlife (90-108). She highlights the importance of a balance between developed areas and places with fewer trails for the

enjoyment of those who are capable of making more strenuous hikes. She sees the backcountry experience as work, or paying one's "dues" to get off the beaten path and away from the crowds. Pam thinks that it should not be easy, and she wonders about the legitimacy of getting there on horseback, which she does on occasion (23-25).

*[Question: Do you think there are any advantages or beneficial reasons for protecting wilderness areas?]* "Again, wildlife to me is a big thing. If you're not protecting it, it's going to be gone. I just think, if we'd let everybody go out and cut paths wherever they wanted to you'd ruin for it for a whole bunch of people that are capable of doing the long hikes, and that type of thing. And that's sort of why I push myself to get out this far, which maybe it's not far for others, but it's (chuckles) quite a ways for me." *[Well it's a nice hike up here.]* "Yeah, just to get away from the people and everything, and if you had roads cutting through it makes it so easy. *[Right.]* Sometimes I actually hate that horses can come. I mean it's (laughs) sort of like: No, you should have to walk it! (Laughs.) If you want to get here, you should have to pay your dues. But, I don't know." *[Probe: How do you feel about seeing signs of the horses on the trail?]* "I really don't like that at all; I wish they'd clean up after them, it seems like they could wear a pouch or something, I don't really like that much. For one thing, we brought a pet up here once. And I know on a lot of the trips they don't want the dogs on the track, and I'm saying, "If you allow horses, why don't you allow dogs?" because I don't see a big difference on that. So, I again that's something, I know there's a lot of people out there that love their dogs. And so maybe, I don't know, maybe some of the trails are dog acceptable. But that would be something to look at too. The ones that are horse-acceptable go ahead and allow dogs on." (90-108)

The conversation that followed to complete this passage (90-108) elicited more of Pam's concerns with regulations at the park. First and interestingly (since she said that she participates), she would prefer that the horse manure not be left on the trails. Moreover, Pam does not see why some trails allow horses but not dogs since in her mind they are both domesticated animals, which people enjoy being with outdoors. Her observations point out the need to interpret or clarify policies at RMNP regarding the use of horses on some trails and the restrictions on dogs. Besides the perceived inappropriateness for some people of seeing (or perhaps stepping in) manure on trails while hiking, many visitors, for example, may not understand the role of horses in the

Park, their use by rangers, trail crews, and local outfitters and the historical context of horse use. They may not have a good idea of what percent of backcountry trails are off limits to commercial or private horse parties at RMNP or the various effects that horses and dogs may have on the terrain and wildlife, for example.

Pam thinks that people should be able to use and enjoy the natural environment or wilderness in responsible ways. She expresses support for the backcountry permit system at RMNP as a facilitator of this responsible enjoyment. Pam takes it a step further by suggesting that visitors to the backcountry be assessed on their skills and knowledge regarding responsible enjoyment before receiving their permits. She clearly considers enjoyment of the wilderness distinct from extractive benefits (which she seemed hesitant to discuss), but Pam indicates that reasonable extractions could be acceptable when necessary (115-124).

*[Question: Would you say that people have a right to use some wilderness for their benefit?] “Yes.” [What types of benefits are acceptable?] “Well again, I guess I look at the backpackers and I guess for the most part you're probably talking enjoyment. But I agree there should be restrictions on—and the fact they have to get a backcountry permit to me seems logical, they should have to learn some rules, maybe even pass a test, I don't know. But I guess probably the main thing's going to be enjoyment. [OK.] I'm not sure why else we tap into the wilderness. I suppose, I guess if you're talking about mining or something, I don't know, that's a whole different ball game. I'm not sure, again, there'd have to be a balance there. There would have to be a real good reason to do it, to actually, to go in and excavate or something.” (115-124)*

At other times during the interview, I sensed that Pam held back somewhat when discussing extractive uses. Her level of approval for such utilitarian practices in actual protected areas like designated wilderness did not clearly emerge during our conversations possibly because of a social desirability effect. An alternative hypothesis regarding Pam's hesitation is that it may be confusing to raise this question to national

park backcountry visitors unless the question is taken out of the national park context and applied to “public land protected areas” in general, so that people can more easily talk about balanced uses and their perceptions about the differences between multiple use lands/backcountry/wilderness, for example.

Pam elaborates on the nature of our responsibilities toward wilderness (137-159). First, it is important because the environment is fragile and animals have gone and will continue to go extinct if we ignore our responsibilities. Second, Pam extends our responsibility of protection to making an effort to mitigate and control some of the damage to the natural landscape resulting from natural forces such as erosion or fire. At the same time, Pam is pulled in the direction of respecting natural forces and getting out of their way. She is obviously still wrestling with the issue of how to balance stewardship and dominion with stewardship and respect.

*[Question: Do you think that people living in the United States have responsibilities toward wilderness?] “Yeah, definitely.” [Do people have responsibilities to protect wilderness for future generations of people?] “Yes.” [Are there any consequences of not living up to these responsibilities?] “It's so easy to lose. I mean I think we've seen species get extinct, we've seen (clears throat) erosion and that type of thing go on at places that are just beautiful, that fifty years down the line that's not the way they're going to be. I mean yeah, I think we have a responsibility not only to do what we can [to keep] from harming it, but also to do what we can to maybe save it from the natural erosion and that type of thing that really isn't our fault, but if we can do something to fix it—it'd be great. [Probe: How do you feel about these natural forces, like fire, and rain and flood that may impact some of these settings.] “Well ... you hate the fire but it happens, you know sometimes, and I think we do our best to put them out; I don't think we let them run wild or anything. And floods, again, you lose one thing you gain something else from it. I don't know I guess that's just part of the picture, and I'm not sure that we really are causing that, like the big flood, I can't remember I think it was a dirt dam that was up there that broke through? [Yeah.] So I don't know if we really had an impact then on that or not as far as causing it, or helping to cause it. But again, you have a whole different side and an appreciation, and a realization of nature as a force to be reckoned with too. You need to be aware when you're out here too, when the storm comes up to get below timber line and stuff like that, so that's just part of the package.” (137-159)*

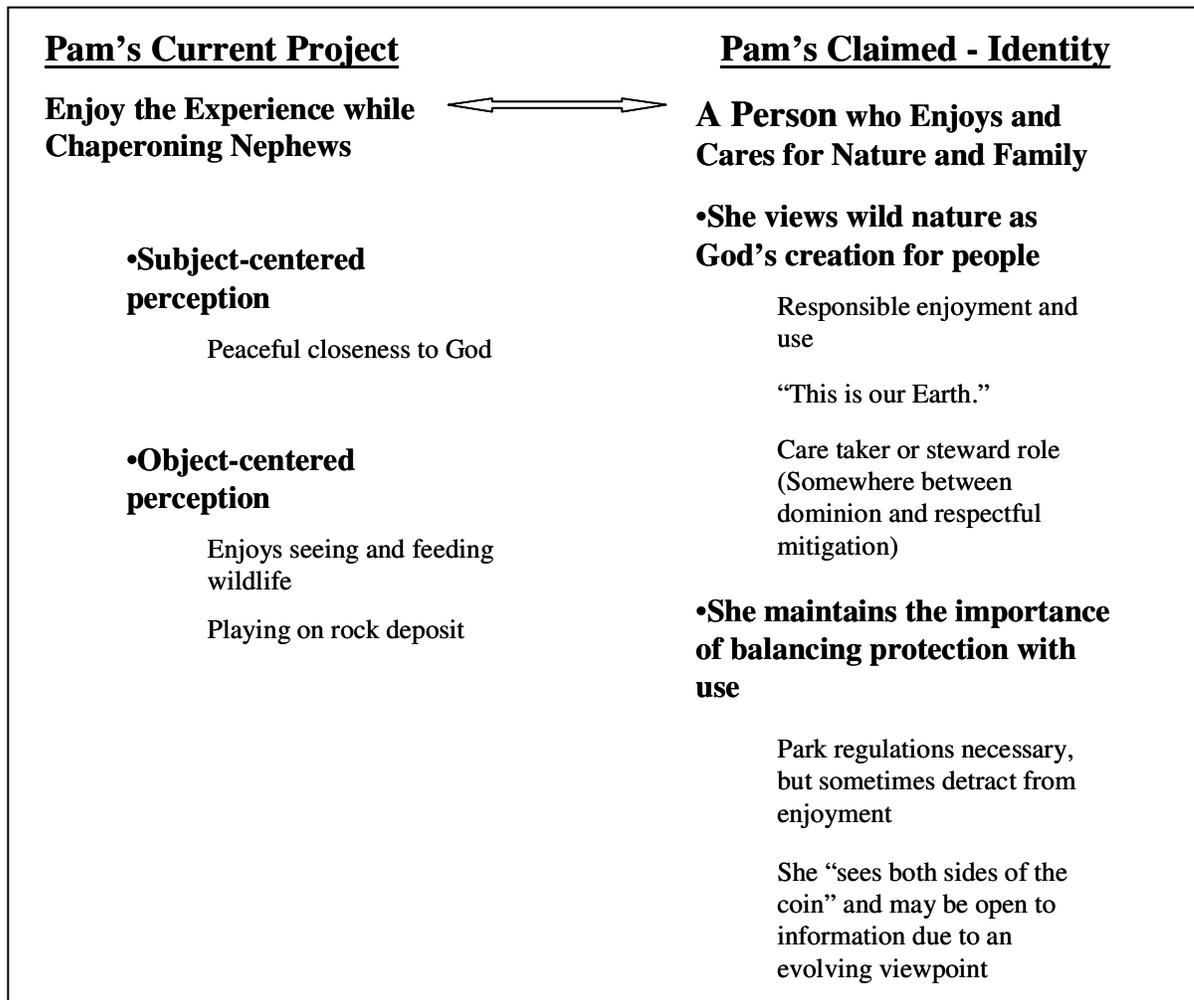


Figure 12. Organizing system for Pam's narrative.

Pam seems ready to better understand the degree to which natural damage is related to human actions. Moreover, she seems to indicate that there may be some advantages associated with flooding, for example (137-159), and she feels that some of these forces are part of wilderness and the experience of it. Pam seems like the kind of visitor that would be receptive to efforts to better interpret the role of natural disturbance in maintaining ecosystem health and diversity as well as the Park's attempts at mitigating unnatural disturbance. In a sense, this not only fits with her religious beliefs that are linked to stewardship, but also mirrors internal debates over a variety of resource

management issues in the Park. As she gains more experience and understanding of the natural world during repeat visits to these places, Pam's conceptions of her responsibilities to nature and how that fits her religious beliefs may take on new meanings.

To conclude, Pam's narrative was interpreted as an expression of her identity as a person who responsibly enjoys and cares for wild nature. She believes that God created wilderness for such reasons. Pam experiences the Park from a position somewhere between responsible dominion and responsible mitigation with high respect for natural forces. During this particular visit to RMNP, I think that she was enjoying a day hike with her nephews while serving as their chaperone as they explored and enjoyed this particular trail corridor. Pam did not speak about her experience this day in terms of spending time with these family members nor did the conversation lead her in that direction. Nonetheless, she stayed in close communication with her nephews via their hand held two-way radios while they were hiking on their own at elevations that were perhaps beyond Pam's capability. Another aspect of her project may have been to keep up with them while enjoying as much of the backcountry as possible. Her personal construction of the relationship between people and wilderness was the focus of the dialog, however. I interpreted this as an important expression of her identity.

### **Hedy: A Local Resident Who Finds Spiritual Solace at the Park**

This research participant was a local woman from Estes Park, Colorado. Hedy was Informant JC2a interviewed on August 15, 2001 at Ouzel Lake in Wild Basin during the morning. She is a 51 year-old registered nurse with 20 years formal education.

During this visit, she was on a day hike with a group, possibly from her religious congregation. She was in the company of a teenage girl from her group at the time of the interview. Hedy identified herself as a born again Christian at the end of the interview. She meditates and studies the Bible when alone in the Park (8-19). Her relationship with God is an important aspect of her life, and Hedy finds significant spiritual meaning in her relationship to place.

Hedy's conception of wilderness includes places in the backcountry that are accessible to many visitors at RMNP, but she seems to prefer the absence of people despite being there as part of a group during this particular visit (3-6). As the conversation evolved, Hedy revealed that spiritual renewal and solitude are important aspects of her experience, but she can enjoy the companionship of others as well (8-19).

*[Question: When you think about wilderness, which places in the Park do you think of?]* "Places far from roads. It's not a particular part of the park, as it is distance from people." *[Probe: So, if you could give a distance, in general?]* "If you can get three and a half to four miles from a road, you're in wilderness." 3-6  
*[Question: Would you say that wilderness is important to you?]* "Yes; oh absolutely—*[PROBE: How so?]*—because wilderness renews your soul."  
*[Question: So, places in the Park that you think of as wilderness, are there any in particular that are especially important to you?]* "Yeah. Odessa Lake is one of my favorite places to go when I want to be solitary. It's accessible. There are trails there, but the lake's big enough to swallow a lot of people. So you can get solitude even if you're not alone at the lake." *[Question: What activities do you do in the wilderness?]* "Um, I primarily hike in, and if I have a friend we chat, and if I don't have a friend, I do Bible study and meditation." 8-19

Her positive experiences at a special place, namely Odessa Lake, support management efforts to disperse visitor groups at alpine lakes and similar sites where visitors gather. In addition, this suggests a need to provide day visitors with information about where they can find lower densities and areas where people tend to be dispersed. This information should explain both the experience opportunities and the norms for

behavior at these locations. The Park's Backcountry Office currently provides this information for those who pass through—largely overnight backpackers. For Hedy, it is possible to achieve solitude in an outdoor experience at RMNP when other visitors are nearby, particularly if they are not visible, and as she later explains, audible (50-61). Her testimony provides evidence that the concept of solitude may be relative for people depending on their perception of density rather than actual numbers of visitors, and that the experience of solitude may possibly be limited by one's ability to access these places. Certainly, some day hikers at RMNP who seek quiet and solitude (such as Hedy) may be limited to shorter hikes 3-4 miles in from a trailhead for various reasons (e.g. small children, physical limitations, time, etc.). Despite these limitations (and limited space at sites), these visitors are seeking and in some cases creating that sense of solitude, which is essential to their experience. They accomplish this by naturally dispersing themselves to avoid the sight and sound of others at places like Ouzel and Odessa Lakes, for examples.

While explaining how she views human relationships with wilderness, Hedy indicates that some people recognize that going to places like RMNP promotes well-being, but there are others who lack this knowledge (i.e. meaning) because they have never experienced wilderness in this manner, so they do not seek it (21-25).

*[Question: How would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?]* “Hmm, I think that varies. I think there's a population that knows that wilderness is essential to their well-being. And there's a part of the population that doesn't know that. To those who know that, it's essential. But I think there are a lot of people who are apathetic to it because it's not a part of their experience. 21-25

Hedy apparently is a person “who know[s]” about the meaningful connections between wilderness and her own well-being. That is, she holds the belief that a

wilderness experience is healthy for her spirituality. Her belief is grounded in individual meanings about her relationship to God, which she has the freedom to express and contemplate when visiting and interacting with the wilderness setting at the Park, particularly when the experience is one of solitude. According to Long and Averill (2003, p.28), enhanced spirituality is a benefit that is frequently associated with solitude.

In her narrative, she expresses an identity as a person who seeks spiritual solace at RMNP (Figure 13). During this visit she probably was engaged, in part, in a project to reinforce this identity by “renewing her soul” (8-19) and sense of well being while also enjoying fellowship with her church group. For Hedy, this project of enhanced spirituality and her claimed identity are inextricably linked despite at first appearing incompatible. A sense of solitude that does not exclude sharing the experience with others recurred as an important theme and sub-dimension of her claimed identity. It may be that Christian fellowship is equally important to Hedy’s spiritual well being during a wilderness experience. For Hedy, being in the presence of other park visitors and solitude seem compatible. In a recent analysis of the benefits and the social nature of solitude, Long and Averill (2003) defined the experience of solitude as “a state of reduced social inhibition and increased freedom to select one’s mental or physical activities” (p. 23), which is usually experienced in the absence of other people, but being by oneself is not a necessary condition for experiencing solitude. Researchers have described a reduction in conflict between visitors of like mind and those engaged in similar activities (e.g., Jacob & Schreyer, 1980).

Hedy once again confirms the importance of spiritual benefits and a sense of solitude in a wilderness experience (63-64; 80-86) as she expresses her identity and

project through the narrative. In addition, she indicates that it is necessary to set some lands aside, such as RMNP, where no commercial development is permitted. In her conception of a wilderness experience, there is no room for commercial development that could seriously impact the quiet and solitude associated with spiritual renewal.

*[Question: What types of feelings do you have when you're in the wilderness?]*  
“Tranquility, and a sense of serenity.” 63-64

*[Question: Would you say that people have a right to use some wilderness for their benefit?]* “Well—*[This is open benefits; however you want it to be.]* “However I define it?” *[Yeah.]* “Well I think everyone should use it to their, to their spiritual benefit. Get out there and enjoy the solitude, enjoy the nature, and get away from people for a while, and have a good time in it, but if you're talking about commercial benefit, I think there's nothing wrong with limiting some land that can't be used for commercial benefit.” 80-86

Given the importance of quiet solitude to her experience, Hedy seems to be more concerned with noise than numbers or proximity of people at RMNP. She expressed strong sentiment against the use of motorized vehicles in wilderness, and she indicated that noise was her main concern, referencing impacts to wildlife as an example (88-90).

*[Question: What would you say are some limits to human uses of wilderness? Things that people should not do in the wilderness.]* “Motorized stuff—for the noise and disruption to wildlife is probably my number one, my number one limitation on it.” 88-90

She also described the experience of hearing an airplane that had recently flown over their location as a disturbance to her experience, and Hedy reiterated the disruptive nature of motorized vehicles in wilderness for people who seek solitude (38-50).

*[Question: What would you say are advantages or beneficial reasons to protecting?]* “Well, the one thing is the absence of motorized noises. Do you remember just a few minutes ago, we had a plane fly over? *[Mhm.]* And I don't even know if you noticed all of this, but I found that highly intrusive—*[I notice all the time.]* Uh-huh. I'm all the way out here, and I have to listen to the plane. Well, yesterday it was nice; we only had a helicopter, we didn't have any planes flying over the Park yesterday (laughing) because of President Bush's visit. Um, and that to me was a good thing. *[Yeah.]* I wish they would ban flights,

commercial flights over the Park. I know we have no low flying commercial flights. But then there are also those little ground vehicles in the winter and in the summer that people would take into the wilderness areas if they had that opportunity. And it's a way for them to get there fast, but it really disrupts the wilderness for those who are there for solitude and quiet.” 38-50

Commercial over flights, noises from roads, and loud disruptive visitors have been identified as impact issues at RMNP (Brooks & Titre, 2003). Her testimony also reinforces the wisdom of the ban on commercial helicopter tours over the Park, which has become NPS policy. Hedy’s interview narrative supports concerns on the part of the NPS over these. Also, her testimony concretely verifies the importance of quiet for the park visitor seeking renewal and spiritual benefits from a solitary (but sometimes social) backcountry/wilderness experience.

In an interesting dialog between Hedy and the interviewer, she clarifies the importance of visitors being dispersed at distances that minimize noise to enhance a sense of solitude at places like RMNP (50-61). She also confirms a willingness to share the experience with other people and a concern for the safety and well being of fellow visitors. Near the end of the excerpt, Hedy restates her position that loud people, however, are unacceptable.

*[Yeah. Probe: Just wondering, what do you think of other people?] “Other people in the wilderness?” [Like, I know when those other kids were over there, they were loud and feeding the ducks, and that annoyed my experience. I was wondering what you thought?] “Did it? They were far enough from us that, that I didn't hear them. Um, I knew they were over there; we followed them up. They are cute little kids. People get—I worry about them being this far back without an adult, and wanted to go ask them how much experience they had. They did have a walkie-talkie with an aunt [Pam] on the other end who's back like at Calypso Cascades, and probably couldn't hear them if they got in trouble on a walkie-talkie. [Right.] So that was my big—the concern about them. But I don't think there should be noisy, rambunctious, drunken parties back in the wilderness; [I think] that people need to respect other people back here.” 50-61*

Coincidentally, the two young boys in the vicinity were Pam's nephews who were previously discussed in the interpretation of Pam's narrative. Hedy and the interviewer reacted differently to the presence and behavior of these boys. This instance provides a concrete example of how visitor behavior can differentially affect the experience of other visitors at RMNP and perhaps other protected areas. Hedy's concern for their safety while exploring the lake with no adult supervision indirectly affected her experience by competing with her meditations and/or social interaction with companions from her church group. When she reports that their presence did not bother her because they were out of sight and earshot, she reconfirms her tolerance for other visitors and the personal importance of quiet. On the other hand, the loudness on the part of the boys and their feeding of the wild ducks at the lake's edge directly and adversely affected the experience for the interviewer (50-61).

As a sub-dimension of her claimed identity, Hedy made clear several times during the interview that she was a local resident (27-36; 108-114). She said that she was aware of some controversy surrounding RMNP and wilderness designation in the community of Estes Park, but she did not talk about what specific issues were controversial at this point in the interview, and the researcher did not probe the situation or inquire about the attitudes of the people living in the community. However, Hedy's response indicates that park managers need to balance their efforts, providing adequate access for visitors and maintaining a front country/backcountry distinction in zoning management at RMNP. She again indicates that she also supports a diversity of types of land use and multiple recreation activities, but not necessarily in wilderness where she seeks solitude. This

observation and the excerpt that follows (91-96) provide direct and important input to staff at the Park from a member of the community (i.e., a local perspective).

*[Question: Do you think there are any disadvantages in protecting wilderness?]* (Pause) “That's an interesting question for a local to answer because I know that it's controversial in Estes Park. Um I, I think like anything, there needs to be balance in life; that we need parts of the Park where people who are handicapped—and I don't mean necessarily wheelchair-bound—so like the elderly who can't hike in five miles; there should be parts of the Park that they can get to. Um ... and places where you can take small kids, and they can enjoy nature without getting all the way to the wilderness point. *[OK.]* But I do think there's balance; I wouldn't, you know like the whole state of Colorado declared wilderness, and not be able to do some motorized activities in life too.” 27-36

*[Probe: During your visits or this visit in particular, do you see or have you seen negative signs of other visitors in the Park?]* “Um—*[Litter, carving.]* A little bit of litter, particularly shiny litter shows up. *[Yeah.]* And there was like a candy wrapper or something under a rock that we passed. It's like, ‘yep, there it is’, but that's probably all I've seen today. I actually am fairly happy with the way they manage Rocky.” 91-96

Regarding visible impacts during her visit to Ouzel Lake, Hedy reported seeing nothing except some specks of litter along the trail (91-96). After admitting that she was pleased with how the NPS was managing the place, she expresses some suspicions regarding the mining of minerals at RMNP and a good deal of local knowledge when the interviewer probed the issue.

*[Question: When people try to protect wilderness, do you ever think that certain priorities are not satisfied? Things like you may have heard of loss of jobs because we're not logging this area anymore, or mining, or other things like that?]* “There are not exactly good minerals in this part of Rocky to begin with. Maybe in Southern Colorado mining's more of an issue where there are actually minerals. Uh, the early miners in this area went away broke. There are a few mines in the Park, or mine tailings where you can see people tried, but nobody got rich off mining in the Park, so why would we open it up now to mining is beyond me.” *[I guess I'm, I'm asking more about your...]*—General?—*[...your global feeling on those issues.]* “Now I—again balance. I don't see anything wrong with setting aside areas that we set aside as wilderness where mining and logging doesn't go on. It doesn't have to be all one way or all the other. We can have both. But there does, there does need to be wilderness areas where it's not allowed.” 66-78

The above excerpt demonstrates (1) that Hedy cares about the use and management of the Park and (2) that she has some understanding of the history and physical characteristics of RMNP. Managers and researchers at the Park should expect that some other local residents hold similar knowledge and concern about this protected landscape, but they should not assume homogeneity in the community. It also suggests that it is always a good idea to give visitors information about the actual proportion of protected areas managed for multiple use and those managed for natural conditions and processes (i.e., national parks and wilderness areas). In the dialog below (108-114), Hedy again reports an awareness and understanding of the site-specific issues surrounding wilderness designation at RMNP.

*[Question: In general, do you think something should be done about loss of wilderness?]* “Yeah, like I don't know an answer to that cause ... it's easier for me to talk about the controversy about whether parts of Rocky should be designated as wilderness because I'm from here, and I understand that issue. But it's harder for me to say the people in Alaska [for example] aren't doing a good job managing their wilderness cause I don't know what the pressures are on them.”  
108-114

*[Question: Would you say losing wilderness is good, bad, or undecided for you?]*  
It would be bad to lose wilderness in Rocky, but again I don't want to impose that value on people in other places when they have economic pressures that I don't understand. 123-125

In addition, this testimony highlights the importance and need for community involvement and collaboration with local residents and stakeholder groups regarding natural resource decision-making. That is, as Hedy clearly states (108-114; 123-125), local people are best qualified to talk about the resource issues at the places where they live, and tend to have less understanding of the issues at distant places in other landscapes. This supports the general premise that both local and national voices are critical for natural resource management and policy-making. It also indicates that

researchers should try to focus on the local context as much as possible during interviews and probes when conducting studies designed to generate narrative understanding of people's relationships to specific places.

In sum, Hedy claimed an identity during the interview as a local resident that seeks solitude at RMNP for the purpose of spiritual renewal and religious meditation. Despite the importance of solitude to her experience, Hedy expressed a willingness to share the place and the experience with other visitors. During this visit, her identity is expressed in a project that combines a sense of solitude and fellowship with members of her church group (most likely in small sub groups as evidenced by the presence of a teenage girl during the interview). It is probable that Hedy, and others like her who recreate as part of a group, often seek privacy and independence to express individual identities as opposed to being completely alone in outdoor recreation settings (Long & Averill, 2003).

As a local resident, Hedy's narrative offers a set of balanced insights to park managers that should inform discussions about solitude, zoning, visitor information, and public involvement. Hedy openly states that she has relevant knowledge about controversial issues surrounding wilderness designation and regulations to protect resources at RMNP that may provide a balance to the view held by local economic interests, for example. Perhaps she and other residents are ready to continue collaboration or enter into additional dialog with the NPS regarding some of these issues.

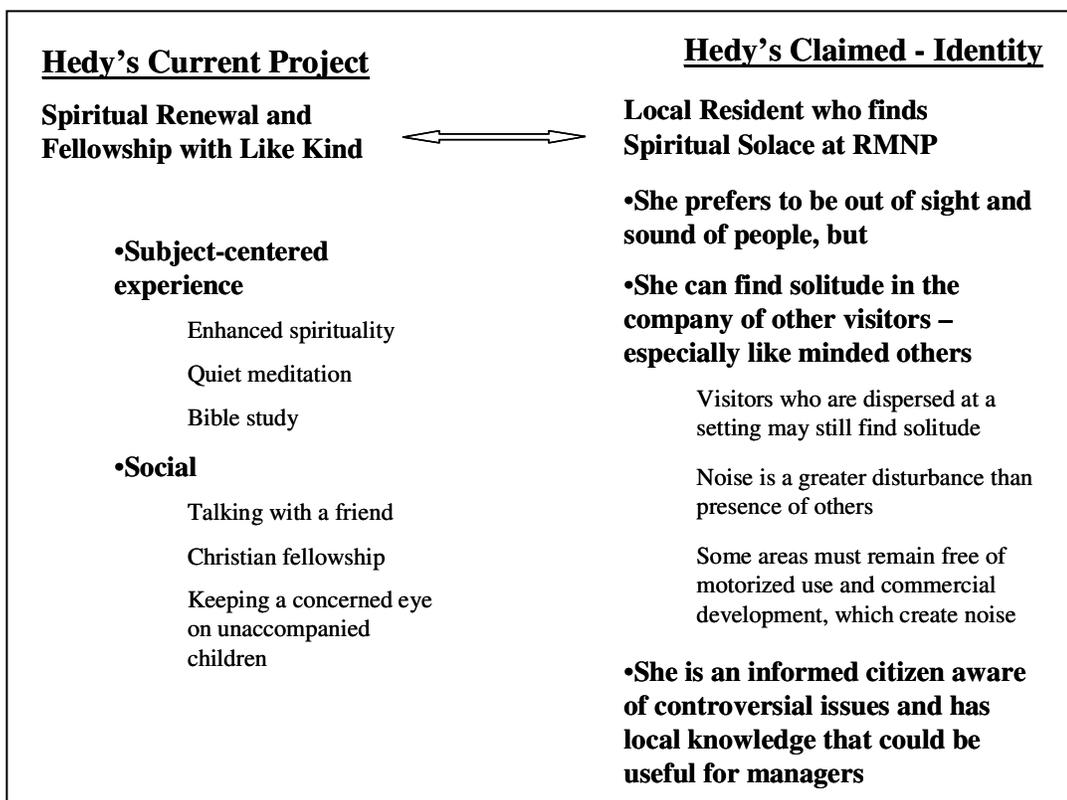


Figure 13. Organizing system for Hedy's narrative.

### **Kim: A Person Who Respects Nature**

Kim is Informant JB9 interviewed at North St. Vrain campsite in Wild Basin on July 15, 2001 during the morning. Kim is a 31 year-old white female Colorado resident with two-years of college education. She was camping with her husband and their two young daughters. However, Kim did not talk much about her family in relation to place or experience except that she thinks that wilderness preservation is crucial for the social and biological survival of present and future generations as evidenced below (168-172).

*[If most of the wilderness in this country disappeared, would you or your family experience any consequences?]* “Oh yeah, definitely—environmental consequences, it would change the whole global—yeah, the whole scheme of things. People of the Earth need this part of the world to survive, and um ... socially, yes, more unfocused on the whole picture.” (168-172)

Although they are return visitors, it is possible that Kim and her husband have not yet developed a strong family identity at RMNP because their children are so young. Family identity in connection to the Park did not emerge during our conversation. However, Kim claimed to be “a mom first, and then I do book keeping and accounting”(183-184). She has no formal religion; she stated, “It's more [a] spiritual, nature-based religion” (186-189); Kim told me that her spirituality relates to wilderness 100 percent in this same excerpt. She does not donate to any environmental organizations, but at one point in the conversation she implied that when people send money to other countries to help with rainforest conservation, for example, “you don't know where it goes” (144).

Kim's current personal project was to reconnect with herself and her place in the world. Two dimensions of this project emerged during the interview: (1) the subject-centered nature of her experience and (2) escape from the stresses of city life (Figure 14). Kim enjoys the slower pace and sensory experiences that she has at RMNP. She has time for introspection without the distractions of her daily life in the city. She experiences “a sense of being” that enables her to reconnect with who she is. In excerpt 9-18, Kim describes the experience of place as having a grounding effect for her.

*[Question: Would you say, in your opinion, that wilderness is important to you?]*  
“Oh very.” *[Probe: What about it makes it important to you? What characteristics or traits?]* “Wilderness important—Um—It has to be just the lack of—busy-ness, or lack of people. Just the solitude where you can actually hear the wind in the trees, or birds (laughs); it kind of puts you back in your space, I think.” *[Probe: Could you elaborate a little bit on the space that you're talking about?]* “Yeah I think with the way that everything works today in the world, you can kind of lose track of who you are. You go so fast; you can always be reached, by cell phone, by e-mail, or by anything. And out here you kind of have a place that you can sit and you can actually think without being interrupted. And that gives you a sense of being” (9-18).

In addition to individual expressive meanings and personal benefits, Kim described benefits of places like RMNP for society as a whole, while at the same time confirming the escape dimension of her project (57-65).

*[Do you think uh there are any advantages or beneficial reasons for protecting wilderness areas?] “Yes.” [What characteristics of wilderness make it worth protecting?] “Characteristics of wilderness—could you explain, please?” [OK. Well some people say that protecting wilderness has a cost. But then, you know, there are others who say protecting it has great benefit as well.] “Oh I—well, you have to have places like this because if you don't—it's just not, everybody's just going get all clumped together and become—the more people you get stuck in one spot, the more violence there is, the more tension ... the more just yuck (laughs). Here you can, you have a place where people can at least get away, even if they are stuck in, you know, people situations.” (57-65)*

She indicates that she has had numerous experiences at different places throughout the Park, both “good and bad”. For Kim, the most memorable experiences at RMNP are those where she experienced the humbling forces of nature. She shared a story about one of these times when she was frightened, which shows evidence of the linkage between her project of reconnecting with self and her expressed identity as a person who respects nature (20-37). Kim’s relationship to nature includes knowing her place in the backcountry/wilderness. She respects it because of its capacity to promote a sense of spiritual grounding and because of its power, physical challenges, and vastness relative to human beings. This example displays how the internal experience of place, which is focused on the self, can interact with the natural forces and physical features of the setting to make the overall experience meaningful for an individual’s life. In this story, she provides a vivid description of what this particular humbling experience was like when she failed to properly respect the forces of nature and took the mountains for granted.

*[Question: Of these kinds of places that you've talked about, on the western slope, or anywhere else in this Park that you consider wilderness, are there any particular places that have a special importance to you? Based on your beliefs, family, experiences, friends or memories.]* “Oh my gosh, there's so many. Pretty much—I could pick a place in this Park, and I could think of an experience that's been good, or scary, or you know, (laughs).” *[Probe: Would you mind briefly describing one for me?]* “Oh sure, um, good, bad, a hike with friends? I guess probably one of the most vivid memories, and ones that still stick with me sometimes, are those—the ones that are—that were really frightening, I guess (laughs). The ones that really make you realize how small you are compared to the Earth. Like one day I went and hiked up Flat Top ([a nearby peak] pronunciation unclear on the tape) just a little more up above here. I wasn't equipped well enough, and I ended up coming down, falling in a waterfall, losing my jacket, my car keys, and all my food, and my lighter, and it was getting dark, and I had to cross the river, scurry across a log, and I was shaking so bad. Finally got down, made it down before total dark. Many people driving down the road, and there were a lot of people out, hitched a ride down. Finally made it back into town, all bloody and scraped up, going ‘Oh my gosh I am so small.’ You know and I was getting kind of cocky about being hot stuff, like ‘I can do it.’” (Laughs.) *[Probe: Yeah ... you felt like you were brought down a couple notches?]* “Oh yeah, like a hundred (laughs).” (20-37)

When asked to list the feelings that she has while at RMNP, Kim indicated a sense of relief with an actual sigh (82-101). When away from other people, being at the place allows her to escape the stresses of everyday life, which facilitates the experience of reconnecting with self (i.e., her larger personal project). However, when she is near crowds, she has a tendency to watch other people at the Park. For Kim, some of these other visitors do not know their place in the backcountry/wilderness (66-80) as is made evident by what she considers to be their complete lack of preparedness, respect, and lack of awareness of the realities of their surroundings (82-101). Kim uses the analogy of an amusement park (and the behaviors that one would see there) to characterize their experience, which may be less authentic than the way Kim views her experience in the backcountry/wilderness. In her narrative about witnessing this “ridiculous behavior” by other visitors, Kim identifies herself as a person who respects the forces of nature. Her

respect may have developed over time through her own personal stories and humbling experiences at places such as RMNP (e.g., 20-37).

*[Question: Could you please list for me all the feelings that you have when you visit the wilderness at RMNP?]* “(Chuckles.) Mostly just (sighs loudly, laughs).” *[Was that a sigh of relief?]* “Sigh of relief, yeah. Um, mostly when I get away from a lot of the people, or when I get in a crowd, I tend to do more ... sort of the tourist watching I guess ... and they’re like, ‘Oh, what are you doing?’ Not that I find myself—higher than anybody else, but then I find the things people do are, are ridiculous to me.” *[Probe: Could you give me an example of some of these ridiculous behaviors?]* “(Hearty laugh.) Oh sure. OK, a couple days ago, we’re hiking up the trail and the sky is dark, I mean it’s going to rain, you can tell. It’s coming down the valley and it’s going to rain, and here come a group of about fifteen people walking by, and all they have are little white paper lunch bags with their lunches. And they’re about two miles from the trailhead, and that’s all they have (laughs). And you just know that they’re just going to get dumped on, and cold and sick, and you just have to go ‘Well, OK. Maybe they’ll figure it out.’ *[Yeah.]* Hiking with their purses—that just cracks me up.” *[Probe: Almost like they don’t, I don’t know, it’s like they’re almost at Disney World.]* “Yeah exactly. It is—it’s a lot like an amusement park. I used to work in a park, and it was, everybody would ask: ‘Well, where’s the park? Where are the rides?’ (Laughs.) It’s like, ‘No. There’s a putt-putt [golf], but that’s it.’” *[Probe: Where’s the midway?]* “Yeah (laughs). *[Probe: I’ve heard a lot of people refer to Estes Park and RMNP as the same thing. Have you ever had that experience?]* “Oh, yeah. A lot of people think that, yeah.” (82-101)

Another important aspect of Kim’s claimed identity is her relatively holistic conception of the backcountry/wilderness. This conception is partially demonstrated by the diversity of activities that Kim engages in while at the place. In excerpt 39-43, she indicates that she enjoys passive and active activities, which involve both subjective and objective perception.

*[Question: Could you please list for me all the activities that you do while you visit wilderness at Rocky?]* “Oh gosh, let’s see. Uh, backpacking is one. Hiking, fishing, some sightseeing, um ... I do art. I do watercolors, drawings, journaling; and I also try to learn about vegetation, edible plants, mushrooms—*[Probe: What do you draw and paint?]* Mostly landscape, things like that.” (39-43)

Kim thinks that people can experience a variety of relationships with wilderness. For example, she appreciates it as a “gift”. At the end of the excerpt below, Kim says that

she thinks that one's relationship to wilderness depends on the amount of experience they have had interacting with it. Also, she considers people to be part of wilderness, although some people are not aware of their relationship.

*[Question: Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and the wilderness?]* “Depends on the people (laughs). I mean there's some people, like myself—most of the people that I know that really appreciate and find it a gift for them to be able to go out and populate these places. But, people, there's a lot of people who just (trails off).” *[Probe: So there are ... different relationships?]* “Yeah, it really depends on the person, and I think it also depends on how much they've had to interact with it.” *[Probe: Do you consider humans to be separate from wilderness or part of it?]* “Definitely part of it, whether they realize it or not. (Laughs.)” (45-52)

In a story about some of her friends who live in a big city, Kim elaborates how the wilderness experience leads to developing a “user-friendly” relationship with the Earth and being part of it as opposed to being fearful of wilderness (66-80). Kim's testimony provides a good example of how peoples' relationships to place can be dependent on time and experience. She seems to be saying that her identity as a person who respects nature has developed with experience. At the end of this passage, Kim warns that the ultimate consequence of not respecting nature is a lack of self-respect thereby highlighting the linkage between her project and identity.

*[Probe: What do you think about, you know, people who have never been out of the large city, and are they, have they lost track or touch with the environment?]* “Oh yeah. I mean they don't see the, they don't see—the problems that are being caused by, like not recycling and stuff like that; they're very—not user-friendly to the Earth. They don't see the by products of what they are doing. And then I also, on another angle of that, I see that people who haven't come out here and lost touch, they're actually, sometimes really scared to be out here. They're not sure of their place here. I have some friends who live in Washington D.C.; every year they come out and reserve a camping spot, and every year they turn around and just can't do it, spend the night in the woods; they get way too scared.” *[Probe: Do you think there are any consequences for society, of this apparent complete separation?]* “Oh yeah. There are definitely huge consequences for society. I mean ... we're supposed to work as a unit with the planet ... and if you don't learn

to respect nature, and the way that the things kind of work together, you kind of lose track of respecting yourself.” (66-80)

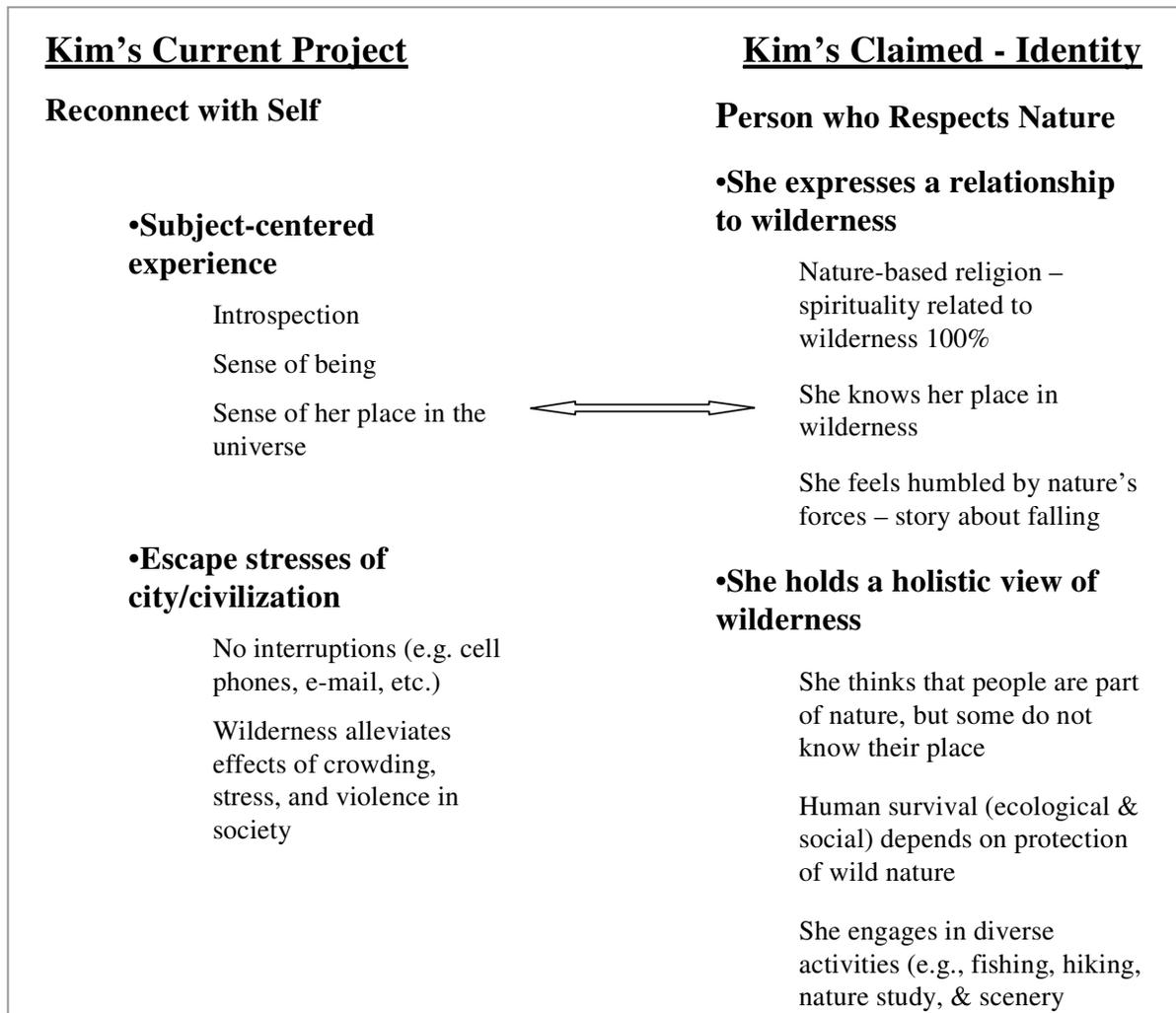


Figure 14. Organizing system for the idiographic themes in Kim’s narrative.

Much of Kim’s narrative focused on our relationship to nature as a whole and our responsibilities as people of the Earth. When asked directly about what parts of RMNP she considers to be wilderness, she expressed a more formal view in which wilderness is actually defined by the presence of fewer people (3-7). This mirrors the Catch-22 or double-edged sword notion of other narratives—wilderness experience promotes

appreciation, self-respect, and preservation, but having too many people there can result in a non-wilderness experience for some individuals.

*[Question: When you think about wilderness, which places in this Park or other places you've visited do you think of?]* “Probably more on the other side of the—*[The western slope?]*—Yeah, the western slope in particular, no specific area just less people go there. Definitely more lush and ... (trails off.) *[Probe: Do you think the amount of people has something to do with wilderness classification?]* “Yeah (laughs).” (3-7)

In summary, she is engaged in a project to reconnect with herself through a wilderness experience. Kim presented herself as a person who respects the backcountry/wilderness as well. Figure 14 above organizes Kim’s experience narrative and relationship to place in the larger scheme of these life themes.

#### **Mike: Wildlife Enthusiast / Conservationist**

Mike is Informant JB17; he is a white male from Northern Michigan, who is twenty-three years old. The interview was conducted at Thunder Lake during the morning period on August 16, 2001. Mike has a high school diploma. He is a carpenter/framer. He contributes to several wildlife/hunting organizations, and he hunts and fishes (13-20). I spoke with him about ten to fifteen minutes before I asked him for an interview. When I arrived at the site, I noticed that Mike had been watching a doe and a fawn (i.e., mule deer), which were browsing in a sunlit area on a hill behind the ranger patrol cabin. He made a point to show the deer to me, and he walked me back to the place where he had been watching the animals. He said, "You gotta come down here and see this" (80-91; 269-270). We watched the deer together while talking. Then, I asked him to do the interview.

*[Question: Would you say in your opinion that wilderness is important to you?]* “Oh most definitely. Wildlife, keep the nature around.” *[Probe: What characteristics traits of wilderness make it important for you?]* “Oh, the beauty of it. I like keepin' wildlife around 'cause I'm a hunter too, I guess. So I enjoy the huntin' of 'em too.” *[Probe: Mhm. Are there any other things about places like this that make it important to you?]* “Oh it's—I'm religious so it's kinda interestin' to sit back, and imagine what God actually done. Just enjoy nature. All the way around I guess.” (13-20)

I observed him to be highly wildlife oriented. Mike also claimed to be religious and active in Christianity, making reference to creation and how the experience of wilderness confirms, for him, everything that God has done (13-20). After the interview, he told me about salmon fishing in Michigan and how he took a group of Amish people fishing on one occasion; whether Mike is Amish himself was not revealed during our conversation, however.

Mike had hiked alone to Thunder Lake in Wild Basin for the day. This was his first visit to RMNP where he actually hiked in the backcountry, so we discussed his experiences at other places (and wilderness in general) in addition to the Park. He was in the area on vacation with his girlfriend and brother, who had not accompanied him to the lake this particular morning. He seemed to be impressed with what he saw during his adventurous hike once he was in the backcountry. At the outset of the interview, Mike referenced a desire to see wildlife and a sense of curiosity about what types of wild animals might be secretly watching him. He also described how he imagines a sense of earlier times in the history of this landscape—the Old West or pioneer narrative. Mike and I exchanged mutual stories about our first visits to these mountains (22-35).

*[Question: Are there any particular special places for you that you associate with your family, friends, or memories or beliefs?]* “Oh, I guess up in Porcupine Mountains [in Michigan]. Our family used to go up there all the time together. So, this is kinda adventurous for my own to come up here (chuckles.)” *[Probe: Yeah, yeah. So what do you think about the Rocky Mountains, now that you've been*

*here?]* “Oh they're gorgeous. *[Yeah.]* It's hard to explain—see the different formations, different rocks, and just I imagine all the ... different animals that could really be lookin' around at you that you can't see. Imagine what old people used to go through, Indian tribes as, as they came across here too. Old West—bunch a different things I guess.” *[Yeah. The first time I came out here was in February of '98, and I was just awe-struck. I'd never seen the Rockies before.]* “I came out here...it was...uh eight years ago 'bout '92 I came up here. Never had a chance to walk around or anything. This is the first time I actually came and hiked. You get back in there, in these trails, it's even better yet (laughs).” *[Yeah.]* “Than anything else.” *[Yep.]* (22-35)

This was a trip of exploration for Mike primarily to see wildlife. Mike is a person who appreciates wildlife and who considers himself to be knowledgeable about wildlife behavior. He expressed this knowledge by describing his concern about some visitors approaching too close to wild animals (44-54). Mike indicated that he knows what to expect in certain situations involving wildlife, but many day visitors may not, which highlights the need for interpretation about the dangers of approaching elk at RMNP, for example.

*[Question: Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?]* “I think better than cities, they have better relationship here. They kinda understand the territories of each other. In the city you come in here and, and you see city people come in the mountains—they see the wilderness, they get as close as they can to an elk or something”. *[Probe: How do you feel about people who approach potentially dangerous wildlife?]* “Ah one of the stupidest things they can do, I'd say. 'Specially if you don't know what, even a little bit, to expect of it. *[Mhm.]* You gotta know when the cows, cow elk's got their baby runnin' around. They're gonna charge after ya. Still haven't seen any good bears yet, that's what I'm lookin' for (laughs).” *[I haven't seen any here yet either.]* (44-54)

At the end of the excerpt above, he indicates a desire to see a bear at the Park. Looking for wildlife was a recurring theme during Mike's interview and was most likely the focus of his day hike to Thunder Lake. He is a good example of a first time day hiker in RMNP, who was focused on the experience of viewing and encountering wild animals.

I think that Mike is comfortable in and has substantial experience with outdoor settings, but he seemed to have a difficult time verbally expressing his feelings about wilderness. Although it was hard for Mike to find the words at times during the interview discussion (211-215), he expressed himself rather clearly when he did speak. Near the end of the conversation, he touched on some abstract internal feelings and subject-centered perceptions that he experiences while in the wilderness. Again, Mike related these feelings to God and creation (228-234).

*[Question: If most of the wilderness in the United States disappeared, would you or your family experience any consequences?]* “Oh I think so. It'd be better harder for the love a nature to—come out and see stuff. One thing—I think getting' in nature yourself you get a (pause) oh a different feeling, relaxation, different feeling of, I don't know how to say it. Open your eyes better I guess. So I think there'd be a lot of consequences.” (211-215)

*[Question: What is your religious background?]* “Uh Christian.” *[All right. Uh are you active in this religion?]* “Yeah.” *[Do you consider yourself to be a spiritual person?]* “Yeah.” *[Does uh your, your spirituality relate to you know wilderness or environment at all?]* “Oh, not that, not in the fact that I worship a certain type a, you know, tree god or a sky god, moon god or any of that. But I think it gives ya, like I said before, you come out here—and it just opens your eyes to what God's done, and it just shows you his powers he has.” (228-234)

For Mike, people can be connected to wilderness through the experience of it (54-63). His testimony provides evidence for the validity of experiential learning and direct participation in environmental education. Mike possibly made the effort to go on this backcountry hike by himself to gain more experience with wilderness to strengthen his personal connection. Again the double-edged sword of wilderness is evident. That is, many people may gain understanding and appreciation for wilderness by going to it, but the more people who go to it, the more threatened the experience and the resource may become.

*[Question: In the sense that people normally don't live in the wilderness, would you consider people to be separate from wilderness, or part of it?]* “It depends the area. Everybody's actually part of the wilderness, some part or another, depends on pollution, or ... they all got control of it. But for the—I think you understand, oh I don't know. I think you have that understandin' of the wilderness once you go to it. *[Mhm.]* And git, you gotta git connected with it a little bit, to understand. I can't say they're totally together, but they're not totally separate either.” *[Probe: So it's somethin' that you can't really learn about by readin' books or watchin' TV?]* “No. Can't watch TV doin', that's fer sure. *[(Laughs.)]* Never really know 'til you come out and experience yerself. Understand how they act.” (54-63)

During the interview, he expressed an identity as a wildlife enthusiast and conservationist and a person who really appreciates wild animals (Figure 15). In the excerpt below, Mike reveals his orientation toward wildlife conservation and his belief that it is essential to protect the wilderness habitat that remains (65-70).

*[Question: Do you think that there are any disadvantages in protecting wilderness?]* “Oh I don't, it's hard to say I guess—I mean uncontrolled to not let the human race move on but...otherwise not controlled not to let the animals stay around too. You gotta have some protection for 'em. *[Mhm.]* Like the endangered species now, you don't protect them you won't have any more left. They gotta restore theirself, not too many places let you do that anymore either, so.” (65-70)

Linked to his identity, he was engaged in a project to see wildlife during an adventurous day hike and his trip to the region in general (80-91). Mike's conception of wilderness is defined by the presence of wild animals to a great extent. At times, Mike spoke as if wilderness and wildlife were one in the same in his view. His understanding of the importance of wilderness as habitat for wild animals may be why Mike tends to speak of wilderness and wildlife as one.

*[Question: Could you please list for me all the feelings or emotions that you have when you visit this place, or you know, other wilderness areas?]* “Oh that's hard to do (slight wincing chuckle). Oh you...sometimes you git tired from walkin' around so much but ... *[Yeah.]* besides that you're in awe-struck I guess. It's hard to imagine that there's a place like this still around. I know driving through the Rockies itself, going down 34, 36 whatever it is, kinda git, oh not really bored but, seems repetitious, and then all of a sudden you see another animal—show up and, gitcha all excited again, lookin' around for different type a animal species.”

*[Probe: Do you feel that seein' the wildlife when you're out here is one of the things that's really important to you, or special?]* “Oh, yeah. When you, like back there we saw that deer and fawn jus' runnin' around, that's just the ultimate. Just to be able to see them enjoy it.” (80-91)

Mike considers places such as RMNP to be refuges for wildlife species. During a conversation about hunting, he expressed dissatisfaction with some restrictions on bear hunting in Michigan, but he recognized the necessity of regulations for wildlife conservation. Mike sees the value of RMNP as a place where wild animals can thrive in the absence of hunting (106-125). This testimony reaffirms the NPS mission of protection and no hunting on national parklands. In the face of issues like overabundant elk herds, it may be helpful for park managers to know that members of the hunting public support the no hunting policy at RMNP.

*[Question: Would you say that people have a right to use some wilderness for their benefit? And you ...can define benefit however you wish.]* “Oh I'd say so. Like I'm a hunter. *[Mhm.]* I think I have the right—to go hunt. *[Mhm.]* I know some of the protection laws they got, where sometimes they only allow a certain amount a people t' go after bears. I think sometime restrictin' that that's not right. I haven't been able t' do that yet, but—*[Have you applied for permits?]* Every year.” *[Hm.]* “Every year since I been 18.” *[Wow. All in Michigan?]* “All in Michigan.” *[You might have to try Canada. My dad just got back from up there.]* “Oh did he?” *[With my little, one of my brothers went with him and they were pretty successful.]* “Really?” *[There were four of 'em and they all got one. ...]* *Probe: You know ... hunting regulations are there I guess because people want to preserve the wildlife for a while. How do you feel about not being able to hunt in a place like RMNP?]* “Well I think that's OK. There're really—I mean you can go a lot of other places and find out, you can find a lot of other places t' hunt, like you jus' said Canada. *[Mhm.]* I know Michigan we got deer all over; there is bear up there if you can find 'em. There're some bigger ones here but (chuckles) that's why they're here (laughs a little). That's why they're here so they can...grow and re breed and ... *[Mhm.]* So I think huntin' here, maybe not the big animals, like you don't see too many small game here either I guess. I think it's OK not to be able to hunt [in RMNP].” (106-125)

Mike revealed what the experience of hunting is like for him at the end of the dialog (241-253). He spends time with his Father while hunting, and Mike indicated that

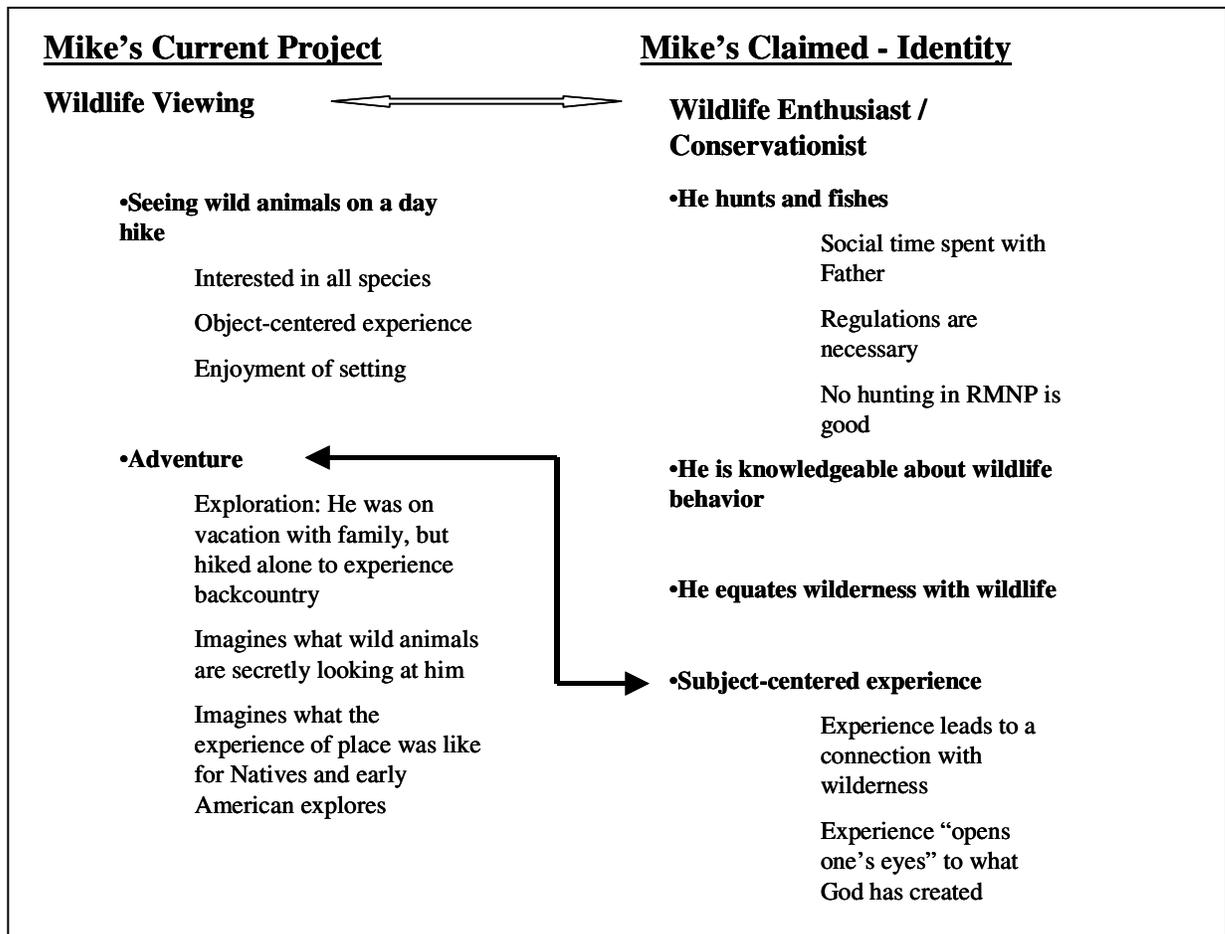


Figure 15. Organized themes for Mike's narrative.

this social dimension is more important than bagging game. The activity is an important part of his identity as a wildlife enthusiast, but the linkages with his desire to see wild animals during this trip and his relationship with his Father show how hunting relates to Mike's life, overall well being, and holistic enjoyment of wildlife and nature.

*[Question: What is your overall reaction to the things that we've discussed today? Did I miss anything important about wilderness that you would like to add?]* "Oh I don't think so; I think you covered pretty much everything. *[Probe: Would you care to elaborate a little bit on how you feel about hunting, and how it makes you feel when you're out hunting? Do you do it with friends and family, or do you go by yourself or?]* "Uh me and my dad go. *[You and your dad?]* Yeah. It's more of a father son time than anything else. And if we get something, we get something; if we don't, we don't. We're not too discouraged any way. It's time to go out and

be together pretty much. It's always nice to bring home a big rack once in a while, though.” [Probe: Right. But you enjoy going on hunts even when you don't get the big rack?] “Oh yeah, yeah. Yep, you can enjoy 'em all. I don't think I'd be out to kill all the little fawns and stuff but...good size animals anyways.” (241-253)

Mike restates his position on conservation by explaining the need for financial support of wilderness above and beyond taxes. He indicates that he donates money to certain conservation organizations as well. Mike's testimony also supports funding research in the parks.

*[Question: Do people living in the United States have a responsibility toward wilderness?]* “Oh I think they do. There's not too many places left and—everybody complain 'bout the taxes paid for all the wilderness 'n' upkeep but tryin' to upkeep somethin' this big is sometimes hard to do with jus' tax money. *[Right.]* I think it's not bad law to have the fundraisers they have, and sometimes give a little bit extra somewhere. I mean I'm a member of the Wildlife Association, 'n' Duck Huntin' Unlimited and huh, I'm pretty big on it, so—*[Probe: So do you feel that our country and our government spends too much money on wilderness?]* I don't know it's hard to say. Sometimes they don't get all the research they want done so, sometimes they don't spend enough.” *[Probe: Are there any consequences to not living up to uh, these responsibilities? If we don't protect it, are there any consequences?]* “Oh I think you don't watch out, there could be a lotta water pollution in this area. You'd be killin' off lotta the different type a games, breeds of animals. And like, big picture, y' know, y' got the ozone layer, if you wanna get that technical but—Life, there is always consequence t' anything you do; sometimes good 'n' sometimes bad. You jus' gotta try to make 'em the good ones.” (141-156)

Mike recognizes the ecological function of places like RMNP for human survival in addition to providing critical habitat for wildlife (141-156). He recognizes the value of the place for larger ecological reasons beyond his personal orientation toward wildlife and its conservation. This supports his relatively high knowledge level and experience in the outdoors.

In sum, there are two dimensions of wildlife viewing for Mike including (1) the object-centered experience and instrumental component of seeing the actual animals in their natural habitats and (2) a sense of adventure or exploration that is linked to his

internal experience of wilderness, connection to nature, and religious beliefs about creation. Wildlife viewing continues to be a major component of the experience at RMNP with 22% of visitors reporting it as their most satisfying experience (Eisenberger & Loomis, 2003). In Mike's case, wildlife viewing is linked to being a wildlife enthusiast and conservationist and his personal and religious construction of wilderness. Knowing that certain species are "out there" whether he sees them or not adds to his sense of adventure and highlights the existence value of wildlife species. Some visitors may report dissatisfaction with an apparent lack of wildlife sightings, but there are most likely others, such as Mike, who appreciate the mere presence (or perception of the presence) of wild animals in wilderness/backcountry settings.

### **Jack: A Temporary Visitor Who Respects Wilderness**

Jack is Informant JB4 interviewed on July 14, 2001 at North St. Vrain, Wild Basin during the morning. Jack is a 25 year-old white male, who is an elementary school science teacher with 17 years formal education. He is a practicing Christian, who attends a Wesleyan church, but he was raised Catholic. He does not donate money to any environmental organizations. He is a first time visitor to RMNP on a back packing trip with his wife and another couple. They are vacationing from Michigan and Indiana, respectively. Although this is his first visit, RMNP is the third protected area that he has visited during this vacation (41-60).

*[Question: What other kinds of places either in this park or others across the country that you have listed as being wilderness, of these places, are there any particular ones that are really special to you, especially important to you?]* "Well other than—for me personally—unfortunately, I've never been west of Chicago until seven days ago. ... But coming out here, we drove through Mount Rushmore, and the Badlands. So, I've been to two national parks, the Badlands

and Rocky Mountains, and those are very, very, very special to me, and I now have a new appreciation for national parks, other than Washington D.C. parks, because that's the only ones that I've been to. It's just breathtaking. I mean there've been moments, especially driving through, every time I get emotional about it, it's when there's not people around obviously, I think that goes hand in hand, but driving through like Wyoming, and seeing—I've never been to Montana, but I'm sure this whole area could be called the big sky country, big sky states, I guess. I mean there were times I was holding the wheel just crying, just for no reason, ... it's so deceiving, that's the key word for this trip, it's deceiving. Looking up in the mountains and I can't tell if they're 50 feet high or 5000 feet high; it's deceiving. It gets me a little dizzy, and in a good way you know, just deceiving. The Badlands were so deceiving. You look down onto the cliff, [and] you can't tell if you're 20 feet or 500 feet. It's a scary but very exciting thing.” 41-60

Jack's descriptive story about his first time out West indicates something important about first time visitors. He appears to be on a trip of discovery; where RMNP may only be one part of the overall emergent experience of the Western mountain landscape for first timers, like Jack, who are on vacation from the Eastern United States and abroad. Those visiting the Park and the surrounding areas for the first time bring with them a variety of preconceptions about the American West and experiences from other places with which they compare and contrast what they experience at RMNP. For example, he compares the relative cleanliness of RMNP with other protected areas that he knows and has visited in Michigan (29-33).

“I think just the fact that—back home, back home is Michigan—tons of wilderness there, tons. But (laugh) no wilderness without a pop can sittin' by it. So there, this is really weird to me; it's incredible to see it so clean and I'm—that's just cause it's National Park, I'm sure, but...” 29-33

Jack also indicates how quickly emotional bonds can develop at these places, which become associated with personally new, exciting, awesome, and sometimes surreal experiences (41-60). He further describes what the experience means to him in passage 60-69, where he begins to identify himself as a person who respects protected wild areas.

In addition, Jack realizes that he is but a temporary visitor there. This emerges as Jack's claimed identity (Figure 16).

*[Probe: Does it make you feel anything other than scary, or dizziness?] “Oh yeah, yeah. I even cried; I hate to sound cheesy, but the whole American pride thing, but you also get saddened too, I don't know if this is right, but I read that 4% of our land is protected by National Government—state or national parks, 2% in Alaska. So that's kind of sad. You know ... 2% of the lower forty-eight are like this, here where we're sitting. But yeah I get extremely excited; it's not a scared like Grizzly bears coming at me scared, it's a scared like; Wow! This is exciting; I better be careful, I need to respect this. It's a smart scared, I'd say. I think you need to be scared because this isn't your home. You need to respect it.” 61-69*

Jack's personal conception of wilderness, which grounds his identity, includes both “little w” and “big W” elements of the wilderness concept that may be contradictory (3-15). For example, he defines wilderness as a place where people are visitors, but he includes parts of Estes Park (e.g., golf course) because he saw elk there. I believe that Jack is developing a relationship with wild nature and that he is engaged in forming his own conception of what wilderness is exactly, which may explain, in part, some of these apparent contradictions and inconsistencies. His current personal project during this trip is to further develop his relationship with nature. This project emerges as the narrative continues.

*[Question: When you think about wilderness, which places in RMNP do you think of?] “Oh...when I think of wilderness. Well to be honest with you, I'd say the whole park, because we drove by a miniature golf course and saw five elk walkin' on the greens. So, but when do I feel it? I feel it when I'm in the quote unquote backcountry. But I'd definitely say, you know, even downtown is the wilderness. It's not people's homes. We're the visitors here.” [Probe: So would you say that people are separate from wilderness?] “I don't think people were intended to be separate [at the] beginning of time. But sure, I do believe 90% of us have separated ourselves from it. But, we're part of it. We need to respect it, you know, those common sense things that they teach us in every brochure they give us here. But, I think if you choose to be, you're part of it—how 'bout that? And I think everyone maybe longs for it in their own minds, but they don't even realize it. Cause well, how could you not enjoy it when you're out here?” [That's the question (short laugh).] 3-15*

Jack thinks that humans can be part of the wilderness if they respect it and that visiting it in an appropriate fashion may lead people to develop a relationship where they become more a part of it. In the next passage (17-29), he clearly states his position that there needs to be a lack of evidence of people in wilderness, but he considers this a double-edged sword because to protect wilderness people need to appreciate it, which only happens when they visit and experience protected areas. Thus, he supports keeping these areas open to the public for the purpose of recreation enjoyment with the stipulation that people be respectful by leaving little or no traces of their visits and activities.

*[Question: Would you say in your opinion that wilderness is important to you?]* “Very much so. In the broadest sense?” *[Probe: What traits or characteristics of wilderness make it important to you?]* “Keeping the definition of wilderness untouched. Leave no trace. We hiked four miles yesterday and I think I saw two cigarette butts, which saddens me but yet that's awesome. And I don't think I've seen one scratch on a tree here—some of the more populated areas, Bear Lake, you see 'Joni loves Chachi' all over the place. *[(Laughs heartily)]* But that's important, that's extremely important, not knowing that someone was here. I don't know, just not seeing people, which is kind of stupid to say because I want to see people 'cause I want them to enjoy it. So, for selfish reasons, I don't want to see anybody, but in order for it to continue, heck you'd want to see thousands of people here. So it's kind of a double-edged sword so to speak.” *[Probe: Do you think that by visiting places like this the general public will appreciate wilderness more?]* “I would certainly pray for that. I don't see how you couldn't.” 17-29

A second dimension of Jack's identity involves wilderness preservation and protection, which he expresses as respectful mitigation that may have ties to his religious background (256-271). For Jack, this notion of respectful mitigation includes several recurring sub-dimensions: (1) learning about local values and context, (2) collaboration and public involvement, (3) no economically extractive activities that alter the landscape (142-167; 256-271), and (4) environmental education and interpretation (126-140).

*[Question: Do you think that there are any disadvantages in protecting wilderness?]* “I’m currently reading a book by an author named Frank Osherm, called *The North Country*, and I don’t know if I agree with this, being a little more liberal-influenced; I’m more of a city boy who comes here on the weekends type thing, but you still have those people who have done the same thing in their family for hundreds of years, and then these, oh whatever you wanna call em, activists who live in another state across the country want to protect their land, and you know there is a little wrong in that. People have fished those waters in certain ways for hundreds of years. They respect it, they’re the wilderness people, so—*[Tough issue.]*—It’s a tough issue, and I think if you raise the pros and cons, there are more pros to protecting it than not, but there are some issues for sure. And you can’t say, ‘OK, it’s OK for this family to go ride their ATVs back there and fish but it’s not OK for these people from this state.’ You can’t do that. So there is a fine line. So yeah I do think there are some negatives to doing it [protection] for the people who’ve lived there forever. But as this country gets more and more into this, or the extreme sport people are thriving for this stuff. So you need to protect it, you need to make sure that certain trails stay clear, whatever, of bikes and so forth. So, I don’t have an answer unfortunately but, I do—the point I’m trying to make is yeah, I do think there are some serious things that could be wrong in protecting it. You need to make sure you’re here—if you’re the activist—you need to come and interview and talk and see what the locals feel ... I’m sure there’s more to it than that, but that’s the first thing I think. ... .” *[Yeah, these outsiders maybe you think they need to get more of a feel for what’s going on the ground?]* Definitely, definitely, interviews, experience, living there for a year, whatever.” 142-167

Jack’s conception of land management and wilderness protection includes people in the landscape with their local meanings and values. His testimony supports participant observation and qualitative interviewing studies as well as public involvement and collaboration. These are key components in ecosystem management and Jack’s version of respectful mitigation. However, he states that protection should be the first priority

*[Question: When people try to protect wilderness, do you ever feel that other priorities may not be satisfied?]* “Yeah, I mean, I don’t know if I’m (clears throat) realizing the question right, but goes back to what I said earlier. Though you need to talk to the people around, or the natives so to speak, or the locals is a better word maybe. Yeah there are other priorities that we—(clears throat)—it’s extremely important but yet, ... we need to reign over this land in a way that we don’t destroy it, but we are still in charge of it, I believe that. I’m not saying it’s mine and it’s not humans, but I do believe that God put us here to—we’re in charge of it. That doesn’t mean we can do whatever we want with it. We need to protect it, ... So there are other priorities there. But, like I said earlier man, once

you make pros and cons I think protecting outweighs most of the other priorities, cause this land is so vast. So that 4%, I think we can leave it at 4%, I mean no less than that. We're at the point now if someone finds iron ore in Northern Minnesota, we don't need more mines, I think we have enough (chuckles). If it's in the National Forest so to speak.” 256-271

Although he is sensitive to multiple interests, Jack indicates that it is essential to preserve the protected lands that remain in this country. He believes that we should take care of these resources because it was mandated by God to do so.

*[Probe: Do you think that wilderness education type things, like what your friend does with NOLS is valuable?]* “Extremely, extremely. And that's somethin' else, I see a lot of public schools even in their curriculum are getting outdoor education programs, or almost every 4th, 5th grade, 6th grade class that I've talked to across the country goes to a four day camp. And that camp whether it's a Y camp, whether it's a church camp, whatever, teaches Outdoor Ed, you know, helps them to appreciate this place. So yeah, I think that's a huge, huge thing. Summer camps, I wish there was a real curriculum, especially in high schools. What an awesome thing to be able to bring kids out here. You know all week, our group of teachers, we kept saying, (whispering tone) ‘Man I wish all my kids were here. I wish Marshan was here, or I wish Sam (trails off). Boy this kid will never see this in his life.’ So that's sad, and exciting. So yeah education's big, big. I'm biased though (laughs lightly).” 128-140

Finally, Jack describes the importance of environmental education for wilderness preservation (128-140). He also identifies himself and his companions as being teachers, so it is not surprising that he is a proponent of education. He does, however, express a desire to share what he is seeing with his students back in Michigan, thereby assigning broader meaning to his wilderness/backcountry experience at RMNP.

During his visit, Jack seemed to be engaged in a personal project of building a relationship with wilderness. He was in the process of learning or evolving wilderness sensitivities, skills, and experience. This learning process may be comfortable for him given his profession as a teacher. His belief that experience in these settings can lead to being a part of the wilderness recurred during the narrative. He spoke of a desire to

practice the techniques of LNT that he was learning from his friend who was backpacking with him. This person had recently completed a National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) training course and was sharing his knowledge with Jack and the others in their party (291-310), who were actively applying what they had learned. Also, Jack was reading books during the trip and talked about other books he had read related to wilderness. Jack feels that he has progressed in his relationship with nature, and he compares himself to other visitors who may have more to learn about a respectful relationship while describing some of the impacts that he has seen at RMNP.

*[Question: During this visit to RMNP, have you seen any negative signs of people visiting here? Could you list them?]* “Sure, disturbing other people. You know the fifteen-year-olds running as fast as they can down the trail, and they're not joggers who are doing it the respectful way. The carvings in certain trees, especially the aspen trees, they grow (slight chuckle) so neat around the carving, that's disgusting. I must say though, I keep talking about litter, but the litter that's here I can tell that—someone dropped it. I probably left a litter here on accident—a little square of something. Cigarette butts, there's no excuse for that. Gum, there's no excuse for that. But I haven't found a McDonald's wrapper; I haven't found a pop can. So that's good. We are people, we are gonna drop things once in a while. I found a dime in my campsite; I don't think someone meant to leave that there. *[(Laughs.) You made a profit.]* There you go. But the negatives mainly are yelling, and there's no real need for the running, unless you're doing it on the trail; it's appropriate for that. Oh man, yesterday we saw a herd of eighty elk up on the top of the continental divide, and there were two women walking towards these elk, sitting on a rock thirty feet away from them. And of course they stand up, and you never know what they're gonna [do]. That's just asinine. But, I think I listed them pretty much: litter, yelling, disrespecting the trails, and when we see other hikers, they're at least on a trail in front of us, we quit talking, cause you don't want to disrupt their experience. And that comes from the NOLS training my buddy has also, it's rubbing off on us.” 291-310

In addition to developing wilderness skills and knowledge, Jack was enjoying the outdoors with his wife and companions during their vacation. Jack spoke of the importance of the social aspects of visiting protected areas. He felt that he could share common bonds with other people who were simultaneously visiting these settings. For

example, he told me while I was interviewing him that he had a bond with me because I obviously enjoyed being in the Park as well (251-254).

“Just the experience you get is the bottom line, and that's a big thing. You feel that love and pride for the people you've shared it with. That's exciting. You have something in common. Even with you, I don't know you at all, but just the fact that we both obviously like being here, we have a bond there.” 251-254

Moreover, Jack expressed a strong social desire to share the experience with others, particularly his students back home (126-140), and those to whom he sent post cards during the trip (78-86), for example.

“It's wonderful to be by yourself out here, but yet you want to share it with people. You know, it's a great feeling to be by yourself, and to really commune with it, but yet it's something you want to share with family or friends. You know writing postcards, every one I wrote: ‘Man I wish you were here,’ ‘Man I wish you were here.’ So yeah definitely. ...*[Do you think part of the experience is being able to have other people--]* “Definitely.” *[—know what you're feeling, see what you're seeing?]* Definitely, yeah--buying a sticker and putting [it] on your bumper back in Michigan, ‘Hey, you were on Long's Peak; I've been there.’ So sure, that's exhilarating.” 76-86

The interesting implication behind Jack's current projects (beyond the importance of the social aspects of his trip) is that people can develop certain levels of skill and wilderness sensitivity through education and experience. Respect for wilderness and relationship to place is often a process rather than an all or nothing state into which a person is born. Jack admits that he has changed during his short lifetime to show more respect for the natural world (103-128). Jack is probably open to information from park interpreters at this learning stage in his relationship with wilderness and backcountry settings. This observation highlights the importance of continuing (and increasing) in the park, or on the ground environmental education and interpretive activities to reach visitors during their emergent experiences.

*[Question: Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?]* “Hmmm, from my experience. Well, my first instinct was to be positive, and say ‘Ah, there’s a very good relationship.’ But then reality kicks in, and I think of all the carvings in trees I’ve seen, all the cigarettes, all the gum, all the things that—my pockets are full when I leave here everyday with litter I pick up. So—it’s just not that they don’t like it, ... it’s ignorance, is what it is. And I was there too once. And, that comes with experiencing it, you become—a love for it or respect for it, just like people, you go into a relationship with it. So, you know it saddens me, but yet it really doesn’t because people are people, and I just hope and pray that you grow out of it, or you grow—I’m a teacher, so I see people change, and I truly believe, and you’re always who you are at the core, but you can add to that. And I think one thing is respecting this place more. ... what else, I don’t know what I can do, I can’t come and take trees out of the lake, but here, I can give this organization ten bucks, or a thousand bucks if you have it. So yeah, I think it’s a good thing, I really do. I think most people enjoy it, and those who don’t, that’s great, as long as they stay away from it. I hate seeing the people in their Velcro shoes, or even their polo shirts, and they’re hiking into this place. I’m like, ‘Wow, I just wish they learned more about it before they did it.’ But, hopefully by wearing those Velcro shoes they realize they need to change that a little bit next time, and that’s part of the growing experience. I sure didn’t know what to expect here, luckily I’m with someone who did, and they helped us. So ignorance is a big thing, and that’s not a bad thing, as long as you get rid of it.” 103-128

Excerpt 103-128 provides a summary of Jack’s project and where he believes he is in relation to other park visitors. It also provides encouragement for visitor education and management. In Jack’s view education is a key factor for cultivating human-wilderness relationships based on respect and appreciation.

I think that the interview made him think about his personal relationship with nature, which fits well with the evolving nature of his current personal project. That is, his relationship with the place was developing during our conversation (396-409). At the end of the interview, he said that he was "really surprised at some of his answers" because he felt that he was being selfish by continually talking about human enjoyment of wilderness over the environmental function or wildlife habitat, for examples. I think that Jack discovered some inconsistencies between his responses and his behaviors in

life. For example, he remarked near the end of the interview about how he talked about donating money to environmental organizations, but then answered no to the question about donating money himself.

*[Question: What is your overall reaction to the things we've discussed today? Did we miss anything important about wilderness that you would like to add?] “Not necessarily. My overall reaction is—I was really surprised at some of my answers of (laughs) putting people first, which isn't right. And how many times did I mention the word 'funding' and my answer was no [to the contribution question] (laughs). So yeah, that is definitely going to leave me something to think about. Where I stand, and what I want, what goal I want to do, to protect wilderness, or go the other way, which I won't, but whatever my personal opinion is; it is gonna make me consider that a lot more. So that's my effect. [OK,] Or reaction I should say.” [Probe: So are you saying that you don't think that people come first, or is it that you've learned something about the human relationship with resources?] “That's right. Me sitting here enjoying my vacation is not the number one priority for this park.” [OK. Well thank you very much for your time.] “Thank you Jeff, good luck to you buddy.” [Thank you. I appreciate it.] 396-409*

<b><u>Jack's Current Projects</u></b>	<b><u>Jack's Claimed - Identity</u></b>
<p><b>Building a Relationship with Wilderness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Developing sensitivities, skills, and experience</li> <li>•Learning about self and his relationship to wilderness</li> <li>•Reading during the trip</li> <li>•Practicing LNT techniques learned from companion</li> </ul> <p><b>Enjoy Outdoor Vacation with Wife and Friends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Social bonding with like-minded people</li> <li>•Desire to share experience with others</li> <li>•Enjoyment secondary to environmental function/wildlife habitat</li> </ul>	<p><b>A Temporary Visitor who Respects Wilderness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Personal conception of wilderness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Double-edged sword</li> <li>People are visitors</li> <li>Absence of signs of humans</li> <li>Recreational enjoyment</li> <li>Environmental function</li> </ul> </li> <li>•Respectful mitigation/protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No extraction</li> <li>Advocates environmental education/interpretation</li> <li>Advocates collaboration and public involvement</li> <li>Importance of local context and values</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Figure 16. Organizing system for Jack's transcript.

Sometimes Jack seemed to be concerned with giving the “correct” answers. This may have been a social desirability effect, but I think that he gave honest answers during the interview. Most likely, being engaged in the learning process and interacting with his NOLS buddy stimulated a desire to present himself as a knowledgeable wilderness person despite some apparent uncertainties and inconsistencies. This is a good example of how a recreation experience emerges. It is likely that Jack’s narrative would differ greatly if I had interviewed him again at the end of his trip given the minor changes and self discoveries that emerged during the short course of this interview.

In sum, Jack described himself as a liberal “city boy who only visits wilderness on the weekends” in support of his claimed identity of a temporary visitor. He indicated that he has respect for the locals who may have to make a living from the land. He feels that wilderness advocates and activists should get to know the locals and the situation on the ground when working toward protection of the landscape, which supports collaborative processes in natural resource decision-making. Jack believes that there can be costs to protecting wilderness, but since only 4% of the United States remains completely protected, the benefits of preservation outweigh these costs. I think that Jack believes that humans have dominion over nature that was given to them by God, but he expressed this as respectful mitigation as opposed to extreme utilitarianism. Jack is a proponent of environmental education and outdoor programs like NOLS and the techniques of LNT. I believe that he is a person who respects the wilderness and who is recreation oriented, specifically he enjoys backpacking and fishing, but one who is beginning to appreciate the environmental functions provided by these places (e.g., habitat for wildlife species).

### **Kathy: Concerned Ecologist**

Kathy was participant MH1a interviewed at Mirror Lake backcountry camping area in the northern region of the Park during the morning of July 7, 2001. She is a 31 year-old white female with 22 years formal education. She was raised a Roman Catholic, but she is no longer active. Kathy considers spending time in wilderness to be spiritual, however.

Kathy and her companion (and probable significant other) were hiking, backpacking, and fishing during this trip. They are newcomers to the area from California. She tends to hold to the standard “Big W” conception of wilderness in that she identifies it with backcountry that is far from roads, and that it has “untouched aspects” where one can experience a break from city life and solitude (7-15).

*[Question: Would you say, in your opinion, that wilderness is important to you?] “Yeah, yeah.” [Probe: What traits about wilderness make it important to you?] “I really enjoy the untouched aspect of it. I enjoy the quiet and solitude. I wish that it wasn't as altered as it even is here, in terms of you don't have a lot of species that you might have had, or you've lost like many predatory species almost back here, except for an occasional bear here and there, maybe some mountain lions, but all of the canines have been taken out, the smaller cats are kind of down in numbers. So the whole experience isn't what it used to be, but it's just nice to get out, to get away from the hustle and bustle, and to experience what is still here.” 7-15*

In the excerpt above, she states a significant ecological observation about a lack of predatory species at RMNP, indicating that the presence of these animals is important, and that the experience of wilderness has changed over the course of time as they have declined. She identified herself as an ecologist with a specialization in aquatic toxicology (Figure 17). During the interview, she clearly articulated ecological concern and an orientation toward protection of these areas, as might be expected given her profession (49-57). She recognizes an ecological function of wilderness areas as indicators of global

environmental condition, thereby assigning global meaning to these places, which allows for societal values and subsequent justification for their protection. In addition, she expresses personal meaning related to her chosen profession. Places like RMNP allow her to experience and appreciate what she works toward understanding and protecting.

*[Question: Do you think that there are any disadvantages in protecting wilderness?]* “Disadvantages? No, no (laughs).” *[Probe: So no reasons why we shouldn't protect it?]* “No, I'm an ecologist so (laughs). The only thing you're taught as an ecologist is when you start to chip away at places like this—I have a real issues with people who think you can chip away at them and it won't really matter, and you can exploit them to a limited degree, and it won't really matter. There is a whole economic aspect obviously to these sorts of places, but these [places] are kind of the barometers, I think, of the health of the whole world, and you sort of have to protect them to some degree.” 49-57

Kathy's conception of wilderness and her orientation toward protection do not exclude humans, however. She recognizes that access to front country sites is important, as well, because it provides a place for the general public to experience a more natural and non-urban/non-agriculture landscape, and it provides opportunities for environmental education (30-47). She feels that experiencing places like RMNP can lead people to a better understanding and appreciation of them. At the end of this passage, she hints that wilderness and protected natural areas can have meaning for the lives of some individuals. As a concerned ecologist, these places have substantially integrated into her life.

“I think it's really important to have access, to have public access areas. To have places for the general public to go, and to experience what a non-urban environment is like, and a non-agricultural (laughs) environment is like. So, I think that all those places that you were talking about as having usage, while they wouldn't necessarily be where I'd want to hang out, I think they're really valuable, and I think it's educational, and it's something that you're not gonna find in an urban setting. You really do need to go out and experience that. And I think people will value, learn to value, I think, places like this more as much as they're into them. I do wish people would sort of take more of an initiative, be a little more adventurous, and go out beyond that; but at the same time, then you'd have

more people in these kinds of places (both laugh), and it might impact them more. *[Probe: In the sense that people usually don't live in wilderness, would you say that people are separate from the wilderness?]* “I think most people are. Obviously there are a lot of individuals who go out and who do backcountry hiking trips, and who go out and kayak, and raft, and those sorts of things. I think that ties them in a little bit more to it. But, I don't think people realize just how the environment in general and places like this kind of integrate in to your life, or don't integrate into your life.” 30-47

Kathy would like to see more people going farther into backcountry/wilderness to learn and appreciate the importance of protection. However, she also indicates the “double-edged sword” nature of this desire in a similar way to other research participants discussed in this chapter: namely, the more people, the more impacts and how can this be balanced? For Kathy, the issues of too many people and impacts were not a problem during this particular visit to Mirror Lake, however. She indicated that the site was in good condition and the other campers there had not adversely affected her stay (143-147).

*[Question: During this visit to RMNP, have you seen any negative signs of people visiting here?]* “On this visit? No, I actually haven't seen any—trash, no trash anywhere. People basically, the few campsites we've passed have been clean, quiet, (laughs) no one really having much of an impact, just doing their own thing.” 143-147

Kathy is new to this place, and this trip seemed to be part of a bigger personal project to get to know the area better (17-22) while simply enjoying the setting, doing some backpacking, and relaxing (72-79) with her companion, who is also employed in an environmental career. Her project has a dimension related to her preferred activities and a dimension of relaxed enjoyment that is subject-centered (Figure 17).

*[Question: Of the kinds of places in RMNP that you have listed as wilderness, are there any particular places that have a special importance to you personally?]* “No because I'm pretty new to the area, ... in the past, this summer and last summer. A few summers, or four summers ago, we actually vacationed up here, and so the Rocky Mountains are relatively new to us, but we've just been trying to hit a few places every summer, to kind of familiarize ourselves with it.” 17-22

[Question: Could you please list for me all the feelings that you have when you visit RMNP?] “Emotions, well ... even though last night—you were talking about there was lightning and things going on. At the same time, when we were coming in, it was just like, so just relaxing. And, feeling like you can't control the weather; you can't control (laughs) anything here. You just kinda roll with it—in general, relaxing, feeling very peaceful, kind of a quiet happiness. So, maybe trying to just really enjoy it even when you're hiking up here, going up those long stretches of uphill feeling like "OK, I'm gonna get there." 72-79

<b><u>Kathy's Current Project</u></b>	<b><u>Kathy's Claimed - Identity</u></b>
<b>Become Familiar with the Area</b>	<b>Concerned Ecologist</b>
•She and companion are newcomers to the area	•Protection oriented
•Activity oriented	•Ecological concern over extraction
Hiking	No mining or timber cutting in wilderness
Camping	
Fishing	•Wilderness has ecological function
•Subject-centered perception	Place is a barometer of world health
Enjoyment	
Relaxation	•Wilderness has intrinsic value
Peacefulness	•Alternative technologies can lower impacts of motorized recreation

Figure 17. Organizing themes and sub-themes for Kathy's transcript.

Perhaps taking trips into backcountry/wilderness allows Kathy to reinforce her dedication to the environment and to her career. This was not discussed or probed in Kathy's narrative, but her concern for the natural environment and its protection, which are obviously related to her identity, did recur during the interview. She again relates wilderness to her career while expressing the recreational value (e.g., a place to go

fishing) of wilderness and RMNP for herself and her companion, which is part of her personal project (203-214).

*[Question: If most of the wilderness in this country disappeared, would you and your family experience any consequences? That is, would it affect any of you in any way?]* Well, we just won't be able to fish all the time (laughs). And yeah, I mean we're both in environmental fields so it would affect us in terms of. I'm a aquatic toxicologist, and so, actually if wilderness, the more wilderness disappears, the more degraded the environment, actually the better off I am (laughs) for my job, which is kind of sad, because I'd really like to put my—people like me normally would sort of like to put ourselves out of business. It would definitely affect—it would probably affect in terms of doing fisheries work. Yeah, and then recreation also, and it would affect a lot of people we know, a lot of people who work in ecology and environmental studies, and we just recreation-wise, yeah, we like coming to places like this where there just aren't a lot of people.” 203-214

By stating that she would ideally like to work herself out of a job, she confirms her ecological concern and dedication to protection. Kathy explains why wilderness and national parks should be protected: (1) They have the capacity to show people who experience them what is truly valuable, and (2) they have intrinsic value in and of themselves regardless of the meanings that people assign to them, or their values for society (59-70). She believes that these places are bigger than human society, and we have no power to create or duplicate them and their ecological functions, but we are capable of destroying these.

*[Question: Do you think there are any advantages or beneficial reasons for protecting wilderness areas? What characteristics of wilderness make it worth protecting?]* “I think that if you're just looking at, more of overall people who come in and use it I think it's an experience that you're not going to get anywhere else. It really does teach people real good about what's valuable, and what's not valuable. This is something people can't create. This is here, and it's something that's bigger than any individual. So I think that this experience is just as important, but I just think—as a professor I had actually once said about endangered species—he just thinks that they have the fundamental right to be there, he does not think that you have to sit down and list a bunch of criteria that they meet. It has just been here (laughs). It's not something that we can create; it's only something that we can destroy.” 59-70

After explaining why we need to protect wilderness, Kathy elaborates some ways to accomplish protection (107-124). Regulations to control recreation and visitor behavior in backcountry/wilderness and practicing low impact behaviors such as LNT techniques make it possible for people to enjoy the experience while preserving these places. Kathy is interested in promoting new and cleaner technologies as a means of protecting the environment. In this case, she tells of how recreational snowmobiles can be made to generate less air pollution, which in her mind is the primary impact of this type of motorized activity.

*[Question: You kind of touched on it a bit there—would you say that people have a right to use some wilderness for their benefit? Could be profitably or just personal use.]* “Well yeah, I think people have the right to use wilderness for personal usage. I think that there are, obviously they regulate when you come into areas like this. And hopefully people will actually follow the regulations, in terms of packing everything in and out, in terms of keeping your food away from animals, things like that. I think usage like that, where it is on the honor system is perfectly reasonable. When you get into things that can have long term impacts like snowmobiles with two-stroke engines—there are four-[stroke] engines, but they can't afford them. They've been developed, but that industry doesn't necessarily want to use them. So there really has to be some give and take because it's not just the snowmobilers who are using that area. There are other people too. And I don't have a problem with snowmobiles in a park when they're not causing whatever huge large percentage of the air pollution that they've attributed to those sorts of uses.” *[Probe: What about noise pollution?]* “I think that is something where you may—noise pollution is less of a problem just because overall impacts are less clear, and that's something where maybe your local constituency and park service, people like that get together and work it out at what level they're willing to accept.” 107-124

The other component of protection that she alludes to is collaboration between management agencies and local stakeholders for addressing recreation and other impacts at wilderness and protected areas (107-124). Her testimony reflects concepts of sustainability and ecosystem management, which are trademarks of modern ecology and conservation biology reflecting her claimed identity and profession as an ecologist.

*[Question: Do you think people living in our country have a responsibility toward wilderness?] Do I think they practice one, or they should have one? [Do you think they should have responsibility?] Well, the thing is if they just left it alone, then they wouldn't need to have a responsibility towards it (laughs). But if you're going to have people coming in and out of it, if you're going to have usages in it, yes, then you need to have a certain standard that you're trying to meet.” 149-154*

Kathy summarizes the issue and the need for protected areas management: People are part of the ecosystem whether we like it or not, and they visit and use places in the landscape that have some degree of protection, so we have a responsibility to monitor people and their activities at these places (149-154).

To conclude, Kathy presented herself as an ecologist who is concerned about protecting places like RMNP for reasons related to ecological function and environmental health. While her narrative focused on this identity, there was also evidence that she was engaged in familiarizing herself with the area as a newcomer while enjoying a recreation experience with a companion in a relaxed setting. This case example shows how the experience of a wilderness setting and the expression of what these places mean can be strongly linked to a person's professional life. It serves as an example, or representative type of visitor whose major life role (i.e., dedication to a career) may influence the experience of and relationship to a protected place.

For the most part, Kathy and the other eleven individuals who participated in the within-transcript interpretations represent diversity in experience narratives rather than the aggregate, or average, park visitor; this is considered to be one of the strengths of a hermeneutic study of visitor experience (Patterson, 1993).

## CHAPTER FIVE: NOMOTHETIC ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW NARRATIVES

### **Introduction: Across Transcript Analyses**

In the preceding chapter, the interpretation focused on the individual identities and projects portrayed by research participants in relation to the nature of their experience at RMNP and their construction of place. Each of the twelve interview transcripts were organized and presented in a meaningful fashion based on two primary themes that were, for the most part, distinct for each case study. Appendix E summarizes and organizes these main themes: (1) claimed-identities and (2) current personal projects for these twelve visitors, which resulted from the idiographic interpretation.

The nomothetic analysis presented in this chapter identifies themes and patterns across individual transcripts and serves as the second phase of the hermeneutic interpretation (Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 2002). Rather than the individual, the nomothetic interpretation (i.e., *Chapter Five*) focuses on phenomena in the form of emergent theoretical concepts and insights that are related to visitors' relationship to place and the management of RMNP as identified across the twelve participants. In other words, this across-case interpretation is concerned with emergent theoretical concepts and specific management insights as opposed to individual narratives of experience.

Three procedures were used to identify the nomothetic themes presented and discussed in *Chapter Five*. These included (1) several readings of the interpretations

presented in *Chapter Four* in their entirety as if it were a single text to be hermeneutically interpreted (Figure 4), (2) comparisons among the twelve individual organizing systems (Figures 5–17) presented in *Chapter Four*, and (3) running queries in Atlas.ti version 4.1 for Windows (Muhr, 1997) for quotations (i.e. meaning units) that were linked to the coded themes that predominantly recurred across the twelve cases during the idiographic analysis.

### **Results and Discussion: Emergent Conceptual and Management Insights**

Because claimed identities and personal projects were primarily different across individual visitors, there is no in-depth nomothetic interpretation presented for these themes. *Chapter Four* provides the in-depth within-individual discussions of identity and personal project(s). However, some general commonality regarding aspects of these broad themes (e.g., respect and enjoyment) is apparent in the condensed organizing system (Appendix E). These similarities and their subtle differences are discussed in the next section relative to identity and project. Then, I discuss the socially constructed nature of wilderness and the formation of relationships to place from the perspectives of these participants as they emerged during the interpretation. The chapter concludes with a presentation and discussion of management insights identified during the nomothetic analysis. Overall, the sub-headings in the Results and Discussion section (and as listed in the Table of Contents for *Chapter Five*) serve as the organizing system for the nomothetic analysis (see Patterson & Williams, 2002, p. 72).

### *Dimensions of the Experience Across Similar Identities and Projects*

Respect for wilderness and natural forces. As a phenomenon, respect for wilderness and the natural forces encountered at protected areas emerged as recurrent themes related to the claimed identities expressed by three participants (Table 2). Pam, Kim, and Jack indicated that they are respectful of wilderness, and that this sense of respect is a dimension of their claimed identities. A personal sense of respect is an important dimension of the backcountry/wilderness experience to the extent that it fosters low impact behaviors, compliance with regulations, and perhaps, orientations toward resource protection. Moreover, people who feel respect for a place may be more sensitive to impacts to the natural resources and to their experiences, which they may encounter during their visits to protected areas (T2-5).

Three aspects of respect were evident from the interpretation: (1) awareness of the natural forces (e.g., storms) that can be encountered at these places and knowing how to respond to them (excerpt T2-1), (2) a general sense of respect for the environment and wilderness areas as wholes because they are greater than any individual (excerpts T2-2; T2-4), and (3) respect for wild nature enables people to respect themselves (excerpt T2-3). These observations and interview excerpts suggest that a multidimensional sense of respect emerged during the analysis across participants; however, subtle differences between participants are clear. These differences, in essence, form these three observed dimensions of the concept of respect regarding a backcountry/wilderness experience at a place like RMNP.

As a concept, respect may be more complicated than what was identified in this analysis with this sample of individuals at this particular park. However, the linkage to

identity is important because it reminds park managers that there are visitors at RMNP who hold and identify with a sense of respect for the place and the natural forces that operate there. Certainly, many dedicated park employees identify with RMNP in similar fashion. Knowing that a sense of respect exists as part of some people's relationships to place can facilitate common understanding and cooperation among park staff and visitors.

Enjoyment. Six transcripts shared elements of enjoyment of the experience in connection with the individuals' current personal projects (Table 3). Enjoyment of the experience was associated with subject-centered perception (e.g., excerpts T3-2; T3-5), and with the creation of God for three of the six individuals (T3-3; T3-4; T3-6).

When speaking about how they enjoy the backcountry/wilderness, participants focused on internal feelings that they personally experience such as relaxation and peacefulness. Interview excerpts that focus on the individual while in the environment indicate subject-centered perception and experience (Kvale, 1983). This is an important theoretical insight because, as has been suggested elsewhere, subject-centered and impressionistic perception may be associated with deeper emotional and spiritual meanings (Patterson, 1993). Valuation may occur regarding the place, its attributes, and people's emergent experiences once such meanings and bonds are perceived and ascribed at a place (see Figure 1; Page, 1992; Williams & Patterson, 1999). It is suggested that a basic level of personal enjoyment or meaningful expression of identity as a person who respects wilderness, during the experience of a place, may substantially contribute to the realization of positive wilderness values for those visitors and groups who perceive such meanings.

In addition, Jack, Pam, and Mike made reference to their beliefs that God had created these places for them to enjoy and benefit from (Table 3, excerpts T3-3; T3-4; T3-6), which often meant respecting and caring for wilderness as well, thereby linking personal projects that involve enjoyment to aspects of identity such as being respectful of nature and its forces (Table 2) while at the Park. In addition, protecting backcountry/wilderness in a responsible and balanced fashion was associated with these themes (Table 3, excerpts T3-3; T3-6). These excerpts begin to suggest that these visitors have both a desire to shield wilderness from the negative effects of people (i.e., protectionist view) and a desire to use it for enjoyment and practical means (i.e., humanist view) in a prudent and conservative fashion (Fine, 1997).

Sense of stewardship and respectful mitigation. For Pam and Jack, respect, enjoyment, balanced use and protection, and God's creation converged into the more encompassing theme of stewardship. Similarly, for Sam, enjoyment of the experience of RMNP in a subject-centered manner was one of his personal projects, and a sense of stewardship emerged as a main dimension of his claimed identity. For Sam the creation of God was not explicitly associated with his sense of stewardship, but he stated that his personal spirituality and broad religious experiences had influenced how he feels about wilderness. Overall, these excerpts suggest that a sense of stewardship includes the interrelated themes of respect, enjoyment, balanced use and protection (excerpts T3-3; T3-6), caring for the wilderness (Table 4, excerpts T4-4; T4-5), and aspects of God's creation as found in the Book of Genesis (e.g., human dominion over nature), or, as for Sam, a non-Judeo-Christian spiritual connection to the environment (Table 4).

Table 2. Interview excerpts supporting discussion of respect for wilderness and natural forces for those visitors who's claimed identities shared aspects of respect.

T2-1	But again, you have a whole different side and an appreciation, and a realization of nature as a force to be reckoned with too. You need to be aware when you're out here too, when the storm comes up to get below timber line and stuff like that, so that's just part of the package. (Pam, 155-159)
T2-2	I guess probably one of the most vivid memories, and ones that still stick with me sometimes, are the ones that were really frightening, I guess (laughs). The ones that really make you realize how small you are compared to the Earth. Like one day I went and hiked up Flat Top [a peak] just a little more up above here. I wasn't equipped well enough, and I ended up coming down, falling in a waterfall, losing my jacket, my car keys, and all my food, and my lighter, and it was getting dark, and I had to cross the river, scurry across a log, and I was shaking so bad. Finally got down, made it down before total dark. ... Finally made it back into town, all bloody and scraped up, going 'Oh my gosh I am so small.' You know and I was getting kind of cocky about being hot stuff, like 'I can do it.' (Laughs.) [ <i>Yeah ... you felt like you were brought down a couple notches?</i> ] Oh yeah, like a hundred (laughs). (Kim, 26-37)
T2-3	<i>[What do you think about people who have never been out of the large city; have they lost track or touch with the environment?]</i> Oh yeah. I mean they don't see the problems that are being caused by not recycling and stuff like that; they're very—not user-friendly to the Earth. They don't see the by products of what they are doing. ... <i>[Do you think there are any consequences for society of this apparent complete separation?]</i> Oh yeah. There are definitely huge consequences for society. ... we're supposed to work as a unit with the planet ... and if you don't learn to respect nature, and the way that the things kind of work together, you kind of lose track of respecting yourself. (Kim, 66-70; 75-80)
T2-4	<i>[Does it make you feel anything other than scary, or dizziness?]</i> Oh yeah. I even cried; I hate to sound cheesy, but the whole American pride thing, ... 2% of the lower forty-eight are like this, here where we're sitting. I get extremely excited; it's not a scared like Grizzly bears coming at me scared, it's a scared like; Wow! This is exciting; I better be careful, I need to respect this. It's a smart scared, I'd say. I think you need to be scared because this isn't your home. You need to respect it. (Jack, 61-69)
T2-5	<i>[Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?]</i> ... Well, my first instinct was to be positive, and say "Ah, there's a very good relationship." But then reality kicks in, and I think of all the carvings in trees I've seen, all the cigarettes, all the gum, my pockets are full when I leave here everyday with litter I pick up. So...it's just not that they don't like it and they need to do. It's ignorance, is what it is. And I was there too once. And, that comes with experiencing it, you become, a love for it or respect for it, just like people, you go into a relationship with it. ... And I think one thing is respecting this place more. (Jack, 103-115)

Table 3. Interview excerpts supporting discussion about enjoyment as a dimension of experience related to personal projects.

T3-1	<i>[Would you say, in your opinion, that wilderness is important to you?]</i> Oh yes, definitely. <i>[What traits or characteristics of wilderness make it important to you?]</i> Well mostly because I spend most of my week inside, and it is sort of that balance in life to get out and to be able to clear the head and get some fresh air. <i>[Are you tired of the office job?]</i> Not really ... I really like what I do, but like I said you got to have that balance. Plus, you know also back to my selfish reasons of I just like to be out here and see this stuff and identify plants ... (Sam, 96-97, 18-23)
T3-2	Lots of people, my self included, really feel a sense of renewal with going out into the wilderness and being out with nature. And I think that is why all these people are here to look around. They're all here to see the beauty, to enjoy the smells, the sounds, and you know why are these people not at the mall? Because there's something about the wilderness that attracts people that appeals to people, and that's why they're all here. So, this is a form of recreation renewal. (Josh, 99-104)
T3-3	So, I think just we have an impact on the environment that's long-term, that we don't always think about because we're trying to enjoy the moment. <i>[Do you think that it's acceptable for people to enjoy these types of places?]</i> Oh, I think you have to. I meant, I guess I believe in God so I believe we're here and this is sort of our Earth, so within reason I meant. <i>[Right.]</i> I think there are some dos and some don'ts, and I think you have to draw a line to try and balance things, but I meant yeah, we want to be able to enjoy it. I want people be able to go out and backpack; I don't want to say no you can't go high country, and do something like that. I think if they're up to it, great. (Pam, 53-61)
T3-4	<i>[Are there any other, any other things about places like this that make it important to you?]</i> ... I'm religious so it's kinda interestin' to sit back, and imagine what God actually done. Just enjoy nature. All the way around I guess. (Mike, 17-20)
T3-5	<i>[Could you please list for me all the feelings that you have when you visit RMNP?]</i> Emotions, well ... even though last night—you were talking about there was lightning and things going on. At the same time, when we were coming in, it was just like, so just relaxing. And, feeling like you can't control the weather; you can't control (laughs) anything here. You just kinda roll with it—in general, relaxing, feeling very peaceful, kind of a quiet happiness. So, maybe trying to just really enjoy it even when you're hiking up here, going up those long stretches of uphill feeling like "OK, I'm gonna get there. (Kathy, 72-79)
T3-6	I do believe that...God put us here to—we're in charge of it. That doesn't mean we can do whatever we want with it. We need to protect it, ... But, like I said earlier man, once you make pros and cons I think protecting outweighs most of the other priorities, ... We're at the point now if someone finds iron ore in Northern Minnesota, we don't need more mines, I think we have enough (chuckles). If it's in the National Forest so to speak. <i>[Would you say that people have a right to use some wilderness for their benefit?]</i> (pause) ... enjoyment benefit, but no, I don't really think we do have a right to use it for profitable benefit. (Jack, 264-275)

Table 4. Interview excerpts supporting discussion of stewardship and respectful mitigation for those visitors whose identities and/or projects shared dimensions of respect, enjoyment, balanced protection, and meanings related to creation or spirituality.

T4-1	And plus we're destroying the habitat of ... the wildlife. That's a big thing. ... you go back to the food chain and ... we don't realize what this one little plant or one little bug, how it affects us until it's gone. You don't miss it 'til it's gone, so to speak. So, that stuff is extremely important. You see the rangers here, and they're changing the habitat, but hopefully they're knowledgeable enough that they're changing it in a way that it needs to be changed. So that's important too, to know when we as humans towards the top of the food chain, need to step in, need to step in and change, or protect, or help the little animal, or do you let it go and have nature take its course? (Jack, 322-331)
T4-2	<i>[Do you think that people living in the United States have responsibilities toward wilderness?]</i> Yeah, definitely. <i>[Do people have responsibilities to protect wilderness for future generations of people?]</i> Yes. <i>[Are there any consequences of not living up to these responsibilities?]</i> It's so easy to lose. I mean I think we've seen species get extinct, we've seen (clears throat) erosion and that type of thing go on at places that are just beautiful, that fifty years down the line that's not the way they're gonna be, and ... I think we have a responsibility not only to do what we can [to keep] from harming it, but also to do what we can to maybe save it from the natural erosion and type of thing that really isn't our fault, but if we can do something to fix it—it'd be great. (Pam, 137-146)
T4-3	I definitely think that we are a part of [wilderness]; we are part of the earth; we are part of this area. Unfortunately, we've gone through a stage where we've developed so much of the wilderness that it needs to be managed and managed carefully and protected definitely. So, in one sense—in that sense we are a part of it when we are managing it and when we are good stewards of the land. That's being a part of it, that's taking care of it. (Sam, 53-59)
T4-4	So yes, we do have a responsibility to the wilderness in that yes we need to take care of it, protect it, and manage it in some sort of balance. (Sam, 181-183)
T4-5	<i>[Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?]</i> The vast majority of people are very caring—take care of it. (Pam, 27-29)
T4-6	Whereas, the wild animals are out there having to find there own food and that type of stuff, which is why hunting and that type of stuff needs to happen. If there's too many deer in the winter, and the herd starts starving off, and then there's no food for the wolves or the coyotes—the food chain breaks down, so our responsibility to the wild animals is to ... sort of protect the wilderness that they live in, and to manage their herd sizes and that type of stuff, or pack sizes, or whatever. (Sam, 285-290)

Management interventions in the form of respectful and responsible mitigation are suggested here to be important aspects of being a good steward of the resource. Three visitors said that park managers and people in general have a responsibility to step in and

act to protect resources at protected areas in a balanced manner (excerpts T4-1; T4-2; T4-3; T4-6). A sense of respectful mitigation essentially translates into stewardship behaviors in the protected landscape. These actions help to create the prerequisite environmental meanings that allow positive valuation of places in that landscape (Page, 1992). The values can be thought to originate with perceived meanings such as personal expressions of respect for wilderness and engagement in caring for and enjoyment of the place because it has spiritual or religious significance as exhibited by Jack, Sam, and Pam. This interpretation begins to suggest that respectful mitigation shares aspects of the “protectionist” and “humanist” worldviews of human-place relations described by Fine (1997). Value lies within these relationships to places at RMNP, not necessarily in the attributes of the Park themselves. Some of these relationships have developed over long periods of time while others are in earlier stages of development, and they may not be transferable to other places.

In an increasingly developed and “unnatural” world, it could be suggested that more people desire to visit, witness, and develop relationships with places that they believe to be natural and to take care of them and to participate in stewardship behaviors. Participation in stewardship activities on the part of some people is an example of how environmental meanings can be ascribed to places and how one might engage in forming a relationship to a place. It is in these engagements that well-being is experienced. The existence of this type of relationship to place should be encouraging for those who manage parks and protected areas because it facilitates a common understanding among managers and some members of the public who visit these areas. Moreover, people with stewardship orientations that are linked to their self-identities should be more likely to

participate in collaborative decision-making processes and cooperative management at protected areas, particularly if they reside locally. These types of engagements will further develop the relationship to place for the participant. A stewardship relationship, developed over time, represents an example of a socially constructed model, or “cultural template” for experiencing (and for describing the experience of) wild places and for making sense of our position and actions within them (Fine, 1997).

### *Social Constructions of Wilderness*

*“I think until we really understand as many view points on this [wilderness] as we can, we really can't sort out where the public will is, and we can't necessarily find out what the value of wilderness is, because the value of wilderness to a great extent—if you take away the mining, the timber, those kinds of things—the [social] value of wilderness is in the mind.”*

Josh, Park Visitor, August 8, 2001

In this dissertation, I view “wilderness as a kind of meaning certain people give to the landscape, as competing social constructions” (Williams, 2002, p. 125; see *Chapter Two*). Multiple meanings and various conceptions of wilderness do exist (e.g., Appendix D; Lutz et al., 1999; Shultis, 1999), and social constructions of place meanings are important dimensions of people’s relationships to place. Evidence of the socially constructed nature of the wilderness concept emerged across the twelve research participants during this interpretation. Specifically, nomothetic themes and sub-dimensions related to visitors’ conceptions of wilderness and their relationships to RMNP as a protected backcountry/wilderness area emerged. Dimensions of a general human-wilderness relationship emerged as dialog about whether people are part of wilderness or separate from it reflecting both the culture-nature dichotomy and convergent philosophical views about the relationship between humans and wilderness (Fine, 1997; Landres, Brunson, Merigliano, Sydoriak, & Morton, 2000; Soper, 1995). This section

begins by exploring the socially constructed nature of the wilderness concept and ends with the presentation of a dilemma that involves people going to wilderness. The questions addressed in this section include (1) how is wilderness defined across these people, (2) how do we as humans fit into wilderness, and (3) how do we come to have a relationship with wilderness?

The meaning of wilderness for these visitors. Several themes, or dimensions of wilderness emerged in this analysis. These tended to represent either the “Big W,” formal designation concept of wilderness found in the Wilderness Act of 1964 (Table 5) or, to a lesser extent, a more holistic “little w” conception of wilderness (Table 6). The official definition includes wording that describes the absence of humans and their activities, predomination of natural conditions and communities, opportunities for solitude, and wilderness as a place where people are visitors (Callicott & Nelson, 1998; Hendee, Stankey, & Lucas, 1990). Hall (2001) reported that hikers at Shenandoah National Park personally defined wilderness to include a lack of human influences (60% of groups interviewed), experiences of solitude (37% of groups), and few encounters with other people (25% of groups). Appendix F provides an excerpt from the Wilderness Act of 1964, which contains the legal definition of wilderness.

Jack, Josh, and Jon conceive of a wilderness experience as one where there is little evidence of the presence of humans and their artifacts (excerpts T5-1; T5-2; T5-3; T5-4). Jon thinks that managing wilderness is a paradox (T5-4) because people manipulating the natural conditions in wilderness areas are not part of his construction of wilderness. Indeed, wilderness management often involves a dilemma where the social value of wilderness (i.e., a sense that a place is free from human controls and manipulation)

is sacrificed for the value of naturalness (i.e., the endemic, or native, biological character of a place) or vice versa (Cole, 2000; Landres, et al., 2000).

Similar to the 1964 Wilderness Act, roads, vehicles, and motorized recreation are seen as having no place in this formal conception of wilderness (excerpts T5-5; T5-6; T5-7). Both Hedy and Jon agree that roads and motorized use bring people and noise, which to a large degree conflict with the wilderness experience as they conceive of it. Also, extractive uses of wilderness such as mining are associated with the human footprint and ecological perturbations and therefore have no place in wilderness (T5-8; T5-9).

As defined in the 1964 Wilderness Act, aspects of solitude and opportunities to experience it were associated with the wilderness concept in four experience narratives (Table 5, excerpts T5-10; T5-11; T5-12; T5-13; T5-14). These visitors often linked solitude with spiritual grounding and a sense of renewal, which are important place meanings at both the individual and cultural levels (see *Chapter Two*). Kim spoke about how experiencing the sounds of the place put her back in her space, and she spoke of finding a sense of being while at RMNP (T5-10). Hedy conceives of wilderness and protected areas as places where one can find solitude and the spiritual benefits that it brings (T5-12), and Josh described the experience of wilderness solitude as rediscovering ones' place in the world and as a type of recreation renewal both personally and for society as a whole (T5-13). These linkages have been supported by a recent analysis of the benefits of solitude, which suggested that a sense of enhanced spirituality is often associated with experiences of solitude (Long & Averill, 2003).

However, the complete absence of other people in a wilderness setting is not necessary for all visitors to experience solitude. At Shenandoah National Park, Hall

(2001, p. 23) concluded that “having high overall numbers of encounters across the whole trip did not preclude some experience of solitude” for some groups of hikers that she interviewed. Likewise, Hedy indicates that it is possible to experience solitude at Odessa Lake in RMNP despite the presence of other visitors (T5-14). Numbers of people and evidence of human civilization will continue to be important issues regarding the wilderness concept and its definitions at RMNP and other protected areas with wilderness qualities. Wilderness managers are faced with the dilemma of balancing uncrowdedness (which usually corresponds with solitude) with free and spontaneous recreation for the whole of the American public; as the desire to visit wilderness areas increases, these problematic tradeoffs will become pronounced (Cole, 2000). As managers face this dilemma, they are reminded that, at least regarding the dimension of solitude, human presence does not always conflict with the wilderness concept. It is suggested that this is the case even for some people who tend to hold to definitions found in the Wilderness Act of 1964.

Alternative conceptions of wilderness emerged during the analyses of these interview narratives (Table 6). These can be thought to diverge from the conceptions described above and those definitions stated in the 1964 Wilderness Act because they tend to blur the categories of nature and culture and position people inside wilderness. This “organic” view (Fine, 1997) reflects tenets of ecosystem management and restoration ecology (Grumbine, 1994; Landres et al., 2000). Both Jane and Jack described more inclusive and holistic conceptions of wilderness that included some human presence or civilization (Table 6). Jane speaks of a broader ecosystem level concept of wilderness, which includes people (excerpts T6-1; T8-9) and the notion that remoteness is relative to

Table 5. Interview excerpts supporting discussion of the definitions of the wilderness concept similar to those found in the Wilderness Act of 1964.

<b>Absence of People and Their Artifacts</b>	
T5-1	<i>[Would you say in your opinion that wilderness is important to you?] Very much so. In the broadest sense? [What traits of it, or characteristics of wilderness make it important to you?] Keeping the definition of wilderness untouched. Leave no trace. We hiked four miles yesterday and I think I saw two cigarette butts, which saddens me but yet that's awesome. And I don't think I've seen one scratch on a tree here ... some of the more populated areas, Bear Lake, you see 'Joni loves Chachi' all over the place. [(Laughs heartily)] But that's important, that's extremely important, not knowing that someone was here. (Jack, 17-24)</i>
T5-2	I mean there are a lot of places in the park that have very few people in them. They are very undeveloped. So, I mean, those are the places that I think of in terms of wilderness at least in RMNP. (Josh, 9-11)
T5-3	... when I think of wilderness areas that aren't very wilderness, if you go up into Summit County around in the Dillon/Silverthorne that area. I mean ... yeah it's a wilderness area, but its like the New Jersey turn pike on a Saturday or Sunday. It's hardly a wilderness experience, although if you get off some of the more common trails you really can be alone in that area as well. But that is sort of the wilderness that I don't think of as wilderness. Just because of the extremely heavy use. I've appreciated the fact that you can't drive motorcycles and that sort of stuff up there, but still it's not exactly what I would call wilderness. <i>[Because of the sheer number of people?]</i> Right. (Josh, 63-71)
T5-4	... I think that every step should be made ... to manage wilderness in such a way which in and of itself sort of plain old paradox. To manage wilderness in such a way that it continually minimizes any kind of human artifact. Does that make sense? <i>[I think I understand, kind of keeping the wild]</i> Keeping it as wild as possible. And, resisting management people ... I think need to resist the tendency of a lot of humans to try to make it increasingly comfortable in certain ways. Even if it's like improving trails to the point that they're like sidewalks. I think that management agencies need to be careful to not respond to all those desires by urbanized people to make them increasingly comfortable. That diminishes part of what wilderness is all about. (Jon, 113-123)
<b>No Roads or Motorized Use</b>	
T5-5	<i>[When you think about wilderness, which places in the Park do you think of?]</i> Places far from roads. It's not a particular part of the park, as it is distance from people. <i>[... could you give a distance, in general, or?]</i> If you can get three and a half to four miles from a road, you're in wilderness. (Hedy, 3-6)
T5-6	I mean the fact that we don't allow machines in here—there would be people that would come in here recreationally on machines if we'd allowed it. ... there's people that cry the blues about that, would like to take snowmobiles all the way across Trail Ridge Road for instance for the adventure of it. But, I think that we have to impose limits on ourselves in order to preserve these kinds of long-term benefits that come out of a place like this. (Jon, 180-186)

Table 5 continued.

T5-7	<i>[What would you say are advantages or beneficial reasons to protecting?]</i> Well, the one thing is the absence of motorized noises. Do you remember just a few minutes ago, we had a plane fly over? And I don't even know if you noticed all of this, but I found that highly intrusive ... I'm all the way out here and I have to listen to the plane. ... I wish they would ban flights, commercial flights over the Park. I know we have no low flying commercial flights. ... But then there are also those little ground vehicles in the winter and in the summer that people would take into the wilderness areas if they had that opportunity. And it's a way for them to get there fast, but it really disrupts the wilderness for those who are there for solitude and quiet. (Hedy, 38-50)
<b>No Extraction</b>	
T5-8	<i>[... Are there any uses that people should not practice, or are there some uses of wilderness that would not be acceptable to you personally?]</i> Just like the whole extraction of resources thing. I mean obviously your paper needs to come from somewhere, wood needs to come from somewhere, but you have large tracts of forest service land. Some people will say it's wilderness, some people will say it isn't. If you're classifying that sort of thing as wilderness also, in the survey as opposed to just parks, then some things like logging. I'm not that keen on them but obviously those resources need to come from somewhere. Things like mining that have a lot more insidious impacts and the technology, really, so they claim, that there's a way to do a lot of those things cleanly. I've worked on mining, in acid mine drainage problems, in the Sierra Nevadas, and mines just have a tendency to not be cleaned up, to not be restored, to have a lot of problems afterwards. ... And so I just have a real problem with things like mining. (Kathy, 126-142)
T5-9	We're at the point now if someone finds iron ore in Northern Minnesota, we don't need more mines, I think we have enough (chuckles). If it's in the National Forest so to speak. (Jack, 269-271)
<b>Solitude</b>	
T5-10	<i>[Would you say, in your opinion, that wilderness is important to you?]</i> Oh very. <i>[What about it makes it important to you?...]</i> Wilderness important ... It's gotta be just the lack of busy-ness, or lack of people. Just the solitude where you can actually hear the wind in the trees, or birds (laughs); it kind of puts you back in your space, I think. <i>[Could you elaborate a little bit on the space that you're talking about?]</i> Yeah I think with the way that everything works today in the world, you can kind of lose track of who you are. You go so fast; you can always be reached, by cell phone, by e-mail, or by anything, and out here you kind of have a place that you can sit and you can actually think without being interrupted. And that gives you a sense of being. (Kim, 9-18)
T5-11	<i>[ ... What traits about wilderness make it important to you?]</i> I really enjoy the untouched aspect of it. I enjoy the quiet and solitude. (Kathy 7-9)
T5-12	Well I think everyone should use it to their spiritual benefit. Get out there and enjoy the solitude, enjoy the nature, and get away from people for a while, and have a good time in it. ... if you're talking about commercial benefit, I think there's nothing wrong with limiting some land that can't be used for commercial benefit. (Hedy, 80-86)

Table 5 continued.

T5-13	<i>[What would you say are some advantages to protecting wilderness?]</i> Again, I think, it's having a place where people can understand what their relationship to the world really is. Having places of solitude having places where ... (long pause) maybe this is of a romantic notion, but we have [spent] most of our past has been lived in the wild. And I think sometimes we just need to get back to that once in a while. Lots of people, my self included, really feel a sense of renewal with going out into the wilderness and being out with nature. (Josh, 95-100)
T5-14	<i>[So, places in the Park that you think of as wilderness, are there any in particular that are especially important to you?]</i> Yeah. Odessa Lake is one of my favorite places to go when I want to be solitary. It's accessible, there are trails there, but the lake's big enough to swallow a lot of people. So you can get solitude even if you're not alone at the lake. (Hedy, 11-15)

Table 6. Interview excerpts supporting discussion of a holistic “little w” definition of the wilderness concept.

T6-1	If I can define wilderness outside of park boundaries and include broader ecosystems, I think, its important when we talk about protecting wilderness to include the regions outside the areas that are set aside as road less, or trail less, or stoves only, no fire wood camping. Whatever the definitions are that define that as a specific wilderness area. I think if we can encourage a broader thinking so that we spread out to the fringe areas of ecosystems in protected areas. (Jane, 159-165)
T6-2	Oh...when I think of wilderness. Well to be honest with you, I'd say the whole park, because we drove by a miniature golf course and saw five elk walking on the greens. So, but when do I feel it? I feel it when I'm in the quote unquote backcountry. But I'd definitely say, you know, even downtown [Estes Park] is the wilderness. It's not people's homes. We're the visitors here. (Jack, 3-8)
T6-3	<i>[When you think about wilderness, which places in RMNP do you think of?]</i> ... a lot of places that I really couldn't name that are sort of off trail—finding our own sort of routes. [We] tend to hike with a photographer. We just go off when we go looking for places that interest us, and not necessarily. Actually done very few peaks and stuff. When I think of wilderness it's not necessarily a matter of remoteness, really sometimes almost what we bring to the experience. Soon as you get off the trail no matter how close the trail might be, it feels more wilderness-like. Walking unguided, you know. <i>[Just you and the setting]</i> And maybe a topo map and a sense of where you are. But basically, not following sort of point A to point B version of doing things. But just getting out into it, and it doesn't necessarily have to be all that remote to be wilderness. (Jane, 3-17)

what one brings to the experience (T6-3). Similarly, exploration off trail at places like RMNP, which may not be officially designated as wilderness areas, can offer a sense of

wilderness. Jack observed that even down in the gateway community of Estes Park aspects of the wilderness landscape such as wild elk feeding in developed areas are evident (T6-2). Interestingly, Jack seems to accept aspects of both views, namely that people can be part of wilderness through the experience of it even though they are seen as mere visitors to wilderness (T5-1). This apparent contradiction is discussed below. These alternative conceptions about our relationship to wilderness are explored in greater depth in the sections that follow beginning with how these participants view RMNP regarding opportunities for wilderness experience and actual wilderness quality.

Dialog about the wilderness quality of RMNP. It becomes apparent when examining the interview excerpts presented in Table 7 that some visitors to RMNP do indeed experience wilderness based on their own conceptions of it as a phenomenon. Some backcountry locations in RMNP were considered to be wilderness or to have a certain amount of wilderness quality across participants. For example, the west side of the Park was thought to be more wilderness-like than the east side, and Forest Canyon, which is on the east side, was identified as wilderness (see excerpts T7-1; T7-8). The backcountry camping areas and high-elevation summit trails at RMNP were associated with wilderness as well (excerpts T7-2; T7-3; T7-6). Jon and Josh described features of the park and management strategies that make it possible to have a wilderness experience at RMNP. Walking on primitive unimproved trails, which may be frequented by wild ungulates, but rarely used by humans, can provide a wilderness experience at places like RMNP (T7-5; T7-8). The backcountry permit system and dispersal of backcountry camping sites at RMNP also provide close-to-home opportunities for wilderness experiences (T7-7).

Table 7. Interview excerpts supporting discussion about the wilderness quality of RMNP and opportunities for wilderness experience across visitors.

T7-1	<i>[When you think about wilderness, which places in this Park or other places you've visited do you think of?]</i> Probably more on the other side of the— <i>[The western slope?]</i> Yeah, the western slope in particular, no specific area just less people go there. Definitely more lush and (trails off.) <i>[Do you think the amount of people has something to do with wilderness classification?]</i> Yeah. (Kim, 3-7)
T7-2	<i>[When you think about wilderness, which places in RMNP do you think of?]</i> Probably the backcountry, which I don't even really get to, but off the beaten path, that would be wilderness to me. (Pam, 6-8)
T7-3	<i>[When you think about wilderness, which places do you think of? Particularly here in the park ... ?]</i> In the park here? <i>[Yes.]</i> More the high country and the backcountry ... some stuff like that, a lot of the summits, the summit trails, places where people aren't. ... Man, I'll tell you the top of Flattop is something to see. (Sam, 11-16)
T7-4	<i>[When you think about wilderness, which places in RMNP do you think of?]</i> I definitely think of this place now, so this is the East Inlet area, Never Summer Range. I think in some ways the Wild Basin area, cause I go up there a lot in the winter. <i>[Any others]</i> I think that's it. (Jon, 3-6)
T7-5	... I mean in this particular visit [upper East Inlet corridor] it was really ideal I mean trail maintenance was minimal. A lot of trail we were on was marked as unimproved trail and it was great to be able to ... have a trail that was a primitive trail through the woods and there was no sign of whether ... it was probably more of an elk trail than a human trail, let me put it that way. Humans have probably adapted to using that trail because wildlife was natural way for wildlife to move up and down through the same kind of rugged terrain that we were going through. (Jon, 242-249)
T7-6	<i>[When you think about wilderness, which places in RMNP do you think of?]</i> When I think of wilderness, probably Longs Peak, and mostly these backcountry campgrounds [Mirror Lake]. Not so much stuff right off of roads. (Kathy, 3-5)
T7-7	I like what the park has done here in terms of the backcountry permit system. They really have done a good job of spreading people out—hiding the campsites, so that you can, within a very short drive of Denver, have an experience that is pretty much a wilderness experience. You have to sort of give up being able to camp anywhere your fancy suits, but by doing that you really can be pretty much alone without having to drive to Alaska (laugh) or whatever. And I think it's that kind of stuff that if we can do more of that in the wilderness system, it would really improve it for everybody. (Josh, 56-61)
T7-8	<i>[When you think about wilderness, which places in RMNP do you think of?]</i> Not here [Alberta Falls] (laughs heartily). I think in terms of wilderness in the park it is more like—what's the name of the canyon? It's down off Trail Ridge Road. ... [Forest Canyon], and certainly a lot of the stuff that's on the western side of the park are certainly much more wilderness than this area here for example. I mean there are a lot of places in the park that have very few people in them. They are very undeveloped. So, I mean, those are the places that I think of in terms of wilderness at least in RMNP. ... There are some places where you can't even find a trail sometimes you know they're used so infrequently. You got to go quite a ways to get to those places. (Josh, 3-14)

A general relationship between people and wilderness. Thus far, we have seen that socially constructed definitions, or conceptions, of wilderness both vary and show commonality across these research participants. These interviews also suggest that RMNP offers opportunities for solitude and a wilderness experience, but how do we as people and visitors to protected areas fit into the concept of wilderness? Are culture and wilderness incompatible? These questions have been alluded to in the preceding discussion about the socially constructed nature of the wilderness concept. The Wilderness Act of 1964, as legal legislation, reflects the protectionist view, which positions people and human culture outside of wilderness (Fine, 1997; Landres et al., 2000). In this section, I discuss interview conversations from RMNP that suggest insights for understanding our complex relationship with wilderness and other protected lands.

When discussing the general relationship between people and wilderness during these interviews, visitors provided insights that support at least two views of the culture-nature relationship (Table 8): a theme that positions people as part of wilderness (excerpts T8-7; T8-8; T8-9; T8-10), and a theme that places humans outside of wilderness, or in conflict with it, reflecting Fine's (1997) protectionist view (T8-1; T8-2; T8-3; T8-4; T8-5; T8-6). Moreover, some excerpts in Table 8 support the view that people can be both part of wilderness and separate from it (T8-11; T8-12; T8-13; T8-14; T8-15) depending on place and person, amount of experience, or number of people per group, for example.

Table 8. Interview excerpts supporting discussion of the dimensions of a general relationship between humans and wilderness.

<b>Humans Are Visitors to Wilderness</b>	
T8-1	This isn't our home like I said earlier and what I meant by that was, we're in others' territories. Bottom line. (Jack, 210-211)
T8-2	<i>[In your opinion, what are the limits to human uses of wilderness?] [For example, are there any uses that people should not practice; are there some uses of wilderness that would not be acceptable to you personally?]</i> Any destruction of habitat. Cause once again, I've said it ten times, it's not our home it's theirs. (Jack, 282-285)
<b>Protectionist View: Humans in Conflict with Wilderness</b>	
T8-3	<i>[Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?]</i> Direct conflict. Direct conflict. ... civilized people ... we don't live well with the wilderness. We like it, a lot of us like it, but then we want to—by liking it we destroy it. (Bob, 157-166)
T8-4	Man is ... I like people. But, people are basically predators, and there's nothing wrong with that I just think we are. I think it's very important that places like RMNP exist to make sure that we have rules that we cannot be predators. Again, I'm just saying functionally, how I believe we are, ... (Bob, 116-119)
T8-5	<i>[How would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?]</i> (long pause) I think that's an uneasy peace (laugh). The problem that I see is the real difficulty with all this is that if you sort of take the position that people need wilderness then the people going to the wilderness sort of make it not a wilderness. (Josh, 45-48)
T8-6	<i>[... Do you think there are any advantages or beneficial reasons for protecting wilderness areas ... ?]</i> ... This is something people can't create. This is here, and it's something that's bigger than any individual. ... as a professor I had actually once said about endangered species—he just thinks that they have the fundamental right to be there, he does not think that you have to sit down and list a bunch of criteria that they meet. It has just been here (laughs). It's not something that we can create. It's only something that we can destroy. (Kathy, 59-70)
<b>Organic View: Humans Are Part of Wilderness</b>	
T8-7	<i>[Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness? For example, ... do you consider humans to be separate from wilderness?]</i> Personally, I don't think so, ... I definitely think that we are a part of it, we are part of the earth; we are part of this area. ... So, in one sense—in that sense we are a part of it when we are managing it and when we are good stewards of the land. That's being a part of it, that's taking care of it. ... I definitely feel like when I'm out here I'm definitely reconnecting you could say or definitely more a part of it. (Sam, 49-63)

Table 8 continued.

<p>T8-8</p>	<p><i>[Would you consider people separate from wilderness, in the sense that they don't normally live in the wilderness?]</i> Well, I would like to think not. I think that the urbanized world that most of us live in—there are some important contrasts there that allow us to appreciate both of those things. ... I know one of the states of mind that I like to get into when I'm in the wilderness and takes 2 or 3 days to do that ... is to remember that you are not just kind of out camping that you're living outdoors. And it's kind of immersing yourself in [the] fact of that you're living outdoors. And you deal with whatever comes whether it's great weather or bad weather or physical issues that you may be dealing with, things like that, that's part of the challenge. ... once you immerse yourself in it that, you realize that you become less and less separate from it. You adapt and adjust to whatever the physical conditions are of the place. I like to think that people come out of the wilderness understanding that as a species we're totally inseparable of course from the physical environment. I'm not sure from my experience that many people grasp that. (Jon, 67-83)</p>
<p>T8-9</p>	<p><i>[Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?] ... [Or do you believe there is a relationship?]</i> Yeah, I think there is a relationship, but what I think I would say is that many of us, I would even include myself even when I think that I am trying to reconnect with it, are pretty disconnected from it. We don't realize how much we're tied into cycles and the seasons—weather. I see it in the littlest things. I'm a youth therapist, and I work with kids year round and sometimes kids will come in on a windy day and they are all jumpy and can't concentrate. ... it's just blowing hard and it just gets into us in a way. We are so connected to the natural forces and the natural cycles that we're very unaware of living in the city, and when I think of our relationship to wilderness, I almost think that it is our job somehow, to strive to re-find that. And, sometimes that means coming up here into the wilderness and sometimes it means you know not paving over your lawn but planting zeriscape instead. ... I think it's a luxury to me to be able to come up here and do those things. ... we are very connected but we don't realize it. (Jane, 119-137)</p>
<p>T8-10</p>	<p><i>[Question: Do you think that there are any disadvantages in protecting wilderness?]</i> ... I think that there is always the possibility of—I don't know if it is a danger or not—there is a possibility that we end up separating out protected wilderness, minimal human use areas from areas that we can do whatever the hell we want to with—like the city, or the corridors between cities. ... I don't want to see people use wilderness areas more than the way we use cities. I'd like to see the reverse effect happening, so I wonder about if you set aside an area as wilderness, it somehow says we humans are not a part of that. I don't want that separation to be there. ... people have always been moving through these spaces and they will continue to move through these spaces for a huge variety of reasons, ... (Jane, 139-149)</p>

Table 8 continued.

	<b>Humans as Both Part of and Separate from Wilderness</b>
T8-11	<p><i>[You ... consider yourself to live in civilization, but you visit the wilderness. Would you say that people are separate from it, or part of it? The wilderness that is.]</i> That's a tough question. We're more separate, than a part of it. It's just that one or two of us can be a part of the wilderness. A hundred thousand of us cannot be a part of the wilderness at the same time. And I know that probably sounds not clear but, again, you and I are here talking, and we can see the falls, and people walkin' by every now and then. I don't think that's a problem. You put a trail of people up here, like I mentioned a hundred people going through, up to the lake there earlier, and it's different. It destroys it. ... I don't think there's any way that you can have wilderness in harmony with numerous—with many people, a large group of people. (Bob, 176-188)</p>
T8-12	<p><i>[In the sense that people normally don't live in the wilderness, would you consider people to be separate from wilderness, or part of it?]</i> It depends the area. Everybody's actually part of the wilderness, some part or another ... oh I don't know. I think you have that understandin' of the wilderness once you go to it. And git, you gotta git connected with it a little bit, to understand. I can't say they're totally together, but they're not totally separate either. <i>[OK. So it's somethin' that you can't really learn about by readin' books or watchin' TV?]</i> No. Can't watch TV doin', that's fer sure. Never really know 'til you come out and experience yerself. Understand how they [wildlife/wilderness] act. (Mike, 54-63)</p>
T8-13	<p><i>[Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and the wilderness?]</i> Depends on the people (laughs). I mean there's some people, like myself—most of the people that I know—that really appreciate and find it a gift for them to be able to go out and populate these places. ... <i>[So there are ... different relationships?]</i> Yeah, it really depends on the person, and I think it also depends on how much they've had to interact with it. <i>[Do you consider humans to be separate from wilderness or part of it?]</i> Definitely part of it, whether they realize it or not. (Kim, 45-52)</p>
T8-14	<p><i>[In the sense that people usually don't live in wilderness, would you say that people are separate from the wilderness?]</i> I think most people are. Obviously there are a lot of individuals who go out and who do backcountry hiking trips, and who go out and kayak, and raft, and those sorts of things. I think that ties them in a little bit more to it. But, I don't think people realize just how the environment in general and places like this kind of integrate into your life, or don't integrate into your life. (Kathy, 41-47)</p>
T8-15	<p><i>[How would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?]</i> Hmm, I think that varies. I think there's a population that knows that wilderness is essential to their well-being. And there's a part of the population that doesn't know that. To those who know that, it's essential. But I think there are a lot of people who are apathetic to it because it's not a part of their experience. (Hedy, 21-25)</p>

This third conception—we are both part of wilderness and not part of it depending on certain conditions—highlights the complexity and process of our relationship with nature. The aim of the discussion here is to begin to describe and understand this complex relationship as a process rather than to actually determine whether humans are part of wilderness or separate from it, which is better left to philosophers. According to Soper (1995, p. 15), the latter question (i.e., Are the social and natural realms distinct?) may be of little importance because “an *a priori* discrimination between humanity and ‘nature’ is implicit in all discussions of the relations between the two, and thus far it is correct to insist that ‘nature’ is the idea through which we conceptualize what is ‘other’ to ourselves.” That is, without the conceptual distinction between humanity and nature, we would not be able to discuss or analyze it with any amount of comprehension. The remainder of the discussion in this section focuses on the processes by which people develop their complex relationships with wilderness, or wild nature—this “other” to us—as described by the research participants in their interviews.

Process of developing a relationship with wilderness. The dialog contained in Table 8 suggests that some people believe that we as humans are part of wilderness to some extent, but we can become more a part of nature and wilderness by going to it and experiencing it—engaging in it (excerpts T8-8; T8-9; T8-12; T8-13; T8-14). These observations highlight the interactive processes by which people develop a relationship with wilderness. The process is emergent over time and with the amount of social and physical interaction in wilderness or protected area settings (T8-13; T8-15). Meanings are made and assigned to protected places like wilderness areas and their attributes during

this process of relationship development. Fine (1997, p. 69) terms this process “naturework,” which he described as:

“... the technique by which social actors individually and collectively make sense of and express their relationship to the environment, ... This process is linked to a set of core ideologies that specify the moral valuation of the relationship of culture and nature. From childhood, we are exposed to disparate views about how nature is to be treated, and from these texts and images ... we express environmental ‘concerns.’ As we enter various nature subcultures, these texts and images are expanded and specified, and our views of nature are linked to those of the groups to which we belong.”

In the interview narratives, research participants described how their relationships to wilderness had developed, or how these relations were currently in development (Table 9), suggesting support for Fine’s (1997) idea of naturework.

What characteristics of this process, which I refer to as evolving/developing a relationship with wilderness or protected places, are evident in these interview conversations recorded at RMNP? Over the course of time and repeat visits to wilderness and other protected areas, experience tends to increase, and feelings of fear and ignorance can be replaced with familiarity, comfort, and positive affect while interacting with the setting and its attributes (Table 9, excerpts T9-1; T9-4; T9-7). These experiences are most likely a mix of good, bad, or even humbling and scary (T9-1; T9-7). One participant described the process as an evolving love and respect, such as when we build relationships with other individuals (T9-4). This emergent and lived experience in wild nature can happen when people are alone; however, the process often involves social interactions with other people while in the setting. Group discussions (T9-5), informal teaching and learning among individuals in a group (T9-8), and purposive socialization of children (T9-3) regarding the wilderness concept, its relation to society, and proper behaviors while there were each described in these interviews. Also, family history in the

outdoors (T9-2; T9-3), which is related to the socialization process, provides the time, experiences, and social interactions necessary for one to develop a relationship with wild places.

Doing extended overnight and longer trips into backcountry/wilderness seems to be an important part of the development process (Table 8, excerpt T8-8; Table 9, excerpt T9-2). These trips force people to become aware of the natural flows and conditions (e.g., weather patterns in relation to time of day) that operate at these places, thereby expanding one's knowledge about how he or she needs to interact with the resource setting. It is possible that many people who participate in longer trips are in advanced stages of this process of naturework, which seemed to be the case for Jane, Jon, and Pete. These observations again highlight process in that the elements of time and repeat visits contributed to these visitors' descriptions of their relationships. For example, it took many years of visiting for Pete to realize and understand the fragility and lengthy rates of recovery after natural disturbances (e.g., fire) that are inherent in the ecosystem at RMNP (T9-2). Perhaps focusing interpretation and environmental education programs on such topics as natural disturbances would reduce the time involved in understanding these aspects of wild nature for some visitors who are at earlier stages of development. It is suggested here, however, that direct interactive experience with the setting, in combination with the personal and social meanings (see *Chapter Two*) that may be created and ascribed to the experience, provide much of the driving force in the process whereby people develop their relationships to places like RMNP. "We create meaning through action and once we have a sense of meaning, actions flow naturally in an authentic way" (Page, 1992, p. 114). Relationships to place form *in* places.

There are visitor management implications associated with these observations and propositions. Positive experiences and relationships such as stewardship, social identity, and a sense of respectful mitigation with places in RMNP are catalyzed over time via repeat visits, so why not offer incentives to return to the Park for backcountry overnight campers, for example? This would require tracking the number of visits to the backcountry (i.e., number of visitor days, total nights spent in backcountry, etc.) for return backpackers. After acquiring a certain amount of time and experience, visitors could be offered flexible itineraries, longer lengths of stay, and perhaps even fee reductions by the park rangers working at the backcountry permit office as incentives to return. Also, these visitors, depending on personal choice and limitations such as small children, might be directed toward more primitive “wilderness” sites and trails at the time they inquire about where to camp before obtaining a permit.

The amount of time and experience that visitors have in the backcountry at RMNP could be communicated to park rangers in the field (and possibly to other visitors) through differently colored permit pack tags, for example. This might increase positive expectations on the part of the field rangers regarding level of experience and respect for the resource when approaching and contacting visitors in the backcountry. Knowing something about visitors’ relationships to the resource and place would help to guide rangers’ decisions regarding what type of contacts to make. For example, meeting visitors who possess a pack tag indicating moderate to high levels of experience in the setting might encourage use of the Authority of the Resource Technique by rangers where necessary (see Wallace & Gaudry, 2002).

Some visitors engaged in relationship development may become aware of where they are in their own developmental processes by comparing themselves to other people they encounter and observe while visiting parks and wilderness areas. Perhaps we confirm our relationships and our identities relative to wilderness by comparing how we interact with wild nature to that of other visitors at these places. Some research participants in this study seemed to be keenly aware of people who may have been at earlier stages in the process of building a relationship with the wilderness, or who were perceived as having no relationship (or at best a dysfunctional relationship) with the setting (Table 9, excerpts T9-4; T9-6; T9-8). Perhaps these participants were reminded of a time when they had behaved in unprepared and unaware manners while in the wilderness during earlier stages in their relationship with it (see T9-4; T9-7).

These comparative observations were made by these visitors at a place in RMNP that might be described as the interface between front country and backcountry (i.e., the middle zone of Wild Basin) where people with various levels of experience tend to intermingle. It could be suggested that these transition zones between lower and higher levels of experience at RMNP and similar protected areas are important places for facilitating stages in the process of developing a relationship to place, particularly because these zones allow this type of social comparison to occur. Visitors in the early stages of the process are allowed the opportunity to have critical experiences and create meanings about them, while those at later stages in the process are presented with experiences that allow them to reflect about where they have been and where they might be going in their own relationships to wild places.

The ability to represent or describe one's wilderness experience is an essential part of the experience. Patterson and others (1998) found that reliving the experience of a wilderness canoe run in the Ocala National Forest in Florida by sharing stories at the landing after the trip was a distinct and positive aspect of the experience even if the stories were about negative or scary experiences (see Table 9, excerpt T9-7 for a story of this nature at RMNP). In addition, repeat canoeists told nostalgic stories from past trips about their best wilderness experiences as part of the present trip (Patterson et al., 1998). As we talk about our relationships with wild nature at places like RMNP, they are further formed and realized (Fine, 1997). In light of these observations, park managers at the Park should not discourage (but find ways to encourage) visitors from lingering for some time at trailheads and parking areas after coming out of the backcountry or the front country, if they so wish, because this time allows groups to relive their experiences through discussions and storytelling to make sense of the experience (Mair, 1988; Sarbin, 1986).

Semi-structured qualitative interviews and guided conversations conducted hermeneutically, for example, are ideal for capturing the lived and storied experience as it occurs in these settings. However, if the people interviewed cannot describe their experience and relationship to place, their information will not be recorded for subsequent interpretation. In these cases, we may conclude that the interview failed for a variety of reasons—the person has no relationship to place (i.e., the place is meaningless to them), they could not yet represent their relationship in words because it is in the earliest stages of the process of development, or they are private and do not express themselves well in words, but might paint or draw an amazing picture. Perhaps some

inconsistencies and contradictions in an experience narrative, when they emerge, are due to this limitation of the method as well. For example, Jack holds the complex view that human developments (i.e., Estes Park) can be part of wilderness (Table 6, excerpt T6-2),

Table 9. Interview excerpts supporting the discussion about “naturework,” or the processes by which people develop relationships with wild nature (Fine, 1997).

T9-1	<p><i>[Could you please list for me all the feelings that you have when you visit the wilderness at RMNP?]</i> Sure, years ago when I first started coming to [RMNP/wilderness], it would have included a lot more petrified and terrified and overwhelmed. I remember the first time having to cross a snowfield I thought I was just going to freak out. But also a sense of real relaxation, of simplicity—I don't know if simplicity is a feeling word, but I would include it, appreciation of the simpler slower pace, definitely a good amount of joy, and laughter. I've cried out here, so I guess that I have been sad out here—a lot of different things. (Jane, 171-178)</p>
T9-2	<p>Oh, we absolutely know how devastating motorized vehicles can be. I have to admit I used to ride dirt bikes [during my] younger years up in national forest in Wisconsin. I wouldn't do that now; my son used to build and operate all terrain vehicles, he doesn't do that now. I think it has to be limited to particular activities that minimally impact what we have here ... It took me a long time to realize how little replacement growth occurs at these higher elevations. You have to understand that when you start getting off the trails and damaging this environment—you know how fragile it is—It's not going to grow back like California in two years after the fire—you have green again. That doesn't happen. In 1978 you're up here [Wild Basin] and you see the damage that the fire did, and you barely have overgrowth up here, in all those years. So, it's got to be I think it's got to be limited. There has to be rules; there has to be self-discipline. You bring out what you take in, you keep it to cooking stoves, and I would not care to see open fires anywhere. I think overnight tent camping—I think that's certainly a permissible thing. As long as you get farther into the wilderness areas, there's a real sense of self-esteem achieved, I think, when you go and live off the land for a number of days or even a weekend. I mean when—I had a younger family—we would spend ten days hiking in national parks around New England and the Northern Midwest and Arizona. My children now—they love it, now they take their children ... going around the country kayaking and tent camping and backpacking. So, what would have happened if there had been no rules from the very beginning? ... (Pete, 96-122)</p>

Table 9 continued.

<p>T9-3</p>	<p>[... Do you think that it is important that this stuff be around for future generations?] Well, I would like to bring my children up here. Earlier today I was hiking with my family and some friends of our family, and the last time my friends were out here, they've got some children, and the last time they were out here their daughter was nine months old and now she is seven, and we are hiking the same trails and she is seeing this stuff again, ... it is neat to see that. ... Yes, future generations—I would love to bring my kids up here. My Dad moved out here in '70 from Jersey, and he and my mom, they were both campers out there, avid campers up and down in the Appalachians and did a lot of outside type of stuff, and then they moved out here, one for the job, and two because of this, and so as I've grown older, I've seen it change and get developed and I've seen a lot of growth here, ... and I just hope to be able to bring my kids up here someday and show them what I saw. ... there is something special about a Dad passing that on to his son or daughter, and even like on the trail we were teaching them [the girls] to use their <i>wilderness voice</i>, and be quiet and listen, 'What is that sound? You know what that sound is, is water falling down, we are getting closer because it is getting louder', and so that develops the kid's logical skills and reasoning skills. ... maybe the selfish hope is to develop their out door wilderness skills, camping skills, and that kind of stuff ... [So, do you feel pretty comfortable in these natural wilderness settings?] Definitely. Definitely. (Sam, 108-139)</p>
<p>T9-4</p>	<p>[ Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?] ... Well, my first instinct was to be positive, and say 'Ah, there's a very good relationship.' But then reality kicks in, and I think of all the carvings in trees I've seen, all the cigarettes, all the gum, all the things that—my pockets are full when I leave here everyday with litter I pick up. So—it's just not that they don't like it, ... it's ignorance, is what it is. And I was there too once. And, that comes with experiencing it, you become—a love for it or respect for it, just like people, you go into a relationship with it. So, it saddens me, but yet it really doesn't because people are people, and I just hope and pray that you grow out of it—I'm a teacher, so I see people change, and I truly believe, and you're always who you are at the core, but you can add to that. And I think one thing is respecting this place more. ... I hate seeing the people in their Velcro shoes, or even their polo shirts, and they're hiking into this place. I'm like, 'Wow, I just wish they learned more about it before they did it.' But, hopefully by wearing those Velcro shoes they realize they need to change that a little bit next time, and that's part of the growing experience. I sure didn't know what to expect here, luckily I'm with someone who did, and they helped us. So ignorance is a big thing, and that's not a bad thing, as long as you get rid of it. (Jack, 103-128)</p>
<p>T9-5</p>	<p>And there always tends to be I guess you can call it an activity. I mean it seems like every time whether I'm by myself or whether I'm with a group we get into discussions about value of wilderness and the spin off's that have to do with the larger human civilization and the directions that we are going. And these kinds of places often become philosophical—these places become kind of catalysts for those philosophical discussions. (Jon, 49-54)</p>

Table 9 continued.

<p>T9-6</p>	<p><i>[Could you please list for me all the feelings that you have when you visit the wilderness at RMNP?] ... when I get in a crowd, I tend to do more ... sort of the tourist watching I guess ... and they're like, 'Oh, what are you doing?' Not that I find myself—higher than anybody else, but then I find the things people do are ridiculous to me. [Could you give me an example of some of these ridiculous behaviors?] (Hearty laugh.) Oh sure. OK, a couple days ago, we're hiking up the trail and the sky is dark, I mean it's going to rain, you can tell. It's coming down the valley and it's going to rain, and here come a group of about fifteen people walking by, and all they have are little white paper lunch bags with their lunches. And they're about two miles from the trailhead, and that's all they have (laughs). And you just know that they're just going to get dumped on, and cold and sick, and you just have to go 'Well, OK. Maybe they'll figure it out.' [Yeah.] Hiking with their purses—that just cracks me up. [Almost like ... they're almost at Disney World.] Yeah exactly. It is—it's a lot like an amusement park. I used to work in a park, and it was, everybody would ask: 'Well, where's the park? Where are the rides?' (Laughs.) It's like, 'No. There's a putt-putt [golf], but that's it.' ... [I've heard a lot of people refer to Estes Park and RMNP as the same thing. Have you ever had that experience?] Oh, yeah. A lot of people think that, yeah. (Kim, 82-101)</i></p>
<p>T9-7</p>	<p><i>[Of these kinds of places that you've talked about, on the Western Slope, or anywhere else in this Park that you consider wilderness, are there any particular places that have a special importance to you? Based on your beliefs, family, experiences, friends or memories.] Oh my gosh, there's so many. Pretty much—I could pick a place in this Park, and I could think of an experience that's been good, or scary, ... [Would you mind briefly describing one for me?] Oh sure, good, bad, a hike with friends? I guess probably one of the most vivid memories, and ones that still stick with me sometimes, are those—the ones that are—that were really frightening, I guess (laughs). The ones that really make you realize how small you are compared to the Earth. Like one day I went and hiked up Flat Top [a nearby peak] just a little more up above here. I wasn't equipped well enough, and I ended up coming down, falling in a waterfall, losing my jacket, my car keys, and all my food, and my lighter, and it was getting dark, and I had to cross the river, scurry across a log, and I was shaking so bad. Finally got down, made it down before total dark. Many people driving down the road, and there were a lot of people out, hitched a ride down. Finally made it back into town, all bloody and scraped up, going 'Oh my gosh I am so small.' You know and I was getting kind of cocky about being hot stuff, like 'I can do it.' (Laughs.) [... you felt like you were brought down a couple notches?] Oh yeah, like a hundred (laughs). (Kim, 20-37)</i></p>
<p>T9-8</p>	<p>... the negatives mainly are yelling, and there's no real need for the running, unless you're doing it on the trail; it's appropriate for that. Oh man, yesterday we saw a herd of eighty elk up on the top of the continental divide, and there were two women walking towards these elk, sitting on a rock thirty feet away from them. And of course they stand up, and you never know what they're gonna [do]. That's just asinine. But, I think I listed them pretty much: litter, yelling, disrespecting the trails, and when we see other hikers, they're at least on a trail in front of us, we quit talking, cause you don't want to disrupt their experience. And that comes from the NOLS training my buddy has ... it's rubbing off on us. (Jack, 302-310)</p>

but he thinks that wilderness is not our home—we only are visitors in wilderness (excerpts T8-1; T8-2). This apparent contradiction may be explained by his developing, or evolving, relationship with wilderness. He is actively and currently involved in forming a personal conception of wilderness that may be difficult to express at this stage. In addition, he is engaged in a process of developing wilderness sensitivities by replacing ignorance and disrespect with awareness and the practice of low-impact behaviors, which he and his companions are learning about from the NOLS instructor with whom they are recreating (T9-4; T9-8).

These observations suggest that when people are engaged in a process of developing a relationship to wild nature, they may experience conflicts and express contradictions when talking and thinking about their conceptions of nature and their experiences in wilderness and protected areas. When, or at what point in time, a visitor is interviewed or given a questionnaire is important. We only capture snapshots of experience and relationship to place because these are continually changing and evolving.

These interview narratives, as interpreted within the framework of this dissertation and in light of current conceptual insights from the literature, support the premise that some people who visit wilderness and other protected places come to know and appreciate wilderness by going to it and interacting with it, often with others from their social groups. As experience and time at a place increase, we assign new meanings to the place and redefine our relationships with it. Some visitors may feel that it is their duty or responsibility to strive to make, or “re-find,” a personal and society level connection with wild nature (e.g., Table 8, T8-9). During this process, which may span the course of years, one might have a change in core ideology, or interpret his or her

relationship and experience with wild nature based on a different cultural template (Fine, 1997). For example, a person who might primarily hold a humanist viewpoint (e.g., dominionistic and utilitarian) toward the environment may shift toward the protectionist, or organic, worldview. During their interviews, both Pete (T9-2) and Jack (T9-4) discussed similar changes (that occurred over time) in their personal relationships to nature and protected places and in their behavioral interactions with these (Table 9).

The double-edged sword dilemma. A dilemma, or Catch-22 situation, is apparent in these conversations. Table 10 (excerpts T10-1; T10-2; T10-3) presents additional evidence that some visitors to the Park are aware of this dilemma. In order to appreciate, preserve, and have a relationship with wild nature via the making of meaning at places such as RMNP, people need to visit these places and interact with them individually and collectively—physically and socially (Fine, 1997; Lane, 2001; Page, 1992). If we hold to a definition of wilderness that positions people and civilization outside wilderness, this process of relationship formation, which could mean increased visitation to protected and wilderness areas over time by groups and individuals, must be viewed as detrimental to these places due to imminent increases in impacts to the natural resources and the wilderness experience (e.g., T10-3). Impacts to natural resources and visitor experience are salient and problematic issues for managers at RMNP (Brooks & Titre, 2003; USDI, NPS, 2001), as well as for the field of parks and recreation management as a whole (Cole, 1987; Leung & Marion, 2000).

Table 10. Interview excerpts supporting the discussion about visitors' awareness of the double-edged sword dilemma.

T10-1	<i>[How would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?]</i> (long pause) I think that's an uneasy peace (laugh). The problem that I see is the real difficulty with all this is that if you sort of take the position that people need wilderness then the people going to the wilderness sort of make it not a wilderness. And it's one of these things where it really is a difficult balance. I think that, we just have to watch out that there's the right ratio of wilderness to people. I know as the population grows, particularly near urban areas—that's harder and harder to achieve. But, I think that we have to do that, because if we have too little wilderness and too many people then we won't have any wilderness. And so that's something you can probably study when you [are] writing, you are thinking about your career. How do you achieve that? Are there ways of spreading wilderness out more or something so that everybody ... (Josh, 45-56)
T10-2	But that's important, that's extremely important, not knowing that someone was here. I don't know, just not seein' people, which is kinda stupid to say because I want to see people 'cause I want them to enjoy it. So, for selfish reasons, I don't want to see anybody, but in order for it to continue, heck you'd want to see thousands of people here. So it's kind of a double-edged sword so to speak. (Jack, 23-27)
T10-3	I think it's really important to have access, to have public access areas. To have places for the general public to go, and to experience what a non-urban environment is like, and a non-agricultural (laughs) environment is like. ... I think that all those places that you were talking about as having usage, while they wouldn't necessarily be where I'd want to hang out, I think they're really valuable, and I think it's educational, and it's something that you're not gonna find in an urban setting. You really do need to go out and experience that. And I think people will value, learn to value, I think, places like this more as much as they're into them. I do wish people would sort of take more of an initiative, be a little more adventurous, and go out beyond that; but at the same time, then you'd have more people in these kinds of places (both laugh), and it might impact them more. (Kathy, 30-41)

The wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness as places where people and their artifacts and controls are limited or nonexistent (Appendix F). Other researchers have suggested that management tradeoffs between wildness, naturalness, uncrowdedness, and freedom in recreation, for example, are imminent and may already be occurring at some places in the United States (Cole, 2000; Landres et al., 2000). These dilemmas are concerned with wilderness ideals and the preferred attributes and qualities of wilderness areas (e.g., wildness versus naturalness), which are somewhat generic and transferable

across places. Although not a new discovery, the double-edged sword dilemma (Table 10) presented and discussed in connection with this interpretation is important because it has at its heart the processes by which people form meaningful and valuable relationships to wilderness and other protected areas and places (Table 9). Unlike wilderness ideals and preferred attributes, these valued relationships may not be transferable across places. To summarize, this across-transcript interpretation has contributed to the formulation of the proposal: *When we as humans participate in the environment at protected places (e.g., involvement in outdoor recreation, conservation behaviors, extended stays in wilderness, etc.), we develop a relationship with these places, and environmental place meanings are created during the process, which are linked to (and may be prerequisites of) environmental values and the valuation of ecosystems* (see Figure 1 on page 30; Page, 1992; Williams & Patterson, 1999). Obviously, these interactive experiences affect the ways in which we come to value (and behave at) these places, thus highlighting the importance of understanding the experience as a process of forming a relationship to place for managers and researchers alike. The implications of viewing visitors as process-oriented are discussed in *Chapter Six*.

### *Emergent Management Insights*

While providing conceptual insights into visitor experiences, this interpretation has confirmed the challenges and expanded at least one dilemma inherent in wilderness and protected areas management, namely how to balance visitation with preservation. Today's era of ecosystem management positions people and their activities in the system—embedded within nature (Brunson, 1995; Grumbine, 1994, 1997; Williams &

Patterson, 1999), so it has become necessary to manage the human system at parks and protected areas. To address practical concerns about this human system for those who manage and administer RMNP, this section presents a summary discussion of insights specific to RMNP that emerged during the interpretation across narratives. These management insights were synthesized from the interpretations discussed in *Chapter Four* and supported by earlier discussions in this chapter regarding conceptual insights and specific management implications. I tend to use the word insight more than implication or recommendation at this point because the word implies contextual and thematic understanding rather than objective truth, the former being the goal of productive hermeneutics.

To revisit the history and background of the study presented in *Chapter One*, I remind the reader that this dissertation is part of a larger project that was requested by the NPS. This request was prompted by questions that arose during the development of a backcountry/wilderness management plan for RMNP and by an environmental assessment that emphasized visitor management issues related to recommended designation of more than 248,000 acres (93% of the Park) of land as wilderness under the National Wilderness Preservation System (Titre & Wallace, 2001; USDI, NPS, 2001), which is legally guided by the tenets of The Wilderness Act of 1964 (see Appendix F).

In 2000, members of the administrative staff at RMNP issued several statements of research that was needed including research on the quality of the wilderness experience at the Park (see Table 7 for evidence of this quality). During meetings with practitioners at RMNP, we were asked to provide information about visitors, including types of experience, natural resource impacts, setting preferences, knowledge about

wilderness, and people's perceptions of existing and proposed management practices. Initial questions generated from these discussions included: (1) Because large portions of RMNP have been recommended for wilderness designation, how do visitors perceive the change in official status to designated wilderness? (2) Does official designation change their expectations of the experience or of park management? (3) How much do visitors know about official wilderness designation? (4) Do visitors make any distinctions between backcountry and wilderness? It was suggested that answers to such questions could be used to inform visitor education, zoning classifications, regulations, and specific management actions at the Park. In light of these broad needs and complex research questions, I present several specific insights that were interpreted from our conversations with the twelve individuals whose interviews are detailed here, insights that begin to address many of the concerns expressed by managers at the Park.

1. These visitors tended to support and to recognize the importance of maintaining a front country/backcountry distinction at RMNP to allow access for all types of visitors, including those limited to front country sites by disabilities, health, small children, time constraints, or lack of desire to go further into the Park. Front country experiences at RMNP have contributed to some people's personal conceptions of wild nature and their dynamic relationships with places within RMNP. Although this distinction is by no means a new management insight, it is pertinent to the situation at the Park in that the recommended official designation of most of RMNP, if it were to occur, must not compromise access to and experience of the more developed front country sites (see *Chapter Four*: Bob, Jane, Jon, Pam, Hedy, and Kathy).

2. Support for the backcountry permit system was evident. Some visitors thought that the permit system facilitated preservation of natural resources and ensured aspects of a wilderness experience such as solitude and the perception of low densities of people in the backcountry (i.e., adequate dispersal of visitors). This permitting system will be challenged, if it is not already, by increased numbers of visitors as they participate in the experience of the setting, but it continues to be an effective means of balancing visitation and preservation in the views of some park visitors (see *Chapter Four*: Kim, Pam, Sam, Jon, Kathy, and Josh).

3. Some visitors to RMNP believe that it is possible to have a wilderness experience there, and they can describe the wilderness quality of the Park based on their personal conceptions of wilderness (see this chapter, Table 7).

4. Sometimes our physical and social interactions with the protected setting, or our conceptions of wild nature in general, conflict with the Park's dual mission to preserve natural resources and to provide quality visitor experiences. This interpretation of these experience narratives suggests that certain types of environmental and experiential education and visitor interpretation need enhancement to ameliorate these conflicts (see *Chapter Four*: Bob, Jane, Pete, Sam, Josh, Pam, Hedy, Jack, and Mike):

- a. Interpretation of the role of natural disturbance (e.g., fire, disease, etc.) in maintaining ecosystem health and diversity
- b. Clarification, justification, and interpretation of policies regarding the Park wide ban on feeding wildlife
- c. Information about the dangers of approaching large wild animals at RMNP (e.g., elk and sheep)
- d. Clarification and interpretation of policies at RMNP regarding the use of horses on some trails and the restriction of dogs on all trails
- e. Information about the actual proportion of protected areas managed for multiple use and those managed for natural conditions and processes (i.e., clarification of the differences in land management among national forests, national parks, and wilderness areas)
- f. The need to couple interpretive information and education programs with direct experience whenever possible
- g. Basic information about sustainability of natural resources and how RMNP plays a role in sustainability
- h. Information that clarifies policies at RMNP regarding the importance of restoration areas

5. Some of the visitors in this study described how experiences of adventure, a sense of the unexpected, and exploration off trail made for satisfying visits, which are linked to sub-insights (f) and (h) above. In addition, the earlier assessment study conducted in 2001 corroborates these observations (Brooks & Titre, 2003). Efforts to provide and enhance these types of experiences in low-impact manners should be continued and/or discussed at the Park. This is of course challenging, but it is suggested here that these types of interactive experiences with the setting, over time, contribute to the development of some people's relationships to places within RMNP and their satisfaction with the experience (see Omodei & Wearing, 1990; *Chapter Four*: Jane, Jon, and Pam; this chapter, Table 9).

6. Seeing and hearing commercial airline over flights were specifically mentioned by at least two participants as being intrusive to their experience. In general, issues of noise as negative aspects of the experience did emerge, supporting current concerns by park staff over noise. Planes and noise were suggested to adversely affect visitors' experiences of solitude and escape from civilization, which can be valued characteristics of a wilderness experience (*Chapter Four: Jon, Josh, and Hedy*).

7. General discussions about, awareness of, and support for collaborative planning and communication efforts that involve local stakeholder groups as a means to issue resolution and conflict management emerged in the narratives (*Chapter Four: Jon, Pete, Hedy, Jack, and Kathy*).

8. People form valued relationships with and have positive experiences at places within RMNP over time and with repeat social and physical interaction in the setting (see this chapter, Table 9). Hence, managers at the Park might consider offering incentives for visitors to return to their favorite places. Such incentives could include (a) flexible itineraries, (b) longer length of stay, and (c) fee reductions for backcountry visitors (and to some extent front country visitors) who return to the Park at least annually. This may facilitate more frequent visits, relationship building, stewardship orientations, and compliance with natural resource and visitor management regulations.

9. Experiences at this national park have been demonstrated to be emergent narratives in many cases. Stories inform the lived experience in these settings and serve as a means for human understanding of that experience (Mair, 1988; Sarbin, 1986). Telling and hearing stories about positive and negative experiences with nature at places in the Park, as they emerged, are important and distinct aspects of the experience. Storytelling behaviors should be encouraged at trailheads, visitor centers, and parking areas where visitors gather and through the education and interpretive efforts and displays made by rangers.

10. The experience of participating in the interviews was judged to be positive and non-intrusive across individual participants. Some stated that the interview was fun and that it made them think about things that they had not previously considered. Others recognized that the study, in principle, would benefit park management, and they hoped that the information that they provided would be used to inform management at RMNP. This dissertation is an attempt to meet that challenge in part. These observations support and should encourage future research of this nature. Moreover, this sends an important message to park staff that some visitors are willing to engage in relatively lengthy and substantially meaningful dialog about RMNP and their experiences while visiting there with those who serve official positions at the Park or who are affiliated with RMNP as contracted researchers.

This list summarizes the main management insights that emerged as themes across narratives beyond the individual level of analysis. Other management insights that became evident during the idiographic work were specific to certain individuals and were discussed in-depth in *Chapter Four*. This summary provides practical direction while communicating insights and implications to the national park staff in an organized and meaningful fashion. The conclusion, *Chapter Six*, revisits the practical and theoretical insightfulness of the interpretation by discussing its implications for past and future research and visitor management at RMNP as a way to evaluate the usefulness of hermeneutic research for parks and protected areas.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS AND EVALUATION

*“Might not we better grasp the significance of qualitative inquiry if we worried less about justifying and locating it as a particular form of research and more about linking it to the practices of teaching and learning [and environmental management]?”*

Thomas A. Schwandt, 1999, p. 463

This dissertation viewed outdoor recreation at a national park as emergent experience that can ultimately enrich people’s lives rather than a predictable outcome of processing information encountered in the setting. Captured in narrative textual form through open-ended and taped interview conversations, visitor experience was hermeneutically interpreted to construct a description of visitors’ experiences and relationships to place while at the same time providing insights for those who manage RMNP (see *Chapter Three*; Patterson, 1993; Patterson & Williams, 2002; Patterson et al., 1998 for discussions about productive ontological hermeneutics as a research paradigm for the leisure sciences). This chapter provides a discussion of additional insights and implications of the study. In addition, the evaluation of this hermeneutic interpretation of leisure experience at RMNP is discussed.

In the dissertation, I view the nature of activity and the involvement in sequential sets of behavior (i.e., the process of moving toward goals and life aspirations) as primary sources of positive human experience, happiness, and well-being. Whereas, instrumental and goal-directed models (e.g. Driver et al., 1987a) view recreation and leisure behavior

as a means of satisfying underlying end states that in turn produce satisfaction and well-being regarding the experience. This highlights the important distinction between process-oriented (autotelic) frameworks that emphasize the meaning of and engagement in activity over time as the source of subjective well-being (Diener, 1984; Omodei & Wearing, 1990) and end-state (telic) frameworks that position happiness in the attainment of goals. Meaning-based models of human behavior such as the one presented in this dissertation fall within process-oriented frameworks (Patterson & Williams, 2002). Both frameworks have been used to study recreation and leisure as a source of happiness and human well-being (Appendix G). However, telic theories have dominated recreation behavior research and the human dimensions of natural resource management (see *Chapter Two*; Patterson & Williams, 2002).

Process-oriented approaches share the perspective that people are happier when they are engaged in interesting and involving activities (Diener, 1984). In addition, Omodei and Wearing (1990) demonstrated the importance of involvement in personal projects as a source of subjective well-being. Involvement in the process of moving toward one's life aspirations is closely related to Csikszentmihalyi's conceptualization of flow, and the autotelic personality finds flow, in part, by enjoying an activity for its own sake, knowing that "what matters is not the result, but the control one is acquiring over one's attention" while engaging in the activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 129). For example, the meaningful and satisfying aspect of hiking Longs Peak at RMNP is not necessarily reaching the summit but rather the actual three- to four-hour strenuous mountain hike, possibly shared with cherished companions, at high elevation on rocky trails, which can be dangerous at times. However, the end point, or outcome, of reaching

the summit serves to focus visitors' attention on the process of becoming involved in the hike. It is this process of moving toward the summit that allows a positive experience. According to Omodei and Wearing (1990, p. 763), goal attainment and involvement are conceptually distinct sources of happiness and positive experience, but these "overlap empirically because they share a common source in the perception of opportunities for need satisfaction." This suggests that there may be some overlap between these frameworks, and thus room for integration. One implication of this research is in the potential of the concept of personal projects for integrating the end-state view of behavior with the process-oriented view; at a minimum, the study of personal projects can help to clarify this distinction.

Given the compatibility of the concept of personal projects with meaning-based process-oriented frameworks, I interpreted and organized examples of individual experience (within cases) in a meaningful way around two broad themes: (1) current personal project(s) (Little, 1983, 1989; Omodei & Wearing, 1990; Patterson, 1993) and (2) the identities that the research participants expressed during the interviews (see *Chapter Four*; Appendix E). Many of the personal projects and identity dimensions that visitors expressed overlapped with certain end states, or outcomes, inherent in some of the motivational domains (Driver et al., 1987a) developed in traditional telic research approaches to recreation behavior (see Table 11). This is not surprising; personal projects are compatible with both extrinsic (i.e., instrumental goal-directed) and intrinsic (i.e., process-oriented flow activities and involvement) motivation (Omodei & Wearing, 1990). The experience outcomes listed in Table 11 may have been important expectations that served to focus the attention of these visitors on their more holistic

Table 11. Similarities between personal projects and motivational domains (Driver et al., 1987a) for twelve individuals interviewed at Rocky Mountain National Park during summer 2001.

Visitor	Process-Oriented Project(s)	Motivational Domains / Outcomes
Bob	Escape Work/Civilization Day Hiking Scenic Driving	Escape Noise/Crowds; Reduce Tensions; Physical Rest Physical Fitness
Jane	Reinforce/Strengthen Life Commitments	Family Togetherness; (Offsite Benefits)
Jon	Seeking a Real and Authentic Experience	Stimulation
Pete	Conditioning Reconnect with Family	Physical Fitness Family Togetherness
Sam	Enjoy the Experience Learn about Natural History	Enjoy Nature Outdoor Learning
Josh	Enjoy the Experience Reconnect with His/Our Position in the World	Enjoy Nature Introspection/Spiritual
Pam	Enjoy the Experience while Chaperoning Nephews	Enjoy Nature Family Togetherness
Hedy	Spiritual Renewal and Fellowship with Like Kind	Introspection/Spiritual Sharing Similar Values
Kim	Reconnect with Self	Introspection/Spiritual
Mike	Wildlife Viewing	Outdoor Learning
Jack	Building a Relationship with Wilderness Enjoy Outdoor Vacation with Wife and Friends	None Enjoy Nature; Family Togetherness; Sharing Similar Values
Kathy	Become Familiar with the Area	Outdoor Learning

personal projects and identities during their visits to places in the Park. Beyond the relationship between expectations and outcomes, this study has demonstrated how people's experiences fit into their larger life endeavors, personal aspirations, and their relationships with places at RMNP. These contextual relationships to place have formed, and are continually being reshaped, by new experiences at the Park—experiences that entail both extrinsically and intrinsically motivated behaviors. The concept of personal projects has implications for the study of recreation behavior in that it begins to bridge the gap between these types of motivation as sources of well-being and positive recreation experience.

Goals and expectations in outdoor recreation are important, but they provide an incomplete picture of visitor experience. Failure to achieve expectations does not always result in negative experience because the overall emergent narrative or story of the experience may have been a success (Patterson et al. 1998). In a study of river rafting experiences in Colorado, Arnould and Price (1993) demonstrated that the emergent narrative of the rafting experience was key to how these rafters evaluated their experience as positive or negative, and satisfaction with the overall rafting trip was found to be weakly linked to the relationship between outcomes and prior expectations. To use an example from this dissertation, Sam, an experienced outdoor person, may have expected to see some interesting plants and animals, or even to identify some new species, during his day visit to Glacier Gorge on the east side of RMNP, but his rich description of a growth of cactus that he had remembered seeing a year ago and what this experience meant for him personally is considered to be primarily emergent:

“Plus, also back to my selfish reasons—I just like to be out here and see this stuff and identify plants ... I was hiking last year, and I saw this growth of cactus, it

was whole generations; there was the dying part over here and it was black and starting to rot and there was the older part here, and it was withery and the spines were kind of hanging down and it looked like one big organism, and over here were new little bulbs coming up. It was like a rainbow, a cactus rainbow there ... and seeing stuff like that ... you can describe it to somebody, but I can't impart to you what it was like to see that.” [Probe: *How did it make you feel, seeing something like that?*] “It made me feel like I was part of the life cycle, a part of the biosphere—like here I am, I'm a person and I'm growing older and I used to be this little baby thing here, now I'm here and one day I'll be that.” [Probe: *You'll be on the black rotten end.*] “Definitely, worm food.” (Sam, 96-108)

In Sam's cactus story, he expresses the experience of sensing his own mortality and an understanding of the natural life cycle. Seeing and talking about the cactus plants provided him with a personal sense of his position in the living world. This is an example of the emergent nature of human experience at places like RMNP. Most likely Sam did not expect to experience a sense of his own mortality, or even a sense of the natural life cycle, when he took this trip. Sam, like many outdoor enthusiasts, certainly wants to learn about nature; his story about the cactus plants provides a meaningful and concrete example of what he learned at this place during a specific visit in relation to the broader scope of his life. Sam's emergent narrative provides meaningful substance for well-studied, instrumental domains of experience such as nature study and spiritual benefits. However, experience outcomes and setting attributes (e.g., plants) are generic and transferable across protected areas, whereas emergent experience narratives are place and time specific.

In reading other experience narratives in *Chapter Four*, we are provided with a diversity of individualized concrete maps of the dimensions of the experience, including interrelationships among dimensions. The ultimate aim is to sample and describe a large diversity of narratives to provide managers at RMNP with an idea of the various types of possible visitor experiences, which is a practical implication of the idiographic

interpretation. Each experience narrative should represent “a detailed understanding of an actual individual” in the context of that setting (Patterson, 1993, p. 188), which reminds us that a hermeneutic study primarily seeks contextual understanding rather than generalizable standards and rules. Patterson and associates (1998) and Patterson (1993, p. 188) referred to these as “representative types of possible experiences rather than abstract generalizations about the average experience.”

From the telic motivational perspective, individual experience narratives should prove useful for managers at RMNP who seek to maximize experience opportunities because they represent diversity and detail in the individual experiences that may need to be provided or mitigated. These detailed exemplars of individual experience also add substance to traditional motivational domains. For example, some Park managers have an idea that domains such as family togetherness (e.g., Driver et al., 1987a; Manning, 1999) may hold instrumental meaning for some visitors when endorsed on a questionnaire as being a reason for visiting RMNP, but Jane’s narrative descriptions of her wedding ceremony and the emotional and spiritual meanings that emerged while participating in the subsequent day hike that her wedding party experienced at RMNP, for example, provide substance and concrete detail to what family togetherness means for Jane and how it relates to her relationship to the place. From a more holistic and process-oriented perspective, visiting the Park and interacting socially (e.g., group conversations) and physically (e.g., off-trail hikes) in the setting allows Jane to reinforce her life commitments to conservation, to building a relationship with wilderness, and to her marriage and nuclear family (see *Chapter Four*, Figure 6). These represent more than

experience outcomes or off-site benefits. They represent involvement in a process that makes Jane's relationship with RMNP a source of well-being and therefore valuable.

Bob's narrative represents a different type of experience that is possible at RMNP. He not only tells us that he is instrumentally engaged in escaping from civilization and the stresses of his career while day hiking and scenic driving at the Park, but he also communicates how escape allows him to reevaluate his own identity as a member of that civilization, and how being at RMNP allows emotional and spiritual feelings to occur that are normally absent from his life (see *Chapter Four*, Figure 5). These idiographic-level insights suggest that experience narratives can represent diversity of types, and these can help to map a more complete range of place meanings at the Park, both of which are critical to management of the human system inherent in today's framework of ecosystem management (Brunson, 1995; Grumbine, 1994; Williams & Patterson, 1999). Moreover, we are informed about visitors' social constructions of wild nature as a whole. We as social science researchers and natural resource professionals are given a rather detailed glimpse, at a certain point in time, of what the experience means for these people's lives.

Beyond the dimensions of a general human-wilderness relationship as described and discussed in *Chapter Five*, many of these research participants described how they had formed their personal and social relationships over time with RMNP or with specific places within the Park. Again, these relationships probably are not transferable from place to place. The take home message for managers from this insight is that the values of the Park are not just in its attributes (e.g., wild animals, alpine lakes, hiking trails, etc.), but even more in the relationships that visitors and residents form with places within

RMNP over time. Although interaction with the physical attributes (e.g., object-centered experience) contributes to the process of relationship formation, the relationships themselves are specific to places within it, and not necessarily to the attributes of the Park. The second implication regarding this insight concerns social science research methodologies. Understanding how people form relationships to specific places in the protected landscape is best approached using qualitative interpretive research designs such as phenomenology and hermeneutics. This is because the process of relationship development is most often an emergent narrative rather than a predictable outcome.

Park management is encouraged to focus on how relationships are formed with places rather than how certain park attributes provide opportunities for certain types of experiences because satisfaction is often realized through the process of developing relationships to places. Education and interpretation programs at the Park might give more emphasis to the stories of visitors in at least two ways: (1) developing conservation and stewardship ethics and respect for the Park might be accomplished by demonstrating how visitors and community members derive meaning from developing knowledge of the place and experience over time, and (2) actual stories or exemplars of experience narratives might be incorporated into the information that visitors receive to illustrate the consequences of not following regulations designed to protect resources and visitor experiences. The respective premises here are that as people become less fearful and more knowledgeable of the setting, they will become more respectful of nature, and efforts should be made to link compliance with park policies to narrative illustration because people tend to understand life situations in storied form (Mair, 1988; Sarbin, 1986).

Next, the discussion moves to considerations involving the evaluation of this analysis of visitor experience at RMNP. To ensure quality in this type of research, the normative commitments of the paradigm must be matched to the researcher's philosophical assumptions about reality, human nature, and the phenomenon under study (Patterson, 1993). In addition, the researcher is required to explicitly state these commitments and assumptions (see *Chapters One & Two*) for the reader before discussing the methods and analyses of the study (see *Chapter Three*). This enables the reader to "carefully evaluate the degree to which the researcher supported a specific interpretation" not only based upon the evidence provided, but in light of "a thorough understanding of the perspective (forestructure of understanding) from which the researcher approaches the phenomenon" rather than from an alternative perspective or conceptual model (Patterson, 1993, p. 172).

According to Patterson (1993), productive hermeneutic studies can be evaluated using the following guidelines, which include (1) the persuasiveness of studies, (2) their insightfulness, (3) relevance to future leisure research, and (4) the practical implications of the studies. These have been addressed, in part, above and in *Chapter Five*. The remainder of this chapter focuses on persuasiveness and future research.

Step one of this interpretation (see *Chapter One*, objective one) was to ensure that my choice of research paradigm was appropriate for my assumptions about human nature and, in this case, visitor experience and relationship to place. Ensuring this correspondence partially addresses the persuasiveness of the study (Patterson, 1993). As a narrative ontology, productive hermeneutics is focused on understanding human experience as it emerges in the lived world, and it makes no distinction between the

subject and world or objects in the world (i.e., visitor experience is an emergent narrative rather than a predictable outcome; it is co-constituted by the visitor, the researcher, and the setting). The dissertation employed a meaning-based model of human nature that views people as “actively engaged in the construction of meaning” during a leisure experience rather than processing information that they encounter in the leisure setting (McCracken, 1987; Mick & Buhl, 1992; Patterson & Williams, 2002, p. 103). The assumptions that underlie meaning-based models of human nature are closely aligned with the commitments of the branch of hermeneutics used in this dissertation and other narrative and social constructionist paradigms.

In addition to clarifying my forestructure of understanding, I have presented substantial portions of actual interview excerpts that were collected at RMNP during summer 2001 to support the insights, suggestions, and claims discussed in the dissertation for both the idiographic and the nomothetic level interpretations. Regarding persuasiveness, making the evidence available to the reader allows him or her to make reasonable judgments about the knowledge claims made by the researcher. This approach is expected to be particularly useful for managerial and administrative staff at RMNP because they can read and understand the data (presented in the shared language of visitors and managers) while evaluating the persuasiveness of the insights and claims discussed here. Many natural resource professionals, members of the RMNP community, and undergraduate recreation students do not possess extensive knowledge of inferential statistics (a form of language itself), which often makes interpretation and evaluation difficult when reading study results that employ them.

In a sense, this hermeneutic interpretation is more public than most quantitative studies (Patterson, 1993) due to the accessible nature of the data. When the reader enters the conversation by reading the interview excerpts, he or she is encouraged to debate, argue against, or concur with what was said and how the researcher interpreted it in a form of public dialog (Bellah et al., 1985). This, of course, has practical implications for collaborative planning efforts, which must involve extensive dialog, debate, and communication between the public and groups such as federal agencies, private associations, and outdoor recreation clubs to increase mutual understanding of natural resource management issues, conflicts, or policy changes. The process of confronting interpretations, arbitrating between them, and testing knowledge claims through public discourse, or dialog, strengthens qualitative research by socially constructing “communicative validity” for the interpretations (Kvale, 1995; Mishler, 1990). In the context of an evaluation of this interpretation by my graduate committee and research peers, providing validity evidence (i.e., validation) for this study has been redefined “as a process by which a community of researchers evaluates the trustworthiness of a particular study” and its claims via an ongoing social discourse based on how the study fits into and contributes to the community’s understanding of an area of inquiry (e.g., environmental psychology, leisure studies, etc.) rather than depending on formal rules and standardized procedures such as the calculation of psychometric coefficients of validity (Mishler, 1990). Adhering to strict criteria for establishing quality in research conflicts with the qualitative enterprises of exploration, creativity, and emergent conceptual flexibility (Seale, 1999a). Kvale (1995, p. 36) made the observation that “a strict psychometric

conception, limiting validity to quantified knowledge, has served as gatekeeper to keep qualitative research outside the halls of science.”

The extreme relativist stance that anything goes regarding the quality of research conflicts with the intent of this dissertation, which is in part to address practical issues for park managers. Qualitative research in this area has to be evaluated on its relevance to applied problems at parks and protected areas. In this study, I acknowledge a biophysical reality with multiple constructions and the concept of situated freedom (Valle et al., 1989) for the park visitor who always perceives a particular setting from her or his own viewpoint, but the setting “acts back on” the visitor, thereby constraining the perceived experiences that are possible while interacting with that setting (Seale, 1999b, p. 26). This dissertation is located in the middle ground between objectivism and relativism and requires a “constructively self-critical research [and management] community” for its evaluation (Seale, 1999b, p. 31).

As a paradigm, hermeneutics portrays interpretation as a process (with no one correct ending point) of sharing and coming to understand common meanings (Gadamer, 1989). It might have been informative if I had shared the individual interpretations with those who co-constructed the interviews as a way to enhance persuasiveness through member checks. This was not the case because we did not ask participants for their contact information or their permission to contact them in the future to discuss the interpretations of their interview transcripts. These types of member checks might have strengthened the persuasiveness and communicative validity of this study by providing additional dialog and interactive communication between researcher and participant. “Communicative validity here approximates an educational endeavor, where truth

[knowledge claims] is developed in a communicative process, both researcher and subjects learning and changing through the dialog” (Kvale, 1995, p. 32).

While writing *Chapter Four* my committee chair, George Wallace, independently reviewed each of my idiographic interpretations, with the excerpted interview text as a way to co-interpret the narratives. When alternative interpretations (and additions or deletions to my interpretations) of the available evidence emerged, we subsequently discussed, altered, and incorporated them into the idiographic presentations based on our common understanding of visitor experience as it relates to current management issues at the Park. We also expect and will welcome extensive discussions and debates with managers at RMNP regarding the persuasiveness and usefulness of this research. This process of co-interpretation should be extended to practitioners at RMNP and at other protected areas where this type of research is conducted. Park managers themselves could benefit from reading and interpreting interview narratives of visitor experience. This would result in co-constructions of meanings of the park experience and mutual understanding for managers and visitors. A recommendation from this study is to encourage future analyses of this nature that directly involve practitioners at RMNP. Perhaps future sessions should be held where researchers and managers discuss transcripts and listen to audio-recorded interviews together to facilitate dialog and communication about the usefulness and implications of this research. A process that continually verifies understanding is consistent with the hermeneutic circle and the interpretive paradigm of this study (see *Chapter Three*, Figure Four).

*Chapter Five* focused on the interrelationships among emergent themes across cases (i.e., nomothetic analysis). The discussion of these conceptual insights and thematic

patterns is closely referenced to the textual data. In this case, however, excerpts are presented out of context so that the reader can compare across more than one individual participant at a time. This allows the reader to evaluate knowledge claims and suggested insights at a level beyond the individual experience narrative. Patterns common to more than one person and unforeseen themes emerged across these individuals that warranted the nomothetic interpretation; if this were not the case, this study could have stopped after the idiographic interpretation of visitor experience narratives (Patterson & Williams, 2002).

The insight that park visitors form long-term relationships to places within RMNP via a process holds important implications for future research. The evidence discussed in *Chapter Five* regarding dimensions and stages of this process should inspire future research into how visitors form relationships to protected places. Theoretical linkages (albeit not entirely clear at this time) are evident in this dialog. That is, social and physical interactions with protected places and their attributes over time facilitate the construction and ascription of place meanings. Life history and social network research studies of outdoor recreation and relationship to place are recommended to capture the aspect of time and the social and physical interactions that are inherent in this process (e.g., childhood socialization into an outdoor oriented family). Similar to Fournier's (1991) recommendation that consumer researchers consider the dynamics of people-object relations, I recommend that leisure researchers, especially qualitative ones, go beyond description and categorization to study the overall processes and structure of human-environmental relations.

The process of making meaning in the protected landscape has been proposed as a prerequisite to valuation of the environment and its attributes (see *Chapter Two*, section 1; Page, 1992; Patterson & Williams, 1999). At certain places and at certain times, it may be the case that environmental values and valuation of attributes influence the construction of new place meanings (see Figure 1 on page 30). Moreover, the social and ecological systems that we are attempting to manage at these places are continually changing, so research and management that focus on process are recommended. Specifically, longitudinal studies of visitor experience narratives in which the same people (e.g., long-time return visitors such as Bob and part-time residents like Pete) are interviewed over time would provide insights about the stages of development of relationship to place. In addition, evolving values and behaviors and perceptions of changes at RMNP (e.g., altered management policies, increased commercial developments, physical changes resulting from natural disturbances, wilderness designation, etc.) might be tracked through time for these individuals relative to their personal or family histories at the place. To the extent that these insights and recommendations stimulate action or changes in future research programs, or in the behaviors of those who manage the Park, the interpretation presented here exhibits “pragmatic validity” evidence (Kvale, 1995).

In sum, protected and wilderness areas such as RMNP are places in the landscape where we experience both the socially constructed and the physically real aspects of wild nature at once. People have the freedom to interact with the place and their companions while the experience emerges, but this freedom is bounded by the physical and social (and often managerial) limitations of their culture and the protected natural setting

(Patterson & Williams, 2002; Valle et al., 1989). According to Williams and Patterson (1999, pp. 153-157), “a given ecosystem can be described as the intersection of natural forces, social relations, and meanings.” Additional research is necessary to increase our understanding of the hyper-complex interface between ecological processes and the human social processes of making meanings and building relationships to place. It has been suggested that a viable conception of wilderness, or wild nature, does exist in this interface. Places like RMNP should continue to provide ideal social and natural settings for studying these processes. The visitors to the Park who were interviewed for this dissertation have begun to describe this interface and some of its meanings in their own words to inform us as natural resource professionals about how their experiences at this place fit into an overall human relationship with natural resources and the environment.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Environmental spirituality and nature-based or traditional religious beliefs are discussed here as pertinent examples because they are thought to represent less tangible, expressive, and symbolic meanings, and strong affective bonds to place, which are represented on the right side of Figure 1 (Cross, 2001; Fournier, 1991; Patterson, 1993; Williams & Patterson, 1999). These meanings serve as the focus of this dissertation. However, spirituality is only one of a diversity of ways of assigning symbolic place meanings or feeling attached to protected landscapes and places within them. For example, historical continuity and romanticism, personal or family history at place, social identity, nostalgia, personal growth and perseverance, ethical/moral commitments, and independence, etc. may certainly represent the types of attachments and place meanings discussed in Figure 1. From a goal-directed perspective, Driver and associates described many of these domains in their early work on motivation, which culminated in the Recreation Experience Preference Scales (see Manning, 1999 for a review of this research program). Place attachment, or relationship to place, is certainly a multi-dimensional phenomenon (Cross, 2001; Low & Altman, 1992). For example, Cross (2001) described five types of relationships to place in the context of community attachment, including biographical, ideological, spiritual, commodified, and dependent.

<sup>2</sup> The philosophy of science is not the scientific method or the history of the practice of science; it is not the sociology of science or the psychology of science (Klemke, 1998). Klemke (1998) rather broadly defined the philosophy of science in this passage: Philosophy of science is the attempt (a) to understand the method, foundations, and logical structure of science and (b) to examine the relations and interfaces of science and other human concerns, institutions, and quests by means of (c) a logical and methodological analysis both of the aims, methods, and criteria of science and of the aims, methods and concerns of various cultural phenomena in their relations to science” (p. 25). This is a complex characterization beyond the scope of this dissertation of the philosophy of science, but it is important to examine its parts because it demonstrates some *characteristics of science* such as structure, foundations, and methods. This definition also implies that science is not separate from human concerns, social systems, and goals, and that there are certain aspects of culture that are related to science. More simply, the philosophy of science is about the *language and dialog of science* and an “analysis of the *principles underlying science*” (Klemke, 1998, p. 24; [italics added]). I am primarily concerned with the principles, or assumptions, underlying science, and how they relate to my choice of paradigm and overall project of understanding place meanings and visitor experience at RMNP.

<sup>3</sup> An open acknowledgement of the values and assumptions that underlie one’s research is necessary because it ensures that the justifications for any practices and policies based on that research would be openly acknowledged as well (Kincheloe, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> In this dissertation, the endeavor of science is thought to consist of two parts—(1) a “systematic effort with a common process, but no requirement of a common methodology” and (2) an understanding and statement(s) of the philosophical

assumptions that guide the research (Patterson & Williams, 1998, p. 291). Moreover, this dissertation recognizes that the choice of scientific paradigm, theory, and method(s) involves value judgments on the part of the researcher(s) about the characteristics of the paradigm or theory or even method (including evaluation criteria) that make it good, or appropriate for understanding the research problem (Howard, 1985; Howe, 1991; Kincheloe, 2003; Kuhn, 1977; McMullin, 1998). Disciplines that rely on an expert discourse about human beings are inherently value laden and socially embedded (Malm, 1993). I suspect that most social scientific researchers cannot leave their entire suite of presuppositions, knowledge, values, and other pieces of cultural baggage at home when they leave for work each day. However, when acknowledged, these pre-understandings can play a productive role in interpretive research that is directed toward understanding human experience.

<sup>5</sup> Many of these transcripts were not appropriate for this paradigm of interpretation because the interviewee did not speak beyond the public self to reveal deeper, private place meanings or relationships to nature, or because the interviewer conducted the interview in a stimulus-response fashion, using no probes or interactive lines of questioning, which does not facilitate the sharing and construction of meaningful life stories and narratives about the phenomenon under study (see Mishler, 1986a; Patterson, 1993, Chapter 6).

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## APPENDICES

Appendix A. Interview locations for the overall study at RMNP during Summer 2001.

Location	Number of Interviews	Percent of Sample
Ouzel Falls	12	17.6
Mirror Lake	8	11.8
Alberta Falls Overlook	4	5.9
North Saint Vrain Camp	4	5.9
Nymph Lake	4	5.9
Lake Verna	4	4.4
Ouzel Lake	3	4.4
Slickrock Camp	3	4.4
Tahosa Camp	3	4.4
Thunder Lake	3	4.4
Bear Lake	2	3.0
Calypso Cascades	2	3.0
Dream Lake	2	3.0
Fern Lake	2	3.0
Jackstraw Camp	2	3.0
Loch Vale	2	3.0
Timber Lake	2	3.0
Trails between locations	2	3.0
Bluebird Lake	1	1.7
Cub Creek Camp	1	1.7
Rockslide Camp	1	1.7
Snowbird Camp	1	1.7
Total	68	100%

Appendix B. Sample characteristics for research participants interviewed at RMNP during summer 2001 and hermeneutically interpreted in this dissertation.

Pseudonym	Visitor type	School	Profession	Religion	Age	Contribute
Bob	Day	16	Accountant	Not stated	59	No
Jane	Over night	18	Youth Therapist	Unitarian	31	No
Jon	Over night	18	School Teacher	None	52	Yes
Pete	Day	16	Public Housing	Presbyterian	60	No
Sam	Day	16	Computer Science	Pluralist	28	No
Josh	Day	18	Retired Engineer	None	55	Yes
Pam	Day	16	Accountant	Baptist	38	No
Hedy	Day	20	Registered Nurse	Born Again	51	No
Kim	Over night	14	At-Home-Mom	Nature-Based	31	No
Mike	Day	12	Carpenter/Framer	Christian	23	Yes
Jack	Overnight	17	School Teacher	Christian	25	No
Kathy	Overnight	22	Ecologist	None	31	Yes

Note: School represents years of formal education including four years of secondary education. Contribute represents financial contributions to environmental or conservation organizations.

Appendix C. Semi-structured, flexible interview guide used at RMNP during Summer 2001.

**Informant #, Date, Location, Region, Day Period, Pseudonym**

Introduction: [My name is Jeff Brooks, and I am a graduate student at The College of Natural Resources, Colorado State University. I am interested in what wilderness or backcountry means to visitors at RMNP. I want to understand things from your point of view. If there are any definitional questions, please interpret them based on your own understanding, but it is okay to stop me and ask questions if you do not understand. Most people say they find the interview interesting; it takes about twenty to twenty-five minutes. Your responses are very important, and will be held in strict confidence. It is faster if I tape; do you mind if I tape record?]

1. [When you think about wilderness, which places in RMNP do you think of?]
2. [Would you say, in your opinion, that wilderness is important to you?] [If yes, PROBE: What traits of wilderness make it important to you?]
3. [Of the kinds of places (in RMNP) that you have listed as wilderness, are there any particular places that have a special importance for you?] [PROBE: For example, is there a wilderness area in RMNP that you associate with your family / friends, or with your beliefs that makes the place more significant to you than other places?]
4. [Could you please list for me all the activities that you do while in the wilderness at RMNP?]
5. [Speaking from your experience, how would you describe the relationship between people and wilderness?] [PROBES: What are your reasons for feeling this way?] [In the sense that people usually don't live in wilderness, do you consider humans to be separate from wilderness?]
6. [Do you think that there are any disadvantages in protecting wilderness?] [PROBE: In your opinion, do you feel there are any reasons why we shouldn't protect wilderness? Please list them.]
7. [Do you think there are any advantages or beneficial reasons for protecting wilderness areas?] [PROBE: If yes, what characteristics of wilderness make it worth protecting?]
8. [Could you please list for me all the feelings that you have when you visit the wilderness at RMNP?]
9. [When people try to protect wilderness, do you ever feel that other priorities may not be satisfied?] [PROBES: For example, some people say that protection of wilderness shouldn't make people lose jobs and shouldn't raise the cost of living. How would you feel about those kinds of things? Do you feel that sometimes the protection of wilderness interferes with human needs?]
10. [Would you say that people have a right to use some wilderness for their benefit?]
11. [In your opinion, what are the limits to human uses of the wilderness?] [PROBE: Are there any uses that people should not practice, or are there some uses of wilderness that would not be acceptable to you personally?] [During this visit to RMNP, have you seen any negative signs of people visiting here? And if so, please list all the negative human signs that you have seen.]

12. [Do people living in our country have responsibilities toward wilderness?] [PROBES: In general, do people have responsibilities to protect wilderness for future generations of people? Are there any consequences of not living up to these responsibilities?]
13. [Have you heard that many types of wilderness are being lost forever around the world?] [If yes, PROBE: How does this make you feel?]
14. [Have you heard anything else about this? For example, what are some of the causes of wilderness being lost?]
15. [Do you think something should be done about it?]
16. [Do you think it should be the responsibility of individuals, or corporations, or governments?]
17. [Is losing wilderness good, bad, or undecided for you?]
18. [If most of the wilderness in this country disappeared, would you and your family experience any consequences? That is, would it affect any of you in any way?]
19. [Could I please get your age?]
20. [Are you a U.S. citizen?]
21. [How many years of formal education do you have past secondary school?]
22. [What is your occupation?]
23. [What is your religious background? Are you active in this religion now?] [Do you consider yourself spiritual?]
24. [Do you contribute to any environmental / wildlife organizations?]
25. [What is your overall reaction to the things we've discussed today?] [Did we miss anything important about wilderness that you would like to add?] [Do you feel this interview was in any way an intrusion on your experience?]

[Interviewer comments]

Appendix D. Multiple realities at Rocky Mountain National Park recorded during summer 2001.

**When you think about wilderness, which places in RMNP do you think of ?**

- “It’s just one big park to me.”
- “National parks and wilderness areas, forests . . . areas outside of metropolitan areas.”
- “I would say, you know, to get away from the roads and trails is wilderness.”
- “More the high country and the backcountry . . . a lot of the summits, the summit trails, places where people aren’t.”
- “I don’t really think of this as wilderness; it’s more like backcountry.”
- “When I think of wilderness, well, to be honest with you, I’d say the whole park, because we drove by a miniature golf course and saw five elk walking on the greens. So . . . when do I *feel* it? I *feel* it when I’m in the backcountry. But, I’d definitely say, you know, even downtown is the wilderness. It’s not people’s homes. We’re the visitors here.”

Appendix E. Summary of primary themes identified in the idiographic interpretation (*Chapter Four*) for twelve individuals interviewed at Rocky Mountain National Park during summer 2001.

Pseudonym	Claimed Identity	Current Personal Project(s)
Bob	Hard-working CPA from the Flatlands	Escape Work/Civilization Day Hiking Scenic Driving
Jane	Passive Explorer	Reinforce/Strengthen Life Commitments
Jon	Wilderness Purist/Protectionist	Seeking a Real and Authentic Experience
Pete	Experienced Long-Distance Trail Hiker/Runner	Conditioning Reconnect with Family
Sam	Experienced Outdoor Person	Enjoy the Experience Learn about Natural History
Josh	Pragmatic Wilderness Person who Likes Solitude	Enjoy the Experience Reconnect with his/our Position in the World
Pam	Person who Enjoys and Cares for Nature and Family	Enjoy the Experience while Chaperoning Nephews
Hedy	Local Resident who Finds Spiritual Solace at the Park	Spiritual Renewal and Fellowship with Like Kind
Kim	Person who Respects Nature	Reconnect with Self
Mike	Wildlife Enthusiast/Conservationist	Wildlife Viewing
Jack	Temporary Visitor who Respects Wilderness	Building a Relationship with Wilderness Enjoy Outdoor Vacation with Wife and Friends
Kathy	Concerned Ecologist	Become Familiar with the Area

Appendix F. Selected excerpt from The Wilderness Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-577) as reprinted in Callicott and Nelson (1998) that describes the official definition of the wilderness concept.

Section 2. (c) A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man [humanity] and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man [humanity], where man [humanity] himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's [humanity's] work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

