

Research to Create Public Memory of Wilderness

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Abstract—If wilderness experiences are distinct from general outdoor recreation experiences, then wilderness visitor research needs to reflect the distinction. If there are distinguishing characteristics, they would be linked to social and cultural meanings embedded in the Wilderness Act of 1964 and contemporary interpretations of it. Most research on wilderness visitor experience is conducted through psychological approaches that do not recognize social and cultural meanings, leaving open questions regarding the social and cultural relevance of any given wilderness area. Public memory is explored as a strategy to create an evolving and unique set of place meanings for a designated wilderness area. Researchers could more fully understand wilderness experience by exploring public memory. The evolving public memory of wilderness as a philosophical concept is distinguished from lack of any public memory for a given wilderness area. The point of public memory is not to preserve the past, but to adapt it in ways that are relevant to the present. There are three sources of information on which to base public memory of wilderness: (1) the reason for designation embedded in wilderness legislation which has led to a national narrative of all wilderness areas as places untrammelled by humans, (2) the story of the designation of the given area and changes in operations that have been generated due to wilderness management regimes, and (3) connections to experiences of visitors and the memories they share. The latter two sources of information have largely been neglected, privileging the public memory that coincides with the national narrative of wilderness. A strategy to create public memory would be a three-step process to share stories of wilderness experiences, engage others to react and comment on the shared stories, and build a credible set of narratives from the engaged public to fit a specific wilderness area.

Introduction

What makes wilderness experiences different from general outdoor recreation experiences? If there is a difference, then the difference needs to be reflected in research. My starting point on wilderness experiences is the Wilderness Act of 1964, which provides substance for the meaning of places so designated. The Act suggests a narrative of the history of American

culture and puts forth a uniquely American justification for land designated as wilderness. The meaning of wilderness, as embodied in the Act, is one that connects with social and cultural values of American life (Callicott and Nelson 1998; Nash 2001). This contrasts with the study of wilderness experiences which has been largely framed as individualized experiences, psychological benefits, and personal preferences. To be sure, trips in wilderness provide a wide array of individualized experiences and benefits, and these could be linked to personal preferences for settings. However the argument that distinguishes wilderness from outdoor recreation experiences has yet to be fully developed. Social and cultural meanings of wilderness generally do not surface in the empirical research on wilderness experiences, yet social and cultural meanings are essential to distinguishing wilderness from general outdoor recreation experiences.

In his critique of wilderness, Cronon (1995) brought visibility to the social and cultural contexts of wilderness recreation. Over the past two decades there has been a growing critique, largely from sociologists and policy scholars, of wilderness management as favoring an “able-bodied white middle class user” (Taylor 2000, p.178; see also Bullard 1993; Mohai 1985). For me, Cronon’s essay problematized the reliance on a psychologized view of wilderness experience and suggested the need for approaches to research that would integrate social and cultural contexts of one’s wilderness visit. The purpose of this paper is to explore the potential of public memory as a strategy to build connections between individual experience and the cultural meaning of any given wilderness area. A secondary purpose is to advocate that recreation researchers and wilderness managers play more active roles in stewardship of social and cultural meanings of wilderness, and expand their current roles as stewards of the onsite visitor experience through manipulation of social and setting attributes.

Public memory is about creating value for something or some place. When people share knowledge of an event, it leads to a conversation where new meaning becomes embedded in the place of interest. When such conversations engage a wide audience, place meanings are created and the value of a locale is enhanced. The process of creating value for some place through an evolving conversation about its significance is the basis for public memory. The point of public memory is not to preserve the past, but to adapt it in ways that affect the present (Lowenthal 1985); in other words, our understandings of the past change as our present conditions change (Blair and others 2010).

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Consider the memories you have shared about a past wilderness trip and the reaction of others to your recollections. These memories, reflected in stories of the past, color meaning for the places visited on the trip and do so in ways that purposefully enrich the present. The basis of public memory of wilderness is within forums that invite the sharing of stories of wilderness that allow others to react and provide commentary and ultimately work to build a narrative or synthesis. Creating public memory of wilderness is about social and cultural layerings on top of our individualized meanings, resulting in a collective knowledge of place (Assmann 1995). Both recreation researchers and wilderness managers have important roles to play in the creation of public memory for wilderness.

Importance of Social and Cultural Meanings of Wilderness

Developing strategies for creating public memory of wilderness invites the experience to grow into a narrative larger than any one person. For wilderness management to keep pace with contemporary values, social and cultural meanings about wilderness need to come to the surface and otherwise be more explicit in social science research. Public memory creates a sense of place with potential to bring people together and provide a positive identity. As an example, war memorials offer a public memory of significant cultural values that led to a country's involvement in war and create a sense of place to honor those who fought in war. Although war memorials are common place, their meanings are anything but common. Rather they distinguish specific men and women from a given locale for a given war who sacrificed themselves for the unique purposes of the war. Stated differently, war memorials are not about remembering a collection of people dying overseas, they are a coming together of individual sacrifice and a shared remembrance of a local history that connects with national pride (Cimprich 2005). If all we know about visitors to a war memorial is their psychological experiences, we have not fully captured its significance as a war memorial. There are social and cultural meanings of a war memorial that directly contribute to individual experiences. Wilderness visitor research has focused on individual experiences and generally has neglected any social and cultural meanings that contribute to such experiences. For research to distinguish wilderness visitors from general outdoor recreationists, it requires a framework that recognizes wilderness as a cultural institution.

As part of a process that builds place meaning, counter-narratives may develop that resist and otherwise critique any given place meaning. Such counter-narratives play important roles in bringing people together to critique or give voice to alternate meanings. For example, like most places of public memory connected with Christopher Columbus, Denver's memorial draws protests from American Indian groups on the official Columbus Day holiday (Noel 2010).

Over time the dominant and counter-narratives of Denver's Columbus Memorial have become linked to one another and function as a progressive dialogue as the meaning of Columbus Day evolves. Likewise, the Wilderness Act of 1964 has been critiqued as lacking sensitivity to the history of many wilderness areas, including historical factors related to American Indian homelands, impact of management regimes, practices of restoration ecology, and problematizing wilderness in relation to gender, race, and class (Cronon 1995; Elliot 1997; Plumwood 1998). Developing forums to create public memory of wilderness will likely provoke social and cultural critiques of a given wilderness that will connect with visitor experiences.

Over the past few decades, there has been a growing literature that addresses social and cultural meaning-making within contexts of recreation and leisure (Kelly 1974; Patterson and others 1998; Stokowski 1996). Lee (1972) was one of the first researchers to frame outdoor recreational sites as having a social meaning beyond the descriptive aspects of the resource conditions and opportunities for activities. Recognizing that outdoor recreation generally occurs in activity groups comprised of family and friends, Lee's (1972) simple premise has profound implications to understanding the social construction of place-meanings of parks, campgrounds, and other outdoor sites. From a framework of outdoor recreation as a dynamic process, McIntyre and Roggenbuck (1998) provide further evidence of the development of place-meanings as intimately tied to the unfolding interactions between recreationists, their social group, and their place. Using a metaphor of "place as a relationship partner," Brooks and his colleagues (Brooks and others 2006; Brooks and Williams in press) provide a convincing argument, coupled with evidence from visitor experiences, that place-meanings are constructed due to long-term social and physical interactions with a place that regulates one's sense of identity. In another strand of research inspired by psychological models, Smaldone and others (2008) studied visitor and resident experiences, concluding that people develop deep-seated emotional attachments over time that accumulate like layers of memories to create place-meanings. From a variety of perspectives, outdoor recreation researchers have addressed visitor experiences as essentially meaning-making processes embedded within social and cultural contexts (Watson 2004).

Three common themes identified across this growing literature are relevant to creating public memory of wilderness. The first is a focus on place-meanings as being a central part of the outdoor recreation experience. The second is a framework that indicates place-meanings, rather than being static and mono-dimensional, evolve and accumulate across time due to interaction with people and places. The third common theme, more implicit than explicit in this literature, is that place-meanings are shared in ways that allow people to learn about themselves and each other. Because of these three themes, the literature on recreational place-meanings provides an important starting point for research that addresses problems with the lack of a public memory of wilderness.

What Is Public Memory of Wilderness?

Public memory is the way a society makes its past meaningful. The past is selectively remembered in ways that unify and build identity for people of the present (Blair and others 2010). Public memory is not an objective remembrance. Indeed, creating public memory is also about a public forgetting, erasure, and possibly silencing (Connerton 2008). Society makes meaning from its past by creating compelling narratives to inspire and build positive value for places and events. Public memory often evokes feelings of respect, loyalty, pride, patriotism and other aspirations for the past.

At its core, public memory is a collective remembering (Phillips 2004). If it were a public history or public understanding, the connotations of these terms imply claims to accuracy, objectivity, and lead to place-meanings as being singular and authentic. “Memory” is purposely employed as the appropriate term due to the multiple and fluid ways in which place-meanings are created. Rather than asserting an absolute truth, public memory is about a narrative that holds layers and accumulates meaning. Public memory is like a palimpsest where meaning accumulates or gets written over, much like a canvas upon which layers of distinct portraits have been painted with each potentially influencing the next (Blair and others 2010).

Although any given wilderness area usually lacks public memory, the concept of wilderness has its tradition of one. In other words, the image of a generic wilderness has been the target of an accumulating public meaning. This public memory is embodied in the writings of intellectuals (such as Cooper 1826; Nash 2001; Olson 1938, 1956; Stegner 1954) in which American natural landscapes are characterized as being untainted and romanticized as being a unique part of the American experience. The Wilderness Society, established in 1935 by Bob Marshall and others, has been a traditional advocate for legislation that designates land to be left in an undeveloped state. The Wilderness Act of 1964, largely written by Howard Zahniser of the Wilderness Society, is an outcome of the long journey for wilderness advocacy. This Act was largely directed at the American West, where large parcels of land were considered untrammelled by humans. However, the Act was problematic for many who felt that the eastern U.S. held land parcels, albeit smaller compared to western standards, that should be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The so-called Eastern Wilderness Act of 1975 was built upon the 1964 Act and allowed smaller parcels of land with visible histories of human disturbance to be designated as wilderness. The debate surrounding the 1975 Act was largely focused on esoteric discussions of purity and pristineness (Hendee and others 1990). The public dialogue for the 1975 Act was restricted to a more narrow set of actors compared to the 1964, Act including congressional staff, special interest groups, and President Gerald Ford who signed it.

In the past three decades, the public memory of wilderness as a concept has largely been asserted by scientists and other intellectuals. Various forums, not necessarily public, have enhanced the accumulated values of wilderness as a

philosophical concept (Cole and Yung 2010; Roggenbuck in press). Like a palimpsest, the public memory of wilderness has grown as a philosophical concept to include meanings tied to biodiversity (Botkin 1990), ecosystem services and sustainable development (Callicott 1991), ethical responsibility to nature (Rolston 1991), deep ecology (Naess 1995), future generations (Nash 2001; Noss 1991), and in a curious twist that poses the ultimate dichotomization of humans and nature, a public memory that claims pristine nature is forever dead (McKibben 1989; see Plumwood 1998 for a persuasive rebuttal). Outlets and forums to influence the public memory of wilderness as a philosophical concept include books, academic literature, land planning workshops and reports, and conferences related to conservation and land preservation. For wilderness in the abstract, there has been an evolving public memory. However participation in it has generally been limited to people of the same status and characteristics of the people involved with the 1964 Wilderness Act—able-bodied white males trained in various scholarly disciplines or closely tied to land management.

Left out of the dialogue is a public memory of specific wilderness areas. With few exceptions, the public memory of any given wilderness is not problematized by politicians, agencies, special interest groups, or intellectuals. Although there are no doubt concerns for specific sites within wilderness areas, such concerns are generally not grist for creating public memory of wilderness. There may be resistance to creating idiosyncratic public memories of specific wilderness areas due to a perception that such place meanings could threaten traditional dogma about wilderness as a place that is pristine, pure, untouched, and otherwise fresh from God’s creation (Cronon 1995). Creating public memory of any given wilderness could conflate, and possibly contradict, the commonly accepted narrative of an untrammelled American landscape as first seen by white settlers. Hence there may be pressures on any given wilderness to eliminate special provisions (such as, motorized boats, stock grazing, aircraft access) and label them as non-conforming or conflict-inducing. Any attempt for a specific wilderness area to accumulate layers of meaning that stray from the nationalized narrative of wilderness may be viewed as threatening the quality of the wilderness and detracting from its purity. In short, whereas there has been an aloof public memory evolving about wilderness as a philosophical concept, there has been little public memory associated with any given wilderness area.

There are sources of information (or meanings) that could be developed to create public memory of specific wilderness areas. Wilderness areas do not simply represent the past; they accumulate their own past. There are three sources of information that could serve as a foundation for public memory (Loewen 2000) and each of these would be applicable for any given wilderness area. The first and most obvious source of information is the reason for designation tied to the Wilderness Act or the national narrative of wilderness as a place untrammelled by humans. This is currently the primary source of information being used to create public memory of wilderness. This source of information by itself is not sufficient to enhance the social relevance of any given wilderness area.

Nor has it visibly inspired research to distinguish wilderness visitor experiences.

Fortunately public memory also includes two other sources of information that have been subtexts in the development of wilderness. The second source of public memory is the story of the designation for any given wilderness area. Designation and subsequent changes in managerial and visitor operations are usually not stories considered worthy of telling, in part, because they point to historic uses and suggest evidence of human disturbance. Sometimes previous historic uses are brought forth as relevant for telling, and if so, such contexts are often of first settlers and pioneers confronting the wilds of America—a story that invites visitors to identify with the pioneers of yore (Cronon 1995). However there could be additional stories of the history of designation that could include counter-narratives with argument and evidence for the land's value and cultural meaning prior to being designated as wilderness.

A third source of information that could stimulate public memory of a specific wilderness area is its connection to the visitors' present moment. The current experience of the visitor, although an important concern for managerial operations, has curiously not made a significant contribution to public memory. Although there have been countless assessments of wilderness visitor experiences (see Manning 2011 for a thorough rendering), such assessments have not been fodder for an evolving public memory of their respective wilderness areas. Research on wilderness visitor experiences has largely aligned with managerial needs to conform to the concept of wilderness and thus is concerned with generic questions associated with satisfaction, crowding, conflict, and solitude. The research has seldom been used to understand or shape the uniqueness of any given wilderness area.

The three sources of information (or meanings) for public memory are dependent on one another. During a visit to a wilderness area, one may come upon prehistoric rock art and reflect on the centuries of time and people who have come before. The individual experiences of witnessing the rock art as novel, interesting to learn about or providing satisfaction, are not immediately cultural values or meanings. Visitor experience research often characterizes the individual experience and through analysis will attempt to explain the degree of novelty, learning or satisfaction by searching for relationships with management-based variables. The individualized framing of the experience aligns with the national narrative of wilderness as being land untouched by the modern world, and both the researcher and land manager will understandably be intrigued by results that show, say, relationships between learning about rock art and increased satisfaction. However if the research ends at this point, the other two sources of information to build public memory will not surface.

To illustrate the palimpsest qualities of public memory, further consider the example of a visitor who encounters ancient rock art. If this visitor was to share the experience regarding personal growth that led to an awareness of centuries of time, this sharing might affect others. Another person might extend the meaning to a felt sense of human mortality and connect it to geologic time. If both of these stories become shared

with others, the place might be perceived as sacred given an understanding that others were left profoundly affected by the place. Senses of time, mortality, and sacredness are all meanings derived from the experience of the place in which the rock art was found. None are true in an absolute sense; rather they reflect multiple place-meanings created by those who visited. Yet another participant in the dialogue may argue that the locale had been homeland to American Indians long before it became a recreational playground for hikers and assert rights of land tenure for native people. A fifth participant in the dialogue may be a wilderness patrol ranger who describes the years of managerial action to fortify the ancient rock art site to make it less susceptible to erosion and vandalism due to a designation effect of increased use. Within this example, various sources of information and meaning have been shared that are relevant to encountering the ancient rock art. Collectively they provide a context for characterizing the social and cultural meanings of the wilderness area. Some of the suggested social and cultural meanings include appreciation of cultural heritage, need to protect cultural heritage, history of tribal land tenure, western conquest and settlement, and a profound sense of time linked to ancestral sacredness. Some of these meanings conform to the national narrative of wilderness while others deviate from it. The point here is to illustrate the variety of sources of information that could contribute to public memory.

There are both traditional and new-found roles for researchers to cultivate the development of these three sources of information as a basis to create public memory of wilderness. However to fully appreciate research-based strategies to create public memory of wilderness, the problems with a lack of public memory need to be explained.

Problems With a Lack of Public Memory

Shared dialogue and public memory is noticeably absent from contemporary American contexts of wilderness areas. Several problems with a lack of public memory of specific wilderness areas ultimately detract from both wilderness and its management.

First, to many people wilderness is defined in a negative sense. That is, we know wilderness as an environment by what is not there and what should not be done there. The "leave no trace" and other recreational minimum impact land ethics have been widely accepted by agencies and visitors. Indeed, I have been on several commercially guided trips in which patrons have been scolded for not urinating in the proper place or for inappropriately disposing of an apple core. There are good reasons to conform with "leave no trace" behavior, however absent a positive public memory, prospective visitors may be left wondering about the over-abundance of behavioral norms and confused by seemingly extensive regulation (Cachelin and others 2011). Wilderness areas generally beg for some positive definition of their meaning beyond the individual benefits of outdoor recreation and leave questions related to "what is the purpose of this particular wilderness area?"

Second, for many people wilderness management is a “hands off” operation. Because it is perceived as perfectly natural and untouched, there is no need for management. After all, doesn’t the wilderness landscape manage itself? Any human tinkering could be seen as playing God (Chase 1986). Rather than some kind of natural regulation, the truth of most wilderness landscapes is much different (Cole and Yung 2010). As known by wilderness managers and restoration ecologists, wilderness areas are managed in well-defined and thoroughly-deliberated ways to appear perfectly natural and untouched (Davis and Slobodkin 2004; Hammitt and Cole 1998). Creating a public memory of wilderness would make wilderness management more transparent due to a shared dialogue that would include agency staff and other stakeholders.

Third, if wilderness management is “hands off,” then there would not be a need for volunteer organizations to maintain wilderness landscapes and settings. Yet the settings of most wilderness areas have been influenced by the activities of numerous volunteers, special interest groups, wilderness advocates, commercial outfitters, and many others. Each group is motivated by specific intentions that appreciate the wilderness area and their efforts affect wilderness settings in significant ways. The lack of a shared dialogue for public memory precludes any open appreciation or public acknowledgement of the effect of these groups on the landscape and perpetuates the myth of wilderness as perfectly natural and untouched. Creating public memory gives credit to human activities that maintain settings and illuminates the diversity of motivations and social values for doing so. Acknowledging human influence on wilderness and the motivations for such activity would allow critiques and counter-narratives to emerge.

As the fourth and final problem stemming from the lack of a public memory of wilderness, where other institutions of American society have been democratized, wilderness is still aloof to most of the American public. The history of wilderness appreciation has been closely tied to elite white males who live in urban areas (Cronon 1995; Nash 2001), and is anchored in the dominant cultural meanings of the mid-twentieth century (Gottlieb 1993). Yet the meaning of many cultural institutions has changed since the 1960s. As examples of public meanings that have evolved over the past 50 years, consider changes in the meaning of institutions such as marriage, family, public schools, health care, indigenous people, and professional sports. The evolution of public meanings is usually a process that engages Americans from all walks of life regardless of gender, race or class. In the case of wilderness, public memory is still largely influenced by people and organizations tied to the discourse of the 1964 Act: staff from federal land management agencies, special interest groups, and outfitters. Democratizing wilderness would parallel other American cultural institutions and empower current visitors to share experiences, represent place meanings, and ultimately help shape place meanings of wilderness to align with contemporary American social and cultural values.

For several reasons, social and cultural values are essential contexts for understanding wilderness experiences. The

Wilderness Act of 1964, like any act of Congress or historical event, is one that becomes re-interpreted as American society moves forward. The Wilderness Act is a living document (Roggenbuck in press). Whether or not the Wilderness Act “should” be a living document is not a useful question. Interpretation of all legislation evolves and so too does the cultural lens for interpreting the Wilderness Act. Without purposeful development of connections to contemporary cultural meanings, any given wilderness will be vulnerable to a lack of public understanding of its purpose, management, and the numerous people and organizations that care about it in a variety of appreciative ways. Creating a public memory for each wilderness area, and the role of researchers in doing so, is discussed herein as a strategy to address the above problems with wilderness.

Research Strategy to Create Public Memory

The three sources of information suggest a strategy to create a unique public memory of a given wilderness area. The strategy is a three-step process to: (1) share stories of wilderness experiences, (2) engage others to react and comment on the shared stories, and (3) build a credible set of narratives from the engaged constituents to fit a specific wilderness area.

For the *first step*, sharing stories of wilderness experiences is about democratizing the discourse about wilderness. There are strategies that could facilitate building a wider circle of participants beyond the traditional place-makers of management agencies, outfitters, and special interest groups. There are currently various kinds of social media linked to blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other networking resources being used to share stories of experiences in wilderness areas. They run the gamut of topics and connect to specific wilderness areas: some messages advertise goods and services for wilderness travel, allow disgruntled wilderness managers to vent their concerns, promote programs related to the wilderness area, show clips of organized groups of backpackers—like boy scouts or church groups on a re-vegetation crew, and portray unusual tasks conducted by ranger staff (such as, clearing trail, hauling-out plane wrecks). Although there may be forums (in this example, websites) dedicated to sharing stories of a given wilderness, they are currently not immediately visible or easily accessed. Developing an appropriate set of forums—developed either by the agency or a “friends of” group—for sharing stories of wilderness experiences is an important first step.

A *second step* in creating public memory of wilderness is to engage others in reacting to and providing commentary on the stories being told (Blair and others 2010). Whatever set of forums are developed to share stories, they also need to engage others to listen, learn, and react to such stories. The ability of various forums to bridge personal experiences with cultural meanings of wilderness needs exploration through a close working relationship between researchers and constituents of a given wilderness area, including the land managers themselves. An example of such a forum to share stories of a wilderness area is found on a YouTube video explaining the

Forest Service's pack mule program for wilderness areas on the east side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The video describes a vision for the wilderness area, suggests unique qualities about the area and the need to spread gravel in streams to restore a fisheries spawning ground. A few comments posted below the video indicate a growing dialogue about the need to use pack mules to restore habitat and enhance biodiversity. They portray others who have worked to restore stream habitat with pack mules and tell a history of the specific wilderness area as being "opened-up" by pack mules. In this example the story told on the video, along with the YouTube forum, fostered others to deliberate about the value and place-meanings of this wilderness area.

The *third step* to creating public memory of a wilderness area requires the development of a credible set of narratives. Engaging others to react and provide commentary to the stories being told does not necessarily lead to credible narratives of a wilderness area. A structure is needed to identify linkages across wilderness experiences and social and cultural meanings. In addition, the structure developed needs to result in narratives of public memory that are relevant to, and believed by, a significant portion of constituents. A critique of the concept of wilderness is that it lacks appreciation for roles played by humans in creating the landscape and falsely posits a landscape void of human influence. This premise has given rise to a popular myth that wilderness does not require management. In the example of the YouTube video about a wilderness pack mule program, the series of commentaries that followed from the video appreciate the history of pack mules and trace the beneficial conservation work that uses pack mules as part of management operations. A general narrative for this series of commentary is about roles for humans and mules in the conservation of biodiversity and habitat for this wilderness area. The extent to which this narrative is credible to constituents is an open question; however, it is likely to be credible to the people who watched the video (more than 10,000 hits since first posted in January 2010) and followed the commentary. By creating public memory that includes the experiences of pack mule trips, the consequences of managerial operations become evident, and others learn of human efforts that support the landscape. Awareness of these human efforts may, in turn, influence visitor experiences and their place meanings. Rather than a static national narrative of a landscape untouched by humans, this wilderness area on the eastern side of the Sierras becomes connected with an evolving public memory about stream restoration, fisheries conservation, and essential roles for the pack mule program. Researchers can play a critical role in exploring narratives that develop and incorporating this understanding into a richer appreciation of the human experience of wilderness.

Conclusion

The orientation of this essay is that the traditional cultural narrative of wilderness needs updating and synchronization with the evolving path of American cultural values. This does not imply that the values embodied in the Wilderness Act (Callicott

and Nelson 1998; Nash 2001) should be abandoned. Rather, the point is that wilderness, like any institution, needs relevancy as an integral part of American culture. Creating public memory of wilderness is not about good/bad, right/wrong, or erosion of purity and sacredness. It is about a localized process of investing place-meanings by those who care about a wilderness area. Along with the traditional meanings of wilderness, there are bound to be additional layers of meanings tied to personal experiences, families, friendships, communities, and others that may problematize and work to reconcile issues related to gender, race, class, and natural and cultural histories. Creating public memory of wilderness will lead to a messy narrative that is multi-layered and complex and will be unlike the relatively concise argument posed in the Wilderness Act that is abstracted and indifferent to the uniqueness of a given place.

There are two major take-away points from this chapter. The first is that research on wilderness visitor experience needs to distinguish itself by connecting with social and cultural meanings. Creating a public memory builds a unique identity for any given wilderness area based upon the integration of personal experiences with contemporary social and cultural values. The research developed on recreational place meanings provides a substantial platform for further inquiry to integrate social and cultural meanings with wilderness recreational experiences (Brooks and Williams in press; Kruger and others 2008). Without such a linkage, there is no distinction between wilderness and general outdoor recreation experiences. Stated differently, although studying recreationists in wilderness areas is an important step in understanding wilderness experiences, this does not mean that wilderness experiences will be fully studied or framed as wilderness experiences.

The second take-away point is that researchers and managers have the potential to play active roles in facilitating the creation of public memory of wilderness. Roles for researchers need to be expanded beyond the provision of descriptive information to managers about users to include the facilitation of dialogue forums that share experiences, learn from one another, prompt commentary, and develop credible narratives for any given wilderness (McCool in press). The shift in roles for recreational social scientists moves away from a sole focus on understanding visitor experiences, to include the creation of values and place meanings for a public memory of specific wilderness areas. A significant product is a unique set of narratives that generate a value basis for managerial objectives. Stated differently, rather than social sciences solely "discovering" preferences or social values, the roles for research expand to facilitating the creation of meaning amongst constituents of wilderness areas. Although the Limits of Acceptable Change and related frameworks provide a basis for managerial objectives (see Manning 2011: 84-87), such a basis stems from a premise that managers are technical stewards restricted to the manipulation of onsite resources. In contrast, creating public memory of wilderness frames managers as providing leadership for stewarding a social and cultural resource called wilderness. Creating public memory of wilderness is viewed as an essential complement to, rather than competition with, frameworks such as Limits of Acceptable Change.

To be sure, there is growing awareness among tourism professionals, and to some extent among land managers, of the need to provide leadership in creating public memory of destinations and natural landscapes (Buzinde and Santos 2009). Such awareness may not be termed “public memory;” however, the efforts work to do so. For example, the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming has developed as a center for visiting the greater Yellowstone area, and in general, a keeper of the “Spirit of the American West” (<http://bbhc.org/>). As part of the Center’s programming, there is a running commentary to foster dialogue among visitors about the American West. Visitors provide written comments about their reaction to—in this case—a wolfe-introduction exhibit in the Center and post them on a corkboard that becomes a “place for visitors to talk with one another, and to engage their predecessors who have left comments” (Pahre in press:18). Although these discussions were focused on the topic of wolf reintroduction to the Yellowstone ecosystem, they have the potential to involve other issues, such as land tenure of American Indians, the meaning of wilderness to American Indians, and de-constructing the role of Buffalo Bill Cody in creating the “Old West” (Pahre in press:17-18). There are other strategies that have been developed that lead to more intimate engagement with visitors and democratization of the discourse about a landscape. It is just such strategies that have the potential to create a public memory of wilderness.

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