

THE IMPORTANCE OF VISITORS' KNOWLEDGE OF THE CULTURAL AND NATURAL HISTORY OF THE ADIRONDACKS IN INFLUENCING SENSE OF PLACE IN THE HIGH PEAKS REGION

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Abstract: This study examined various dimensions of the sense of place experience felt by visitors to the High Peaks of the Adirondack Park. More specifically, a 6-page questionnaire (mail-back postage-paid) was distributed to 803 people over a three-month period (June, July & August, 1999). The two primary objectives of this study were to: 1) explore the various characteristics that influence visitors' sense of place within the High Peaks (including the emotive ties and symbolic associations visitors' assign to their special place), and 2) explore a possible relationship between visitors' knowledge of the cultural and natural history of the Adirondacks and a broader personal preservation/environmental ethic. Final results indicated that many visitors who experience a sense of place in the High Peaks feel so because it is a place of 'exceptional beauty' and many feel a sense of place based on their 'knowledge of the cultural and natural history of the Adirondacks'. Further analysis revealed that the level of importance visitors' felt toward their 'knowledge of the cultural and natural history of the Adirondacks' had some influential effect on their personal preservation/environmental ethic. Not surprisingly, there was a strong correlation between those visitors who felt a sense of place—verses—those who did *not* experience a sense of place, and the likelihood of them possessing a preservation/environmental ethic. Results indicate there is room for additional educational and interpretive programming in the area, focusing specifically on educating visitors about the cultural and natural history of the Adirondacks, besides basic visitor education about the conditions (and means by which) wilderness is realized.

Introduction

The prevailing approach to research on outdoor recreation has been to focus primarily on the recreational setting itself. That is, focusing on the various physical, social, and managerial factors that create a particular setting. In addition, past research on outdoor recreation has tended to further reduce the analysis to a general and frequently broad overview of the level of satisfaction one associates with a particular recreational setting, given he or she can carry out his or her preferred recreational activity in that particular setting. However, both modes of analysis are somewhat limited. In that, the first approach attempts to identify setting features necessary to support specific activities or desired experiences (Schreyer, Knopf & Williams, 1985), and in so doing, the recreational setting is seen as a collection of features or attributes that allow the individual recreationist to fulfill or realize his or her personal recreational goal.

According to this view, the setting (described by its attributes) that the recreationist seeks out -- and eventually uses and impacts -- is ultimately viewed as a means to an end (McCool, Stankey & Clark, 1985). In effect, this approach to studying outdoor recreation underscores a utilitarian approach and suggests a degree of substitutability with regard to the recreational setting. That is, if a particular group of features or attributes are present at a given recreational setting -- allowing for specific types of recreational activities to occur -- than it seems likely that individual recreationists will be pleased or satisfied with the recreational setting itself. However, by emphasizing the role of setting attributes in the decision-making process, the problem of designing recreational settings (and allocating increasingly limited funds) is simply reduced to that of identifying the most valued and optimal combination of attributes for a given clientele (Peterson, Stynes, Rosenthal & Dwyer, 1985).

Furthermore, Williams (1989) observes that this view of the recreational setting as merely a collection of features and attributes leads to a severely limited view of the recreational setting as more of a uniform commodity (much like our mass produced automobiles) than a one of a kind setting that is special to the individual recreationist for reasons beyond its setting attributes. Furthermore, this utilitarian or commodity oriented view has resulted in numerous empirical studies which attempt to identify and measure the perceived utility of various setting attributes in satisfying various recreation goals (Cooksey, Dickinson & Loomis, 1982; Manfreda, Driver & Brown, 1983; McCool et al., 1985).

The second mode of analysis -- which is somewhat linked to the first -- attempts to gauge or measure the overall quality of the recreational experience itself according to a host of somewhat uncontrollable factors such as the number of visitors one encounters when engaged in the recreational activity of their choice. Moreover, how this positively (or negatively, which is more often the case) influences the individuals' recreational experience. For example, several studies document that privacy from persons in other parties and other users camping near one's campsite is the most important attribute of a wilderness experience (Stankey, 1973; Graefe, Donnelly & Vaske, 1986).

Both modes of outdoor recreation analysis are limited however. In that, both views tend to overlook the "meaningfulness" of the recreational experience as a whole. That is, the more affective or emotional and symbolic qualities of the recreation experience as a whole -- moving beyond merely the physical setting or the activities one engages in. The previous modes of analysis view recreation settings as somewhat interchangeable or reproducible provided there are similar combinations of replicable setting attributes. Brown (1989) however, asserts that outdoor recreation studies call for a more holistic type of analysis, one that tends toward the gestalt, rather than separate and disparate pieces of information.

Various Place Phenomena

Within the past decade various studies have emerged that tend toward a more holistic characterization of the outdoor recreational engagement as a phenomenological experience (Fishwick & Vining, 1992; Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999; Mitchell, Force, Carroll & McLaughlin, 1991; Roberts, 1996). That is, recognizing that there are direct (through the senses) and indirect (through cognitive and symbolic processes) ways in which we take in information – and hence, make sense of, or derive *meaning* from our various life experiences. Furthermore, Williams (1988) suggests that there are three primary “modes” of outdoor recreation experience: activities, companions, and place settings.

Yet as Greene (1996) suggests, there are still only a few relevant studies that recognize the importance of the place setting by recreation researchers. More specifically, that an individual may experience a sense of affinitive connection or ‘sense of place’ toward a particular place. That is, a sense of special-ness or connectedness that the individual has for that particular place. Greene (1996) summarizes that a place acquires special meaning when an individual moves through a particular setting, acquiring information about the place and encountering memorable place-related experiences -- which are influenced by the characteristics of the physical setting, the characteristics of the social setting and characteristics of the individual perceiver. In effect, a sense of place results from an interaction between the unique cultural and physical characteristics of a setting and the personality and behavior of an individual in that setting (Steele, 1981). As Tuan suggests (1974) sense of place is frequently associated with an emotional or affective bond between an individual and a particular place. The bond may vary in intensity from immediate sensory enjoyment to a long-lasting deeply rooted attachment to a particular place.

Therefore, undifferentiated space becomes ‘place’ as one gets to know it better and endows it with value or *meaning*, and essentially what results is a degree of place attachment toward a particular geographic locale. A place becomes inextricably associated with certain life events and the people with whom the individual shared the event, and for many people what results is a strong sense of attachment toward that particular place or a deep identification with the place (Low & Altman, 1992; Korpela, 1989; Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983; Stokols & Schumaker, 1981; and Proshansky, 1978).

Research Objective

It seems natural to suggest that when an individual develops a strong association or special attachment to a particular place that the individual would extend a certain ethic of concern and care toward that particular place. That is, if an individual has strong feelings about a particular place they would be concerned about its long-term welfare – just as if the place were a family member or friend. The degree to which there is a correlation between one’s feelings of strong place attachment and one’s broader environmental concerns is central to this study. Moreover,

the underlying focus of this study is to determine whether a relationship exists between an individual’s symbolic association with the High Peaks region of the Adirondack - - vis-à-vis various place phenomena -- and one’s broader stewardship concerns for the natural world, evidenced by their involvement and membership in a conservation/environmental organization.

Preserving the unique character of the Adirondack Park -- which many would agree is a global model for integrated land use and conservation – is something that cannot be accomplished without understanding more completely the various reasons people choose to live and recreate in the region. Thus, identifying the various factors that contribute to, and/or influence a persons’ sense of place and place attachment for the High Peaks region may help future regional managers understand public reactions to various management directives, such as limiting the number of hikers per group or banning campfires in designated wilderness areas that fall above a certain altitude. More specifically, by determining whether a person’s strong sense of place attachment influences their conservation/environmental concerns, this could aid area managers in planning for and making future environmental education and visitor interpretation decisions, among other management directives.

The issue of place attachment and the degree of land stewardship peoples have toward special places in the High Peaks region of the Adirondacks is of particular interest, given the newly approved unit management plan for that area. For years the High Peaks region -- which lies in the northeastern section of the Park -- had been carrying out its field operations without any guiding long-term management plan for the area. Many would agree that managing in this way could possibly result in landscape degradation and misuse of resources, and in some instances the sensitive alpine vegetation in and around the summit areas of several High Peaks would suffer greatly.

Study Design

Study Area

Whereas the western and southern Adirondacks are a gentle landscape of hills, lakes, wetlands, ponds and streams, the northeast section of the park contains the High Peaks. Forty-three of them rise above 4,000 feet and eleven have alpine summits that rise above timberline, making them quite popular for hikers and backpackers. Thus, the High Peaks region is the most popular region of the Adirondack Park, and subsequently receives heavy and intense visitation throughout the spring, summer and fall.

The Adirondack Park is the largest park in the contiguous United States. It contains six million acres, covers one-fifth of New York State and is nearly three times the size of Yellowstone National Park. More than half of the Adirondack Park is private land, devoted principally to forestry, agriculture and open-space recreation. The Park is home to 130,000 permanent and 110,000 seasonal residents, and hosts an estimated nine million visitors each

year. The remaining 45 percent of the Park is publicly owned Forest Preserve, protected as "Forever Wild" by the New York State Constitution since 1895. One million acres of these public lands are designated as wilderness, where a wide range of non-mechanized recreation may be enjoyed in a natural setting. The majority of the public land (more than 1.3 million acres) is classified as Wild Forest, where motorized uses are permitted on designated waters, roads and trails. Nearly 75 million people live within a day's drive of the Adirondack Park and the Park hosts more than 10 million people each year. Within the Park are more than 2,800 lakes and ponds, and more than 1,500 miles of rivers, fed by an estimated 30,000 miles of brooks and streams. Backcountry use of the most popular wilderness areas of the Parks, especially the High Peaks Wilderness Area, is increasing at about six percent per year.

With such an interesting (and often perplexing) mix of public and private lands, the overall management of the Adirondack Park itself has proven over time to be ultimately challenging. In the next century and beyond, the Adirondack Park must continue to offer vast areas of undisturbed open space as a sanctuary for native plant and animal species, and as a natural haven for human beings in need of physical and spiritual rejuvenation. It must also provide for sustainable, resource-based local economies and for the protection of community values in a Park setting.

Data Collection

The data for this study was collected over a three-month period beginning in June of 1999 and continued through August of the same year. Visitors were contacted primarily at the main trailhead and parking area at the Adirondack Loj, located approximately 12 miles southeast of the hamlet of Lake Placid, New York. The Adirondack Mountain Club, a non-profit conservation organization that performs vital trail maintenance functions throughout the Park, manages the Adirondack Loj itself, and the surrounding parking areas. However, the interior of the High Peaks region is managed under the broader land management directive of the State's Department of Environmental Conservation. Thus, historically, this accounts for some of the public's misunderstanding and resistance to particular recreation management directives.

The first time visitor is usually unaware that the Adirondack Mountain Club is responsible for much of the trail system throughout the Park, yet the state's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is responsible for region wide resource management directives. These directives include not only recreational concerns but also issues regarding watershed management, fish and wildlife management, and various law enforcement matters. Oftentimes, the way in which the various regions of the Park are managed is often confusing to the first time visitor.

A total of 169 groups were contacted over the three-month sampling period. Of those, 125 were contacted in and

around the Adirondack Loj and adjacent parking area. The remaining 44 groups were contacted at one of several critical trail junctures within the interior of the High Peaks region -- primarily those in and around Mount Marcy and the John's Brook Lodge -- as well as the summits of several frequently climbed peaks in the region. Within the study period, three weekend (Friday -- Sunday) and two week day (Monday -- Thursday) sampling clusters were randomly selected each month. During sampling all parties entering or leaving the area were contacted and a short interaction took place between potential study participants and a field research assistant to determine whether or not the person(s) was interested in taking part in the research.

Those people who were interested in partaking in the study (and were at least 18 years old), were given a 6-page questionnaire to complete and mail-back in a pre-addressed stamped envelope. Daily sampling occurred from the hours of 10:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. A total of 803 surveys were distributed over the three-month sampling period. Of the parties initially contacted, only five individuals declined to participate in the study. In addition to first-person field contacts, field research assistants left 27 questionnaires on parked vehicles left along the roadside in non-designated parking areas just outside the managerial boundary of either the Adirondack Mountain Club or the DEC.

Instrument

A review of relevant sense of place and place attachment literature did not reveal a standardized scale for measuring place attachment. Past research efforts have employed individualized methods suited to the specific study (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999; Greene, 1996; Shumaker & Taylor, 1983). Toward that end a pilot study was conducted over a two-month period during the summer of 1998 in the High Peaks region of the Park. The pilot study aimed to identify and evaluate self-report response items that captured various aspects of the sense of place and place attachment phenomena.

A six-page questionnaire was devised in conjunction with the information that was originally gathered from the pilot questionnaire. The questionnaire used for this study contained four distinct sections. The first section focused on examining the individuals' experience of various place phenomena, including various characteristics that influence a sense of place, the emotional and symbolic ties one attaches to their special place. The second section focused on examining whether or not the individuals possessed an preservation/environmental ethic based on their understanding of the cultural and natural history of the Adirondacks. The third section gathered general demographic information, and the fourth section identified various trip characteristics of individual respondents.

The first section provided an introductory descriptive statement about what constitutes a sense of place and place attachment, and the following operational was put in a text box at the top of the first page to prompt the participant as to the various types of place phenomena the questionnaire was designed to explore:

'Sense of place' and 'place attachment' refers to the emotional or affective bonds that you form with a particular place; this bond may vary in intensity from immediate sensory delight to long lasting and deeply rooted attachment. It may occur even though you have visited a particular place only once. In other words, the place takes on special and important meaning for you. When you experience this deep sense of place attachment, the particular place lingers in your mind long after you have left it. These are the types of places I want to know about.

The first question was designed to distinguish between respondents who had no special attachment for a particular place in the High Peaks region of the Adirondack Park, and those who did. After reading the previous description, respondents were then asked the following question "Is there a place in the High Peaks region of the Park that is particularly important or special to you -- a place toward which you experience a deep sense of place or sense of attachment as described above?" Respondents were forced to choose between a 'yes', or 'no', response. The next series of questions (questions 2 - 5) were designed to explore the range of characteristics, emotional ties and symbolic associations that respondents held for their special place in the High Peaks.

The second section of the questionnaire focused on the participants' knowledge of the natural and cultural history of the Adirondacks as it relates to a conservation/environmental ethic. Two key questions were asked in this particular section and the first read as follows: "Has your knowledge of the cultural history of the Adirondacks encouraged a desire to preserve the long-term health and integrity of the 'people, places, and community' that make up the Adirondacks? In other words, has your knowledge of the cultural history of the Adirondacks stimulated a conservation ethic in you?" The second key question read: "Has your knowledge of the natural history of the Adirondacks made you want to preserve the long-term health and integrity of the 'natural places and biotic community' that make up the Adirondacks? In other words, has your knowledge of the natural history of the Adirondacks stimulated a conservation ethic in you?" Respondents were asked to answer each question with a 'yes', 'somewhat' or 'no, not at all' response. If they answered 'yes' to either of the questions, they were then asked to identify the specific part(s) of the cultural or natural history of the Adirondacks that was especially important to them.

The third section of the questionnaire solicited general demographic information such as the participant's age, gender, location of primary residence, and annual income. The fourth and final section of the questionnaire gathered basic trip characteristics for each participant such as: day of week visited, length of stay, activities pursued during visit, and group size.

Data Analysis

To learn more about the underlying characteristics that influence an individuals' sense of place or place attachment

for a particular place in the High Peaks region a general frequency distribution was run on 7 independent characteristic variables. The characteristic variables were then examined to determine any general trend in the data. In addition, general frequency distributions were generated to determine the emotional ties and symbolic associations participants' had towards their special place. As well, frequency distributions were generated to examine whether individuals' perceived an acceptable substitute for their special place within the Adirondack Park.

To compare the responses of two particular questions with several potential answers, two-way tables (contingency tables) were produced with a Chi-square analysis of the distribution ($\alpha = .05$). Observed responses were compared with expected responses to determine the source of significant associations between two questions. For example, Chi-square analysis was used to establish whether a relationship existed between those individuals' who experienced the presence or absence of a sense of place and their overall level of understanding of the natural and cultural history of the Adirondacks.

In addition, Chi-Square analysis was used to determine whether or not a significant relationship existed between those individuals' who claimed their understanding of the natural and cultural history of the Adirondacks influenced their conservation/environmental ethic and their involvement -- vis-à-vis membership -- in an environmental or conservation organization, such as *The Nature Conservancy*, *The Adirondack Mountain Club* or the *Environmental Defense Fund*.

Results

Of the 803 surveys that were distributed, 312 were completed and returned through the mail by the fall of 1999. Three surveys were initially dismissed from the analysis due to the fact that the participant was either not 18 years of age or older, or the questionnaire had been only partially completed. A total of 309 surveys were used in the final analysis, yet some variation in the sample size still exists for a few questions due to respondents who randomly skipped a particular question.

Since one of the primary goals of this study was to learn more about the various characteristics that influence an individuals' sense of place or place attachment (i.e. strong sense of connection to a particular place), the first question on the survey was designed to distinguish between those respondents who did experience strong place attachment for a particular place within the High Peaks region of the Adirondack Park and those who did not. Of the 309 questionnaires that were used in the final analysis, 217 were from participants who self-identified as having experienced strong place attachment to a particular place in the High Peaks region and the remaining 92 responses were gathered from participants who claimed no special place attachment to a particular place in the High Peaks region. Sampling results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Survey Contacts and Response Rate

Survey Contacts	Study Area		Total
	Adirondack Loj Parking Area	Hiking Trails & Trail Junctionures	
Total individuals contacted (number of <u>groups</u> contacted)	627 (125)	176 (44)	803 (169)
Valid surveys completed and returned by mail	172	137	N = 309
Participants who experience a strong sense of place	145	72	217
Participants who do not experience a strong sense of place	61	31	92
Response rate per study area (%)	27	78	38(%)

Key Question Results

Participants were asked to rank the importance of several characteristics that potentially influence attachment to a special place: 'exceptional beauty' was the most influential characteristic (83% ranked it as "very important"), with 'the knowledge of the cultural & natural history of the Adirondacks as second-most influential (81% of 199 respondents). Participants also included characteristics such as: 'engagement in recreational activities' (67% of 202

respondents), and 'wilderness' (52% of 203 respondents). See Table 2.

The third question asked participants about the emotional ties that they had for their special place: eighty-three percent of the 217 respondents felt 'refreshed/restored'; seventy-one percent felt 'relaxed'; seventy-three felt 'wonder & awe'; and surprisingly, eighty-six of all 217 respondents indicated *not* feeling 'peaceful' toward their special place.

Table 2. Characteristics That Influence Visitors' Sense of Place Within the High Peaks

Characteristic	N	Response	Frequency	Percent
Past Personal History	203	Not Important	65	0.32
		Somewhat Important	52	0.26
		Very Important	86	0.42
Knowledge of the Cultural & Natural History of the Adirondacks	199	Not Important	8	0.02
		Somewhat Important	13	0.06
		Very Important	162	0.81
Engagement in Recreational Activities	202	Not Important	16	0.08
		Somewhat Important	51	0.25
		Very Important	135	0.67
Place of Exceptional Beauty	208	Not Important	5	0.02
		Somewhat Important	30	0.14
		Very Important	173	0.83
Place Has Spiritual Meaning	192	Not Important	54	0.28
		Somewhat Important	64	0.33
		Very Important	74	0.39
Place is Part of My Personal Identity	198	Not Important	30	0.15
		Somewhat Important	70	0.35
		Very Important	98	0.49
Place is Wilderness	203	Not Important	17	0.08
		Somewhat Important	80	0.39
		Very Important	106	0.52

The next question sought to determine the broader symbolic associations participants made in response to their special place: seventy-one percent of 217 respondents indicated the place represented 'serenity/peace'; sixty-nine percent indicated it represented 'wonderment'; and surprisingly, only eighty percent indicated their special place represented 'refuge/sanctuary'.

Of the 217 respondents who experienced place attachment to a particular locale in the High Peaks, nearly three-quarters of the participants (73%) felt there was a suitable substitute for their special place. Moreover, sixty-six percent felt they could find a substitute special place in another area of the Park.

The next question attempted to gauge the level of influence various environmental, social and managerial conditions had on visitors' sense of place. As shown in Table 3, respondents found: the 'absence of litter, soap in the water, and trail erosion' as extremely positive (69%); 'direct encounters with other park visitors' as extremely negative (75%), while thirty-nine percent indicated that 'in-direct encounters with other park visitors' as somewhat negative; almost half of the respondents (40%) found 'encounters with park officials (rangers, peak stewards, etc.)' as

somewhat positive; and nearly half of the respondents (40%) found the 'presence of park facilities (trail markers, lean-to's, interpretive signage)' as somewhat positive.

The following two questions were designed to assess whether the participants understanding and knowledge of the cultural and natural history of the Adirondacks precipitated a particular land ethic. For example, question number 7 read, "Has your knowledge of the cultural history of the Adirondacks encouraged a desire to preserve the long-term health and integrity of the people, places and communities that make up the Adirondacks? In other words, has your knowledge of the cultural history of the Adirondacks stimulated a preservation ethic in you?" The number of respondents (N=302) who responded 'yes', 'somewhat' and 'no, not at all' was 35%, 32% and 32% respectively. Participants were additionally asked to indicate which parts of the cultural history of the Adirondacks visitors found important. Typical responses included: era of the Great Camps; history of lumbering; history of the Adirondack Park formation; State declaration of the "Forever Wild" forests; era of guiding and the importance of guide boats; and the era of hunting & trapping.

Table 3. Influence Various Environmental, Social & Managerial Conditions Has On Visitors' Sense of Place In High Peaks

Condition	N	Response	Frequency	Percent
Absence of Human Induced Impacts (e.g. Litter, Soap in Water, Trail Erosion)	213	Extremely Negative	7	0.03
		Somewhat Negative	3	0.01
		Neutral	14	0.07
		Somewhat Positive	41	0.19
		Extremely Positive	148	0.69
Direct Encounters With Other Park Visitors (e.g. on trail, campsite, trail juncture)	203	Extremely Negative	152	0.75
		Somewhat Negative	37	0.18
		Neutral	11	0.05
		Somewhat Positive	3	0.01
		Extremely Positive	0	0.00
In-Direct Encounters With Other Park Visitors (e.g. distant sights and sounds)	206	Extremely Negative	35	0.17
		Somewhat Negative	81	0.39
		Neutral	73	0.35
		Somewhat Positive	12	0.06
		Extremely Positive	5	0.02
Encounters With Park Officials (e.g. rangers, peak stewards)	205	Extremely Negative	3	0.01
		Somewhat Negative	11	0.05
		Neutral	58	0.28
		Somewhat Positive	82	0.40
		Extremely Positive	51	0.25
Presence of Park Facilities (e.g. trail markers, lean-to's, interpretive signage)	205	Extremely Negative	4	0.02
		Somewhat Negative	3	0.01
		Neutral	45	0.22
		Somewhat Positive	81	0.40
		Extremely Positive	72	0.35

The next question read, “Has your knowledge of the natural history of the Adirondacks made you want to preserve the long-term health and integrity of the natural places and biotic community that make up the Adirondacks? In other words, has your knowledge of the natural history of the Adirondacks stimulated an environmental ethic in you?” Out of 293 respondents who completed this question, nearly half (49%) replied ‘yes’, roughly one-third (29%) indicated ‘somewhat’ and the remainder of the participants indicated ‘no, not at all.’ Additionally, participants were asked to identify which parts of the natural history of the Adirondacks visitors found important: extirpation of wolves and extinction of other species; geologic history and the landforms of the region; ecological history (e.g. natural fire regimes; shift in species composition; forest succession, etc.

Moreover, Chi-square analysis was performed on the results of those individuals who experienced a sense of place versus those who *did not* experience a sense of place to determine the degree to which the importance of their knowledge about the cultural history of the Adirondacks influenced a preservation ethic: there was a statistically

higher incidence of those individuals who experienced a sense of place (verses those who did not) and the likelihood of them possessing a preservation ethic (Table 4). In addition, Chi-square analysis was performed on the results of those individuals who experienced a sense of place versus those who *did not* experience a sense of place to determine the degree to which the importance of their knowledge about the natural history of the Adirondacks influenced an environmental ethic: there was a statistically higher incidence of those individuals who experienced a sense of place (verses those who did not) and the likelihood of them possessing an environmental ethic (Table 5).

Correspondingly, a comparison of results was conducted to determine the significance of an individuals’ knowledge of the cultural and natural history of the Adirondacks and their membership in a conservation, preservation or environmental organization. Chi-square analysis showed a strong association between those who placed great importance on their knowledge of the cultural and natural history of the Adirondacks and the likelihood of them belonging to a conservation/environmental organization. (See Tables 6 and 7.)

Table 4. Importance of Knowledge of the Cultural History of the Adirondacks with Regard to Visitors’ Preservation Ethic

	Park Visitors Who Did Not Experience A Sense of Place	Park Visitors Who Did Experience A Sense of Place	All Park Visitors
Cultural History Not At All Important to Visitors’ Preservation Ethic	44 28.56	54 69.44	98 98.00
Cultural History Somewhat Important To Visitors’ Preservation Ethic	20 28.56	78 69.44	98 98.00
Cultural History Highly Important to Visitors’ Preservation Ethic	24 30.89	82 75.11	106 106.00
All Park Visitors	88 88.00	214 214.00	302 302.00

Chi-Square = 17.572, DF = 2, P-Value = 0.000

Table 5. Importance of Knowledge of the Natural History of the Adirondacks with Regard to Visitors’ Environmental Ethic

	Park Visitors Who Did Not Experience A Sense of Place	Park Visitors Who Did Experience A Sense of Place	All Park Visitors
Natural History Not At All Important to Visitors’ Environmental Ethic	30 18.41	35 46.59	65 65.00
Natural History Somewhat Important to Visitors’ Environmental Ethic	21 23.80	63 60.20	84 84.00
Natural History Highly Important to Visitors’ Environmental Ethic	32 40.79	112 103.21	144 144.00
All Park Visitors	83 83.00	210 210.00	293 293.00

Chi-Square = 13.275, DF = 2, P-Value = 0.001

Table 6. Significance of Individuals' Knowledge of the Cultural History of the Adirondacks and Their Membership in A Conservation, Preservation or Environmental Organization

	Non Member of Preservation Organization.	Member of Preservation Organization	All Park Visitors
Cultural History Not At All Important	70 55.53	28 42.47	98 98.00
Cultural History Somewhat Important	58 54.97	39 42.03	97 97.00
Cultural History Highly Important	42 59.50	63 45.50	105 105.00
All Park Visitors	170 170.00	130 130.00	300 300.00

Chi-Square = 20.961, DF = 2, P-Value = 0.000

Table 7. Significance of Individuals' Knowledge of the Natural History of the Adirondacks and Their Membership in A Conservation, Preservation or Environmental Organization

	Non Member of Environmental Organization	Member of Environmental Organization	All Park Visitors
Natural History Not At All Important	48 36.86	17 28.14	65 65.00
Natural History Somewhat Important	58 47.06	25 35.94	83 83.00
Natural History Highly Important	59 81.08	84 61.92	143 143.00
All Park Visitors	165 165.00	126 126.00	291 291.00

Chi-Square = 27.544, DF = 2, P-Value = 0.000

Socio-demographic Results

Exactly half of the participants were between the ages of 34-54, and 57 percent of the respondents were male while 43 percent were female. Half of the respondents had completed advanced graduate level education. One third of the respondents who permanently resided in a suburban location, while 25 percent resided in urban areas over 75,000 people. The remaining participants were from rural areas, small villages or lived within the Park itself. Of the respondents who participated in the study, 79 percent had previously visited the High Peaks before, and of those who had previously visited, over half (58%) claimed to visit the area several times a year. Well over half of the respondents (89%) had visited the High Peaks as part of a larger group (1-5 people), while only eleven percent traveled solo. Just over half of the respondents (56%) visited on a weekday and the remainder visited on a weekend. Sixty-six percent of the respondents included an overnight stay during their visit. The range of reasons for visiting the High Peaks included: the availability of diverse outdoor recreation opportunities (42% of respondents); because the High Peaks is a wilderness area (23%); because of their strong attachment to the place (22%); and fourteen percent of the respondents indicated it gave them time to enjoy companionship with others.

Discussion & Management Implications

What these study results clearly indicate, is that many visitors to the High Peaks region of the Adirondack Park

experience a strong sense of place or place attachment that is due, in part, to their knowledge of, and importance they place on understanding, the area's cultural and natural history. Furthermore, that this strong sense of place or place attachment is *not necessarily* based on past, repeat visitation to the area, nor living in close proximity to the area – which is a particular viewpoint several researchers and scholars hold (Low & Altman, 1992; Shumaker & Taylor, 1983; Tuan, 1974; Seamon, 1980). Rather, primarily the visitors' knowledge of the cultural and natural history of the Adirondacks, the relative beauty of the area, and the fact that much of the High Peaks is a wilderness area greatly influence visitors' experience of various place phenomena. This is not to suggest that visitors' past personal history with the area has no influence on sense of place – it is comparatively just less influential.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation, in conjunction with the Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK), may want to develop and promote additional cultural and natural history interpretive programming, considering the number of respondents who claimed that having knowledge of the history of the Adirondacks was important to their sense of place. Additionally, given the number of respondents who claimed their knowledge of the cultural and natural history was very important, and it was an influential factor on their membership in a preservation, conservation or environmental organization, the DEC and the ADK would be wise to further develop collaborative interpretive programming partnerships – similar to the collaborative effort demonstrated by the Peak Stewards Program.

Moreover, considering visitors' responses to the various environmental, social and managerial conditions present in the High Peaks and the impact direct encounters with other Park visitors had on participants' sense of place, it appears that the recently implemented reduction in party size limits in the High Peaks would be viewed as a positive management action. Additionally, considering the number of visitors who viewed direct encounters with Park officials, as positive overall, Park officials should continue with the various environmental/visitor-use education efforts they currently have in place – and perhaps, enhance those efforts to include basic information about the cultural and natural history of the Adirondacks.

Results also indicate that the DEC and other organizations that are involved in stewardship activities within the High Peaks – such as the Adirondack Mountain Club – should continue with various rehabilitative and conservation efforts in the area. For example, continuing with trail restoration efforts and re-vegetation and tree planting in areas that have experienced severe overuse, such as the site in the immediate vicinity of Marcy Dam. Another management strategy that could be implemented to mitigate or lessen the impact at heavily used areas is to amplify visitor education efforts regarding *other* wilderness options within the larger Adirondack Park considering the number of respondents who felt they could find a suitable substitute for their 'special place' in another part of the Park. In other words, put additional effort into educating users about other use options – thereby dispersing use overall.

Lastly, considering the number of visitors who claimed to experience a sense of place in the High Peaks region based on the fact that the area was a wilderness, additional visitor education efforts could be put into place to educate users about the unique characteristics that "define" wilderness. For example, some first time visitors might not understand the necessity of party size limits, non-motorized use regulations, or the need to limit future development on tracts of land that are classified as wilderness.

Conclusion

Resource managers are just beginning to recognize the impact of managing recreational settings for their emotional, symbolic, and even spiritual values (Roberts, 1996; Salwasser, 1990), and the investigation of how sense of place and other place phenomena adds to our growing understanding of the importance of managing for these types of values. While the results presented here represent an initial exploratory step about how one's understanding of the cultural and natural history of an area helps to shape or influence sense of place, much remains to be done to understand and further measure the meaning of places outside the High Peaks.

The significance of a place approach is that it attempts to establish the connections between people and geographic areas directly rather than establishing such connections indirectly in the form of use and user characteristics, and activities-based recreation research. This approach can enhance future wilderness planning in the Adirondack Park.

For instance, much of the resource planning that has occurred in the past has failed to satisfy the public, in part because plans often do not indicate where proposed actions are to take place, *specifically*. Place attachment and strong sense of place reminds resource managers and other decision makers that the public is intimately involved with specific places under their jurisdiction. Furthermore resource planning fails to adequately capture the full range of meaning associated with wilderness and other wild lands. More often than not, planning has emphasized the ecological – and certainly the economic – values, while tending to ignore or overlook the emotional, symbolic and spiritual values of wilderness. Approaching the management of such richly complex areas as the Adirondack Park through a place perspective prompts managers to reconsider the outdated commodity approach to resource management. That is, the place perspective demonstrates that places are not just the sum of interchangeable attributes, but whole entities in themselves that people care passionately about. This type of approach acknowledges that resources – both ecological and historical – are not simply raw materials to be manipulated into a particular recreational opportunity. Rather, and perhaps more importantly, wilderness areas such as the High Peaks are places rich with deep history, places that hold significant symbolic value for the novice and return visitor alike, and lastly, those places which invoke a deep sense of place – for many people – bring shape, purpose and meaning to ones' life.

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