

Measuring Place Attachment: Some Preliminary Results

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Introduction. In an effort to enhance recreation resource management, research has generally focused on identifying the key environmental "attributes" necessary to support specific recreation activities and needs. For example, choice models which emphasize the role of environmental attributes in decision making implicitly assume that recreation activities and settings are substitutable, given that the replacement provides similar attributes (Peterson et al., 1985). Research in environment and behavior, however, suggests that most people experience feelings of place attachment which go beyond the usefulness of a particular place or setting for pursuing a particular activity (Proshansky et al., 1983). Thus, the willingness to substitute is likely to be strongly influenced by the attachment a visitor may have to a specific site or class of resources such as wilderness, national parks, or historic sites. The relationship participants have to the resource, that is the extent to which their identity is tied to it, needs to be understood before responses to changing environmental conditions can be predicted. This study is an initial attempt to describe visitor characteristics in terms of the meanings they attach to the resource.

Relationship to the resource involves the meanings and symbols visitors assign to a specific geographical area or category. Environmental psychologists (Proshansky, et al. 1983) have addressed these meanings in terms of attachment to places such as home, neighborhood, and country. Similarly, investigators in consumer behavior have had a longstanding interest in "product involvement" (Zaichkowsky, 1985) and increasingly recognize that the meanings of and attachments to possessions are important aspects of satisfaction (Belk 1988). And within leisure and recreation behavior research there has been some interest in attachment to activities (Buchanan, 1985; Selin & Howard, 1988). The premise of this presentation is that one of the reasons individuals assign importance to places (just as they do to objects, activities and possessions) is that these places help to identify themselves to others. Moreover, the various lines of research described above collectively suggest that the value an individual attaches to a certain object or place cannot be explained solely by its "functional" properties (i. e., those attributes necessary to support specific activities or experiences). Thus, the degree of attachment to a place may be important in determining perceptions of substitutability and conflict, as well as overall satisfaction.

Relationship to the resource, or place attachment, represents a concept of valuing a recreation setting that encompasses both functional and emotional/symbolic meanings and attachments (Schreyer et al. 1981). Functional meanings have to do with the opportunities the setting affords in terms of specific activity needs. This is similar to what Stokols and Shumaker (1981) describe as place dependence (i. e., when the occupants of a setting perceive that it supports their behavioral goals better than an alternative). Though a person may value a place because it is a good place for hiking, camping, fishing and so forth, or because it has outstanding scenery (making the setting highly valued for recreation purposes) the people who use these areas may or may not feel a strong sense of attachment to the area. The emotional/symbolic level of meaning has to do with the importance a person attaches to the place because of what the setting symbolizes or stands for. These may sometimes be very personal meanings as in a childhood stomping ground or may be very abstract as the way national parks symbolize our American heritage (Williams et al. 1989). Proshansky et al. (1983) refer to this type of place attachment as place identity.

Thus, attachment to recreation settings may have at least two origins. One would be resource dependence which refers to the importance of the resource for doing the activity (i. e., functional attachment). The other aspect would be resource identity, which refers to degree of emotional or symbolic meaning assigned to a place. In essence attachment involves some form of preference for or bonding to the setting. This preference may be for purely functional reasons ("It is a good place to do the activities I like to do") or the place may take on some special significance for the customer that has an emotional or symbolic character ("The place itself is important to me"). In the former case the value of the setting is more likely embodied in the physical characteristics of the place (i. e., as properties or attributes of the setting). In the latter case the meaning or value of the place is assigned to it by individuals, groups or society, with little direct correspondence between the properties of the object (place) and the meanings assigned to it.

Methods. This presentation reports on a pilot study to determine if self-report response items could be developed that tap each of these dimensions. Literature in environmental psychology regarding place attachment (Proshansky et al., 1983) and leisure behavior regarding activity involvement (Wellman et al., 1982) were consulted to generate resource dependence and resource identity items. In addition, items were proposed, reviewed, and edited by three researchers (other than the authors) which resulted in 11 resource dependence and 16 resource identity items. These items were evaluated for construct validity and reliability by presenting the items in the form of a questionnaire to 129 students from four universities who completed the questionnaire as part of a class assignments. Subjects responded to items such as "This place means a lot to me" and "I wouldn't substitute any other area for doing the type of things I did here" on a five-point Likert scale ("strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"). Subjects were asked to respond with respect to a 'wilderness, backcountry, roadless or natural area" they had visited recently. Because the primary interest for this study was the inter-item correlation structure, no attempt was made to distinguish types of resource attachment across settings.

Results. Factor, reliability and correlation analyses were conducted on the responses to the 27 items to verify the assumption of two attachment dimensions and are presented in Tables 1 and 2. A three-factor solution produced the most meaningful results based on an analysis of eigenvalues and factor structure matrices. Items were considered part of a factor if they loaded more than 0.50 on it and if the loading on the second highest factor was at least 0.2 less than the highest loading.

The first factor taps an identity dimension. All of the items address the extent to which using the place is a central aspect of their life. The alpha level for this factor is 0.86. The second factor represents the resource dependence dimension of attachment. The highest loading items suggest an unwillingness to use another site for the activity. That is, attachment has to do with how well the setting functions to do the activity. The internal consistency of this dimension was 0.82. A third factor seems to tap a place indifference dimension. The items loading the highest on this factor all involved negative appraisals of the setting. The items do not reflect the symbolic orientation of the first factor or the functional orientation of the second and may be just an artifact of this particular analysis. The internal consistency for this dimension was 0.78. With the 13 items from the first two factors combined into one scale the internal consistency alpha is 0.85. Further, this scale is highly correlated ($r = 0.86$) with a scale (labeled "Attachment") made up of six items that loaded highly on two or more of the three factors.

Discussion. Though only two dimensions were designed into the scale, these preliminary results suggest that negative feelings toward the site may be distinguishable from symbolic and functional forms of attachment. The intriguing question that comes from these results concerns the theoretical relationships among these dimensions. Are they subcomponents of the same underlying attachment construct or, as Ittelson, et al. (1976) suggests, different modes of experiencing the environment? For example, our three modes of attachment appear to have counterparts in the Ittelson, et al. five "mode of experience" classification, where the setting functions as self, setting for action, and emotional territory. The other two are social system, and physical space.

We see attachment to place as part of a broader issue of characterizing the participant's relationship to the resource. Understanding these relationships is a way of addressing the timeless question of "who are our customers?" What we believe is really on the minds of managers is "What is the relationship to the resource of various client groups that use the place? Does this place have any special meaning to the customer? To what extent is the customer attached to it and dependent on it?" Settings are more than a bundle of attributes among which people pick and chose. Places, in themselves, have meaning and significance to the customer, like possessions that serve to identify their owner.

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Table I
Dimensions of place attachment based on a Carthamus
rotated factor analysis of 123 respondents

Item	Factor			Mean	Standard Deviation
	One	Two	Three		
I find that a lot of my life is organized around this place	.73	.15	.09	2.7	0.95
One of the major reasons I now live where I do is to be near this place	.72	-.10	.04	2.6	1.01
My choice of career will be based in part on my desire to be near this place	.71	.00	.00	2.4	0.95
I identify strongly with this place	.67	.19	.37	3.7	0.98
I feel like this place is a part of me	.66	.13	.45	3.4	1.11
I get more satisfaction out of visiting this place than from visiting any other	.61	.29	.13	3.3	0.99
I enjoy doing the type of things here more than in any other area	.34	.73	.00	3.0	0.89
I wouldn't substitute any other area for doing the type of things I did here	.27	.68	-.15	2.7	0.95
This area is the best place for what I like to do	.34	.62	-.06	2.7	1.03
The time I spent here I could have just as easily been spent somewhere else	.06	.62	-.06	3.2	1.01
The things I do here I would enjoy just as much at another site	.02	.61	.26	2.8	0.93
No other place can compare to this area	.25	.54	-.12	3.0	1.20
If I had been in another area my experience would have been the same	-.14	.54	.05	3.0	0.96
I feel no commitment to this place	.33	.21	.75	3.5	1.09
I do not particularly like this place	.09	.31	.68	4.4	0.73
This place is boring to me	.16	.27	.58	4.5	0.74
I am very attached to this place	.49	.49	.43	3.6	0.92
This place means a lot to me	.47	.22	.55	4.3	0.64
Doing what I do here is more important to me than doing it in any other place	.63	.50	-.08	2.9	1.103
I think a lot about coming here	.54	.42	.32	3.7	0.94
This place makes me feel like no other place can	.49	.55	.03	3.0	1.03
I would prefer to spend more time here if I could	.40	.24	.50	4.1	0.80

Table 2
Alpha Coefficients and Intercorrelations Among Subscales
Scales

Scale	ID	DP	IN	AT	ID-DP	ID-DP-AT	ALL
Identity	86	34	45	74	81	81	80
Dependence		82	33	66	83	79	77
Indifference			78	60	47	53	65
Attachment				86	86	94	94
Identity- Dependence					85	98	96
Identity-Dependence- Attachment						91	99
All scales							92

Note: Values along the diagonal are alpha coefficients. Off-diagonal elements are correlation coefficients. All are significant at $p. < .01$. Items constituting the indifference subspace were recoded to change the algebraic sign of the subspace.