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CONFLICT IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

by

Gerald R. Jacob

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Outdoor Recreation

Approved:

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

1978

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This section really should not be necessary since I hope the people to be mentioned already know that I appreciate the help they've given me over the last two years. So for those readers who don't know, the following is a list of personal debts accumulated over the course of my Master's Program here at Utah State.

I was happy to find in Rich Schreyer a refreshingly unconventional, creative and challenging thinker. He patiently helped me get my knowledge of outdoor recreation and conflict off from ground zero. Without his thought and guidance this thesis could not have occurred. As a sensitive person and a valued friend, I owe him even more--for good advice, a lot of understanding, his "open door" policy both at school and home, and introducing me to Utah's canyon country.

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Gerald R. Jacob

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ABSTRACT

Conflict in Outdoor Recreation

by

Gerald R. Jacob, Master of Science

Utah State University, 1978

Major Professor: Dr. Richard Schreyer
Department: Forestry and Outdoor Recreation

The causes of conflict among users of outdoor recreation resources have received little attention from recreation researchers. Knowledge of factors responsible for conflict might assist recreation planners' attempts to reduce future instances of conflict and help management focus its conflict resolution efforts. A theory of conflict is offered as the first step in systematically procuring such knowledge. A definition and characteristics of outdoor recreation conflicts are presented; four comprehensive causes of user conflicts are proposed. Ten propositions are used to link these factors to conflict and suggest future research hypotheses. The social psychological dynamics of conflict, as described here, have implications for understanding the sources of user dissatisfaction.

In part two, 120 interviews, taken from two conflict situations involving mechanized and nonmechanized forms of recreation, were used to examine the heuristic value of the theory's concepts. A case study format was used for the analysis.

The interviews demonstrated a need to distinguish between potential and felt, or experienced, conflict, due to the latter's

dependence on a chance social interaction. Nonmechanized users displayed a high conflict potential, indicated by conflict avoidance behavior, which reduced reports of felt conflict. Fewer mechanized users expressed felt conflict.

Stereotyping of the opposite group's lifestyle was found in both cases, as was a lack of intergroup communication. A negative evaluation of the other group's lifestyle seems inherent in such stereotypes.

Opposing groups sought different outcomes from interacting with a natural environment though backcountry vehicle users showed a more diverse set of interactions than the literature or stereotypes suggest.

Users demonstrated possessiveness for a particular recreation place--this orientation may also exist for categories of places such as National Parks.

The findings support the contention that differences in lifestyle, modes of experiencing natural environments, and resource specificity are factors responsible for conflict and worthy of future research.

(52 pages)

Keywords: Conflict, Outdoor recreation resources, Recreation place, Lifestyle, User satisfaction.

FORWARD

Too much attention has been focused on the resolution of conflicts among political interest groups while attempts to discern their underlying causes are neglected. This thesis summarizes an attempt to create a comprehensive social-psychological theory of user conflicts in outdoor recreation. To our knowledge such a theory breaks new ground. Naturally initial efforts such as this will raise many questions. If this theory provokes, then at least we have brought attention to a topic central to the understanding of recreation behavior.

The thesis itself is composed of two parts, or articles, which were written for submission to technically reviewed journals. Because the journal format was adopted, the discussion of many complex subjects is intentionally brief; nevertheless, we feel some amount of clarity and readability has been gained by limiting ourselves to the major points.

It was decided that including a literature review would have been redundant as an annotated bibliography on the subject has been compiled already.¹ The literature cited in these articles complements that review.

Again, Rich Schreyer's contribution and role in the formulation of these articles should be acknowledged.

¹ Jacob, Gerald R. 1978. Conflict in Outdoor Recreation: A bibliography of relevant literature. Logan, Utah: Utah State University, Dept. of Forestry and Outdoor Recreation--Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism.

PART I

A THEORY OF CONFLICT IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

PREFACE

The causes of conflict among users of outdoor recreation resources have received little attention from recreation researchers. Knowledge of factors responsible for conflict might assist recreation planners' attempts to reduce future instances of conflict and help management focus its conflict resolution efforts. A theory of conflict is offered as the first step in systematically procuring such knowledge. A definition and characteristics of outdoor recreation conflicts are presented; four comprehensive causes of user conflicts are proposed. Ten propositions are used to link these factors to conflict and suggest future research hypotheses. The social psychological dynamics of conflict, as described here, have implications for understanding the sources of user dissatisfaction.

Keywords: Conflict, Outdoor recreation, User satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Discussion about conflicts between recreation user groups such as snowmobilers and skiers, hikers and trailbikers rarely move beyond cursory observation. This article presents a social-psychological theory of conflict in outdoor recreation with the aim of stimulating a more systematic examination of its behavioral dynamics and origins. Research more effectively builds a body of knowledge when some commonly held theories can coordinate and give meaning to otherwise disjointed individual investigations. We hope this theory of conflict will be useful for giving coherence to future investigations while suggesting relationships that unify the many disparate concepts of recreation behavior. Further, such a theory can strengthen important ties with other fields of research, demonstrating that outdoor recreation research has implications useful in understanding a wide range of social conflicts.

The next section presents a definition of conflict, followed by sections describing four proposed major causes of conflict in outdoor recreation (Figure 1). Ten propositions, from which testable hypotheses can be derived, succinctly state the relationships between these factors and conflict.

A DEFINITION OF CONFLICT

Proposed definitions of conflict are numerous (Fink 1968). The definition of conflict presented here makes no attempt to reconcile various definitions found in the literature but does include those aspects which seem most relevant to understanding conflict among users of outdoor recreation resources.

For an individual, conflict is defined as goal interference attributed to another's behavior. Goal interference does not necessarily imply goal incompatibility. People with the same goal may still conflict over the means of attaining a goal, or because opportunities for goal attainment are limited (Deutsch 1971). This definition assumes that people recreate to achieve certain outcomes-- goals. Discrepancy theory equates dissatisfaction with the difference between actualized and desired goals (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). Conflict, then, can be viewed as a special class of user dissatisfaction.

Another key term in the definition is "attributed." The cause of goal interference must be identified. An individual can reason the causal link between goal interference and another's behavior in at least two ways: 1) Realistically, the other person's behavior can indeed alter the desired social or physical components of the recreation experience. 2) No one else may be responsible for the goal interference and scapegoating occurs. Scapegoating is the process whereby feelings of personal frustration or failure are projected onto another, thus displacing the locus of responsibility (Allport

1958). It is important to recognize that conflict as goal interference is not an objective state but must be understood as an individual's interpretation and evaluation of past and future social interactions.

A noteworthy characteristic of many outdoor recreation conflicts is their asymmetrical nature. The definition of conflict stated here does not imply mutual goal interference as a condition necessary for conflict to occur (Deutsch 1971). In addition, conflict should not be seen as a simple yes-no condition. Conflicts vary in intensity with the importance of the goal being obstructed; some goal interference may be only a minor frustration with little impact on the overall experience. The desire to maximize personal satisfaction derived from recreation participation could lead to re-evaluation of a goal in response to conflict--"It really wasn't that important anyways." The tendency to down-play conflict suggests that a generalized expression of recreation satisfaction is not a reliable indicator of conflict; rather, examining specific cases of goal interference and the accompanying affective evaluation of interpersonal contacts may be more revealing.

FOUR MAJOR FACTORS BEHIND OUTDOOR RECREATION CONFLICTS

We have identified four major classes of factors as producing conflict in outdoor recreation:

1. Activity Style--the personal meaning assigned to an activity.
2. Resource Specificity--the importance attached to using a specific recreation resource.
3. Mode of Experience--the way(s) in which the natural environment is perceived.
4. Lifestyle Tolerance--the propensity for acceptance or rejection of lifestyles different from one's own.

Any one factor is sufficient condition for conflict, but a conflict will most likely entail a combination of them. The conceptual linkages between these factors and conflict appear to be capable of explaining hypothetical conflict situations and those reported in the literature or observed in the field. While these factors may be associated with conflict, do they cause it? Causality implies that if a factor is present at one point in time, then at a later point conflict will exist, assuming a social interaction has taken place. This theory does propose causal, reciprocal relationships in which the presence of one to all four factors produces conflict. In turn, past conflict experiences may affect the manifestations of these causal factors and the conflict's intensity.

Both resource specificity and activity style have similar dynamics which are described with the following three concepts: central life

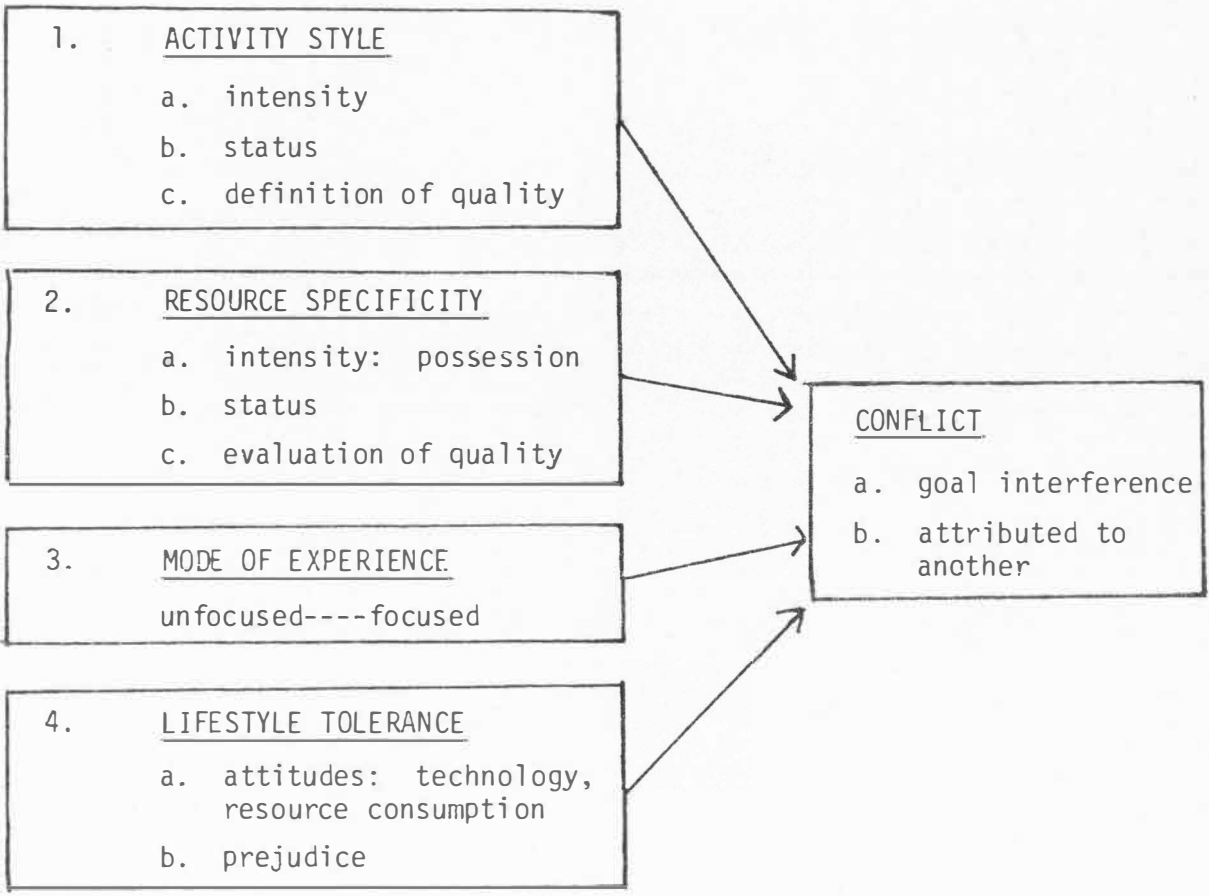


Figure 1. A conceptual model of conflict in outdoor recreation.

interest, status, and evaluations of quality. Slightly modifying Dubin and Goldman's version (1972), we define central life interest as the preferred behaviors and behavioral settings manifested when a person is given the choice. The individual may feel little ego involvement in other mandatory behaviors, such as work, which are viewed only as the means for realizing the central life interest (Dubin and Goldman 1972). Selecting a recreation place or activity (or both) as central life interests indicates that these recreation experiences provide major sources of personal rewards. Recreation presents one's values and lifestyle for others' inspection. In the process of constructing a self-image and sense of individuality, connotations of high or low status are attached to the recreation place and activity style adopted. Evaluations of place and activity quality are an essential part of recreation behavior and decision-making. Standards of an acceptable recreation experience evolve and thus define the requirements for goal achievement. The abstract notion of quality can be assessed as the (activity or resource's) capacity to facilitate goal achievement.

Activity Style

While the concept "activity" implies a standard, commonly used category of behavior patterns, various personal meanings can be attached to the same behavior (Burch 1965). Categorical definitions of activity are too general for this theory of conflict. Instead, a concept of activity style, defined as the personal meanings attached to the activity, is used. Personal interpretations of the same

activity result in contrasting standards of participant behavior which are the source of intra-activity conflicts. Three elements describe the individual's activity style: intensity of participation--the activity as a central life interest, range of experience which affects the definition of a quality experience, and status-associated activity variations.

Intensity of participation: The activity as central life interest

Personal involvement in an activity varies. For some the activity is the focus of their leisure, or even their central life interest, a critical source of rewards outside of work. At these higher intensities of involvement, a person's identity and satisfaction with life are intimately tied to participation in the activity. Interpersonal relationships, social values and skills are renewed while participating in the activity. Many others' commitments are less intense; the activity lies at the periphery of their leisure, perhaps only occasionally practiced. If conditions prevent participation, another may be substituted. Intense involvement in one activity may be foregone for a shallow, but more diverse set of interests, making a conflict in any one activity less threatening to the individual's well-being (Dadrian 1971).

People with an intense activity style are likely to hold very specific norms of proper participant behavior. In LaPage and Ragain's study (1974) of campers, newcomers to the activity were seen as less friendly and respectful of others. Unaware of the old order's customs and norms, casual or new participants are viewed with disdain.

The casual participant is often associated with the fadist and blamed for increasing use pressures and crowding. Therefore, (Proposition 1) the more intense the activity style, the greater the likelihood a social interaction will lead to conflict. Furthermore, mass demand threatens personal identification with an activity leading to the perception that growing use "cheapens" the experience. Improvisations are introduced to recapture unique, personal forms of participation. Consequently, status and experience quality distinctions evolve to distinguish the intensely involved from the casually involved (Bryan 1977).

Status

Activity status hierarchies in recreation are based on equipment and expertise possessed. Such requirements for admittance to the inner circle of devoted participants maintain its exclusiveness (West 1977). Obtaining high status and being identified with the elite are recreation goals for some participants. The latest equipment and exclusive designs are highly visible symbols of status within the activity. While high status equipment may be correlated with a sophisticated knowledge of the activity, it may often be purchased in the belief that "the bigger the boat, the better it makes the captain." Expertise--the possession of practical skills--establishes a less permeable and purchasable status position.

Status has both internal and external referents. The status conscious participant depends upon visible demonstrations of skill and equipment where the attendant spectators serve as an external reaffirmation of its value. Others of equal skill or equipment may

see the "hotdogger" showoff as crass and define the activity as a personal matter of proving something to no one but oneself. (Proposition 2) When the private activity style confronts the status conscious activity style, conflict results because the private activity style's disregard for status symbols negates the relevance of the other participant's status hierarchy. A second source of status based intra-activity conflict occurs when a participant desiring high status must interact with others viewed as lower status (Proposition 3); interactions of this sort signal an erosion of the activity style's high status connotations. Finally, conflict also occurs between participants who do not share the same status hierarchies (Proposition 4). A status conscious participant seeking to fulfill one particular definition of status is rejecting the value of other status symbols; and so one evaluates even the high status members of another hierarchy as being of low status.

Range of experience and definitions of quality

Within any activity various definitions of a quality experience are present; concepts of quality constitute the third element of activity style. The quality of experience is an evaluation requiring comparison. Occasional or novice participants possess little experience on which to base their judgments and defer to the status quo as their standard for comparisons; or they generalize their expectations so that virtually any outcome will maintain satisfaction (Schreyer 1976). Conflict among these participants is likely to be rare. Flooding into an activity, they bring a tolerance for conditions veteran participants see as indicating a lower or deteriorating

quality of experience (Nielsen et al. 1977). People deeply involved in an activity formulate and apply rigorous standards of personal behavior to others in an attempt to protect their definition of a quality experience. Like status, these definitions are tied to the nature and intensity of a person's involvement in the activity; part of being a higher status participant is adopting a specific, accepted definition of the quality experience. (Proposition 5) The more intense the participant, the more specific the notion of what constitutes a quality experience; and thus the greater the potential for conflict. Less resilient definitions of quality demand limitations on the number or kinds of incoming users. Experiences which had been defined as high quality in the past become commonplace when affordable, sophisticated technologies increase access and reduce participant skill requirements.

To summarize, conflict results when intense participants must interact with casual ones. People intensely involved in a recreation activity are prone to conflict because, while their goals are well defined, only a small number of participants know or defer to the strict behavioral guidelines necessary for goal achievement. The intensely involved face the dilemma of having to interact with neophytes, yet also realizing that if everyone were to adopt their activity style, its connotations of higher status would be diluted.

Resource Specificity

The Great Plains may symbolize loneliness, a swimming hole one's childhood, the desert a useless land. Some symbolic interpretations

of physical resources are common to whole cultures while others are highly personalized (Tuan 1974). Recreation experiences are built around personal and cultural evaluations of resources which establish a normative order of behavior associated with the recreation place, and which outlines how it will be used (Lee 1972). Simply put, place is a culture or social group's interpretation of a physical resource. Conflict occurs when a person or group challenges the normative order with a different interpretation of the recreation place. Such a break with the "accepted view" threatens traditional recreation experiences associated with that place.

Those conflicts involving varying definitions of place are described by the concept resource specificity--the importance an individual attaches to the use of a particular recreation resource. The importance of a specific recreation resource as the place for leisure pursuits varies with 1) a person's range of experience which affects the evaluation of the resource's physical attributes as unique or common, 2) feelings of possession and the role of a place as a central life interest (CLI), and 3) its connotations of status.

Experience and evaluations of resource quality

Past experience heavily influences the evaluation of a place's physical attributes. People living close to the recreation place tend to see its qualities as commonplace and are more likely to visit because of convenience. The visitor from afar, often derisively personified as the gawking tourist, may see the same recreation place as possessing unique qualities uncommon in one's everyday experience.

An appreciative visitor is sensitive to behaviors indicating a lack of respect for this uncommon recreation place. (Proposition 6) When a person who views the place's qualities as unequalled confronts a different evaluation, conflict results. The latter is seen as denigrating the valued, personal, and potentially emotional experience associated with the recreation place.

Sense of possession: Place as a central life interest

A second aspect of resource specificity, possession by knowledge (Lee 1972), also affects the visitor-place relationship. A person well acquainted with a recreation place has well-defined expectations about the variety and type of experiences to be found there. Standards of behavior appropriate for users of the place are known. In cases of recurring use, simple convenience could be the motivator but it is also possible that an affective attachment for the place has developed over time. While its physical qualities may not be evaluated as unique, the place comes to embody memories and traditions. In this way it becomes a central life interest, a focal point of recreation participation. A sense of possession becomes manifest in the expectation "I should have a say in how this area is managed" (O'Leary 1976). In the eyes of such recreationists, "outsiders," those unfamiliar with the place, are not qualified to say how the resource should be used. (Proposition 7) Conflict results when users with a possessive attitude towards the resource confront users perceived as disrupting traditional uses and behavioral norms.

Status

Knowledge may be the basis for a status hierarchy among users of a recreation place. Similar to activity, high status is associated with knowledge of the place--its special opportunities, "secrets," and past. Experiences associated with the spot no one's ever heard about have obvious value for the individual attempting to display a unique, intimate relationship with the place. Protection of this knowledge is an effective barrier preventing the lower status users from emulating the elite (West 1977). But status requires displaying the knowledge, which eventually communicates it to others. Guide-books written by "insiders" are another force breaking down barriers between categories of users as the knowledge of the experience becomes common. Conflict occurs for high status users when they must interact with the lower status users who symbolize a devaluation of a heretofore exclusive, intimate relationship with the place (Proposition 8).

The Mode of Experience

Outdoor recreation, as we are using the term, takes place in environments commonly regarded as natural, and a major component of recreation experiences is the perception of such environments. Goal achievement often depends upon the user having a specific sensory interaction with the natural environment. Some sensory stimuli are more prone to be interfered with than others; the presence of one environmental stimulus can preempt sensing another. Thus users are more prone to conflict if their goals depend upon these susceptible

stimuli. This third source of conflict is labeled the mode of experience. It attempts to explain why, under identical conditions, stimuli such as the sounds of motor vehicles are sources of conflict for some recreationists and not others.

The modes, or ways, of experiencing an environment are described as a continuum ranging from unfocused to focused. The unfocused mode is an experience of environmental generalities, overall spatial relationships, the lay of the land but not its particulars. Movement, fleeting images, and broad, sweeping impressions characterize this mode (Jackson 1957). Yi-Fu Tuan would describe this as the experience of space, embodying feelings of freedom and spaciousness (Tuan 1978). The fact that some trailbikers prefer backcountry trails and not gravel pits points out the importance placed on interacting with a natural environment. In the backcountry, movement and viewing the scenery are recreation goals but movement precludes concentrating the senses for a detailed examination of the environment. As a result, specific sensory inputs are relatively unimportant, though all the senses may be used. In even more unfocused experiences, the sensation of movement itself may be the primary recreation goal and is fulfilled with the dirtbike playground "rollercoaster ride." So long as movement is unhindered, conflict does not result.

At the other end of the continuum, an individual in a focused mode points the senses on specific entities within the environment. Movement must be interrupted so the visitor can pause and more closely examine the natural environment. Stones are picked up, balsam needles smelled, berries eaten and birds identified, making an intimate knowledge of the place and its inhabitants central to the

recreation experience. Focusing depends upon complex input of sensory details associated with the recreation place, and is intolerant of those introduced, man-made stimuli which threaten this perceptual process. Of course many intermediate possibilities exist between the extreme case of the gravel pit dirtbiker and the backpacking nature photographer. However, as the mode of experiencing an environment becomes more focused, it involves an increasing intolerance of external stimuli and produces more rigid definitions of what constitutes those stimuli. Moving along the continuum from unfocused towards focused is analogous to going from low conflict prone to extremely conflict prone modes of experience. When a person in the focused mode interacts with a person in the unfocused mode, conflict results (Proposition 9). Furthermore, the greater the gap between two recreationists along the unfocused-focused continuum, the greater the potential for conflict. An important question is raised: Does an individual select recreation activities to capture a wide variety of these modes or are lifestyle-related patterns of recreation participation built around some point on this continuum?

Tolerance for Lifestyle Diversity

In a society of diverse and contradictory worldviews, the solitary individual wishes to be reassured that there are others who share the same goals, values and personal philosophies that make up one's lifestyle. The voluntary recreation group is an important source of self affirmation that reinforces confidence in the rightness of one's lifestyle. Few people seek a recreation association that challenges and contradicts their basic values.

Various conformity pressures which maintain group cohesiveness in outlook and behavior also reinforce the distinctions between one's own group (the ingroup) and the different lifestyles of outgroups (Dion 1973). American society has always contained a myriad of social groups and outlooks; and while tolerance for such diversity is often not practiced, it is part of our political philosophical heritage. Group norms which aim at reinforcing distinctions between in and outgroups become dangerous when they encourage the false generalizations of ethnocentric thinking. In such a frame of mind outgroup members are evaluated as weird, morally inferior, or inscrutable; they are viewed as a threat to the ingroup's goals and its lifestyle. In extreme cases of intolerance, segregation occurs. Attempts are made to limit or prevent outgroup access to a resource. An unwillingness to share resources with members of other lifestyle groups is an important source of conflict in outdoor recreation and society at large. Conflicts caused by intolerance for lifestyle diversity indicate that basic societal clashes make their way into recreation settings.

To avoid an overdose of social contact, people simplify life's complexities by relating to other people as categories, though the rigidity with which one applies these categories varies. That man is a snowmobiler; she is a skier. What do these categories imply about their members? How do people interpret these categories? In recreation, ingroups and outgroups are categories of people an individual establishes on the basis of perceived or imagined lifestyle similarities and differences, including expressed preferences for

certain recreation activities. Many subtle lifestyle qualities are implied when a group label is put on a person. With the label comes a symbolic set of values whose range varies inversely with one's willingness to construct a stereotype. Two themes common to recreation related stereotyping are described below.

Technology and resource consumption

A machine symbolizes human manipulation of the physical environment, an urban, technological society, transmuted Nature, and goods to be consumed. Major lifestyle differences are associated with one's evaluation of the machine's connotations. Escape from technologically induced stresses and a momentary return to a simplified existence in a pristine environment are common reasons for recreating (Driver and Knopf 1976). For many people the person on the trailbike, with the motorboat or riding the snow machine symbolizes a society arrogantly exploiting and consuming resources. The machine is an uncomfortable reminder of what one is trying to escape. Knopp and Tyger (1973) found that crosscountry skiers and snowmobilers have opposite resource consumption orientations. The machine oriented recreationist also holds to a more traditional set of values: confidence in technology's solutions to problems, a utilitarian view of resources and rugged individualism (Knopp and Tyger 1973; Martin and Berry 1974).

Different orientations to resource consumption can be distinguished as urban or rural. The Ford 250 pickup with a Savage lever-action in the gunrack symbolizes the redneck hunter for the big city, small

car owner. From the rural point of view, small cars are equated with "Sahara (Sierra) clubbers" trying to horn in where they have no right to be (sense of possession) and lock up resources.

Prejudice

Ethnic, racial, and social class distinctions also may foment lifestyle conflicts. Especially in urban areas, people with a low tolerance for other lifestyles cause racial and ethnic tensions. Groups can pursue the same activity, following the same rules and yet conflict still results (Vernon 1976). In these cases goal interference is generalized across all outgroup behaviors, i.e., "they" can do nothing right. Recreation goals cannot be attained with the outgroup present. The primary recreation goal, association with one's own kind, must first be met.

Tolerance for lifestyle diversity has two components. First, people perceive differences between their own and an outgroup. Second, these differences must be evaluated. (Proposition 10) If these differences are evaluated as undesirable or a potential threat to recreation goals, conflict results when members of the two groups confront one another. People intolerant of lifestyle diversity are more prone to conflict, especially as the number and variety of people desiring access to recreation resources increase.

CONCLUSIONS

The existence of these four major factors does not necessarily mean that a conflict exists. For example, the resource may be large enough to make self-imposed zoning possible or social interactions rare. However, if these factors are present there is a high potential for conflict, especially as use pressures on recreation resources increase. Once the assumption of social interaction is met, there will be a conflict.

Certain limitations of this theory and discussion should be recognized. Personality factors will no doubt influence the manifestations of the factors just discussed though they have not been directly addressed here. At current levels of refinement their consideration could introduce complications greater than their explanatory contribution. The subject of conflict resolution has not been touched because such an account would have to address an awesome array of institutional, political and legal constraints on the resolution strategies adopted. And finally, many conceptual relationships have purposely been left unmentioned and difficult concepts simplified to avoid cluttering this preliminary sketch. If a solid theoretical structure has been provided, the details of individual situations should fall into place.

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PART II

A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF TWO CONFLICT SITUATIONS

PREFACE

Taken from two conflict situations involving mechanized and non-mechanized forms of recreation, 120 interviews were used to examine three proposed causes of user conflicts. A case study format was used for the analysis.

The interviews demonstrated a need to distinguish between potential and felt, or experienced, conflict, due to the latter's dependence on a chance social interaction. Nonmechanized users displayed a high conflict potential, indicated by conflict avoidance behavior, which reduced reports or felt conflict. Fewer mechanized users expressed felt conflict.

Stereotyping of the opposite group's lifestyle was found in both cases, as was a lack of intergroup communication. A negative evaluation of the other group's lifestyle seems inherent in such stereotypes.

Opposing groups sought different outcomes from interacting with a natural environment though backcountry vehicle users showed a more diverse set of interactions than the literature or stereotypes suggest.

Users demonstrated possessiveness for a particular recreation place. This orientation may also exist for categories of places such as National Parks.

The findings support the contention that differences in lifestyle, modes of experiencing natural environments, and resource specificity are factors responsible for conflict and worthy of future research.

Keywords: Conflict, Outdoor recreation, Recreation place, Lifestyle.

INTRODUCTION

Conflicts between mechanized and nonmechanized users of recreation resources are now common ingredients of the wildland recreation political stew. While areas increasingly are being zoned, closed or users otherwise segregated in hopes of defusing such potent conflicts, recreation research has not produced a systematic approach for analyzing these and other user conflicts. The question remains--what causes conflict between different users of recreation resources? The visible gyrations of politicized interest groups are reflections of deeper social psychological stresses occurring in day to day social interactions. The causes of conflict must therefore be sought through understanding of individual social relationships.

In the previous paper we suggested that the nature of inter-activity conflicts varies with the participants' assessment of the resource being used, lifestyle, and personal philosophies of resource consumption. The goal of this exploratory study is to illustrate the usefulness of these concepts as a tool for understanding a variety of conflict situations.

Two conflict situations were chosen on the basis of popular press reports, the recreation literature and discussion with experienced users. Four user groups from two conflict situations were interviewed: Case One--cross-country skiers and snowmobilers, Case Two--backcountry hikers and vehicle users (jeeps and trailbikes). While these situations all involve the commonly noted confrontation

between mechanized and nonmechanized recreationists, the concepts used in the analysis should be applicable to other recreation conflicts as well.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK GUIDING THIS ANALYSIS

The concepts guiding this analysis are only summarized here as a more detailed explanation is found in the previous article. This section and the case studies that follow are similarly organized: An examination of proposed causes succeeds discussion on the users' perception of conflict.

Conflict in outdoor recreation is a special case of user dissatisfaction in which the actions of one individual prevent another from achieving some desired goal. Conflict assumes that someone has been blamed as the cause of this goal interference; therefore, some form of social interaction, either direct confrontation or indirect knowledge of another's presence, must take place. In the interviews, a user's felt conflict was probed by asking a direct question to that end. In both cases direct questioning did reveal much about the nature of felt conflicts but proved to be an unreliable technique for these reasons: The word "conflict" has many different interpretations; those commonly associated with physical violence could make many people reluctant to respond affirmatively even if a conflict, as defined here, took place. The desire to give a socially acceptable response is a second source of bias. Third, comparing people who did and did not feel a conflict is relatively meaningless because the occurrence of felt conflict depends upon a chance condition--having some social interaction with another. And finally, when asking users to evaluate whether a situation is a conflict, it is not clear if

they are giving a response based on their own personal experience or if the response reflects an overall evaluation of the situation.

Feelings of intergroup conflict, unrelated to a specific situation, are indicated when an individual admits that the opposing group prevents one from having an enjoyable time. At the same time, it is possible for a user to express general satisfaction from participation in a specific activity while a high potential for conflict remains. The desire for a satisfying recreation experience could induce the post facto reevaluation of its unpleasant elements as a means of satisfying that desire. A high potential for conflict is indicated when a user alters his/her behavior; for example, a user consciously selects recreation places to avoid the other group. A question probing this avoidance seemed to be an effective indicator of potential conflict. Almost all skiers and hikers interviewed demonstrated such a potential. The opposite was generally true for snowmobilers and backcountry vehicle users, supporting speculation that mechanized and nonmechanized conflicts tend to be asymmetrical. Analyzing a user's potential for conflict may be a necessary step in understanding incidents of felt conflict.

As the theory presented in the first article is pointed toward general underlying patterns of recreation behavior, no distinctions must be made between the causes of existing, felt conflict and those causes influencing the potential for conflict. Three proposed causes of interactivity conflicts which will guide subsequent case study analyses are:

1. Resource specificity: The importance attached to use of a specific recreation resource. Conflict occurs when people who have

developed a possessive attitude towards the resource encounter users viewed as newcomers. Conflict also occurs when people who feel that the resource's physical attributes are unique sense that others see the same resource as commonplace. To probe this factor, respondents were questioned about their history of use and their evaluation of the resource as unique, "one-of-a-kind," or common.

2. Lifestyle tolerance: The propensity for acceptance or rejection of lifestyles different from one's own. Conflict occurs when a person must interact with another having a negatively evaluated lifestyle. Stereotypes are often indicative of this intolerance. Respondents were asked whether they felt the other group was composed of people different from themselves; explanations of these perceived differences were requested.

3. Mode of experience: The way(s) in which an individual chooses to perceive a natural environment. Conflict occurs when people seeking to experience an environment's specific sensory stimuli (i.e., people in a focused mode) must interact with others who mainly wish to experience its spaciousness and freedom of movement (i.e., people in an unfocused mode). The open-ended interview produced many insights into what people disliked about the ways others interacted with the natural environment.

It was not expected that all three factors would be necessary to explain each case study; in a particular case one factor could hold more explanatory power than another. Nevertheless, we feel one should not have to go beyond the proposed factors to explain user conflicts. Discussion of conflicts only in categorical terms, such

as mechanized versus nonmechanized, clouds some major differences among such conflicts and forgets points of contention that may be necessary to address the resolution or management of conflict.

METHODOLOGY

All subjects were asked to participate in a structured interview composed of 22 simple number or yes/no questions. Of course such categories cannot capture varying intensities of felt conflict and other responses. Respondents were encouraged to qualify their answers and make additional comments, avoiding the researcher's preconceived response categories. With some willing contacts interviews lasting up to 1½ hours took place, permitting the interviewer to probe for specific reasons behind responses. Thirty interviews for each group in Cases One and Two were completed for a total of 120, with only two refusals. In most situations only one person per group was interviewed to increase the potential for a diversity of responses. No attempt was made to confine the interviews to group leaders and people were contacted only after they had had some experience with the study site. Snowmobilers and skiers were interviewed over a 1½ month period from January through February, 1978 on the Wasatch National Forest in Utah; backcountry hikers and vehicle users were interviewed during the first week of May and over the Memorial Day holiday, 1978 in Canyonlands National Park.

Problems with sampling, operationalizing concepts, the untested reliability of the methods employed, and the lack of definitive hypotheses preclude the application of statistical operations to information at this stage of development. Personal interviews and field observations were purposely selected because they expose the researcher to the richness and complexities of human interactions

before resorting to reductionist methodologies. Researcher bias and less reliable aggregate data are admitted limitations of the selected methods. Despite these limitations, this qualitative analysis of conflict situations is worthwhile if it helps clarify the conceptual framework that will guide future, more quantitative studies.

CASE ONE: CROSSCOUNTRY SKIERS AND
SNOWMOBILERS

The study site was the U.S. Forest Service's Logan Canyon Recreation Area located in northeastern Utah. Past conflicts in the area had been reported in the local newspaper. Responding to the conflicts, the Forest Service had instituted a travel plan which resulted in the closure of certain areas to snowmobiling. Closed areas were few and previously established differences in use patterns probably did more to segregate conflicting users. Largely represented by local university students and staff with more flexible schedules, crosscountry skiers were better able to use the area during the week, thereby avoiding contact with snowmobilers. Weekday use by skiers was still of such low density that weekend sampling times were required. Almost all snowmobilers were observed using the area on the weekends, especially on Saturday; only three snowmobilers could be contacted out of three attempted weekday samples. Certain areas had become known to some, more experienced canyon users as snowmobiler or skier places; however, these places were not recognized in the official travel plan and many visitors were unaware of these informal designations. In spite of different use patterns, there was much opportunity for interaction between the two groups--Saturday still being the most popular day for both groups. Both shared the same parking areas, many of the same access trails, and signs of snowmobilers persisted even if none were present.

Potential and Felt Conflict

While 60 percent of the skiers personally felt there was a conflict; the remainder indicated that they had been able to arrange their schedules, places selected, etc. to successfully avoid conflicts. Nearly all skiers demonstrated a potential for conflict. Ninety-seven percent (29/30) tried to find places where there were no snowmobilers; five skiers stated "no snowmobilers" as the specific attraction of the place they were visiting. Surprisingly, 30 percent of the snowmobilers felt there was a conflict, though only 13 percent consciously tried to select areas to avoid skiers. These results could be explained by considering that while many snowmobilers felt little conflict when recreating they were becoming sensitized to the skiers complaints and were worried about the skiers ability to force the closing of areas to snowmobiling. Snowmobilers' felt conflict seems to reflect a generalized evaluation of the situation, independent of personal experience.

Resource Specificity

Snowmobilers tended to express possessiveness over this area, which was not evident among skiers. An example is the man who told of his father cutting timber in the same area where he now snowmobiles. Another man expressed this attachment to the area, "I've used this canyon for hunting and fishing and gathered firewood here since I was a boy and that was over 50 years ago." For these people the recreation area embodied memories, family traditions, and long established ways of using resources. The most frequently cited

complaint (volunteered by 27 percent of the snowmobilers) was the closing of areas to snowmobiling; the concept of multiple use was interpreted to mean equal access for everyone.

Possessiveness appears to account for conflict felt by the snowmobilers, who were usually local residents with a relatively long history of use. The mean length of use for snowmobilers was almost five years ($\bar{X} = 4.7$, $s = 3.7$), compared to two years for cross-country skiers ($\bar{X} = 2.1$, $s = 1.6$). Forty percent of the skiers were visiting a place within the recreation area for the first time, compared to 13 percent for the snowmobilers. While this may indicate more experience with the area, it could also be due to snowmobilers sticking to a few places while skiers are more likely to visit a variety of places during the season.

Interviews showed that approximately equal numbers of skiers and snowmobilers evaluated the area as unique. Thus different evaluations of resource quality did not appear to be a cause of conflict. Despite this finding and snowmobilers' longer term use of the resource, skiers seemed to assume that anyone snowmobiling could not appreciate the environment they were visiting. Here it is possible that a status hierarchy based on knowledge of the resource may imply judging another's mode of experience as one of inferior status.

Mode of Experience

Only two skiers said they skied solely for its value as exercise; for most it was a way of experiencing a natural environment. Almost all stated such things as solitude, wildlife, and peacefulness were

important parts of that experience. Skiers objected to snowmobiles as intrusions which blotted out the sensory stimuli of a natural environment. Skiers equated snowmobiling with the superficial experience; its sensory byproducts, noise and smelly exhaust, meant these people could not possibly be appreciating the area's amenities. If one accepts the skiers' definition of what it means to appreciate, this is true; but snowmobilers seem to have a very different definition of what it means to experience and appreciate an environment. Interviews indicated that freedom, movement and scenery were their major sources of pleasure associated with snowmobiling in a natural environment. Contrary to many skiers' comments, snowmobilers did not necessarily like noise but it was tolerated as an evil necessary to gain other benefits.

Snowmobiling seems to give its participants a sense of freedom, a release from the constraints of everyday life. It is one time when the individual decides the course of action to be taken; the machine's speed allows one to feel the results of the decision in a relatively short period of time. Trails, zoning and fences constrain that freedom of action and are symbols of external forces telling them how to use lands they feel are their own.

The sweeping, gliding motion of a snowmobile moving through bowls of fresh powder were described almost poetically by one person. In contrast to the "hard riders" who sought to "conquer the mountain," these people appreciated a sense of harmony that came from moving with the terrain. Divorced from the natural environment, speed probably summarizes the thrill of snowmobiling for a minority of its participants.

Viewing the scenery was an important, more often cited (27 percent) source of enjoyment. However, the term scenery implies a more generalized, unfocused perception of an environment, the picturesque view rather than a complicated blend of sensory specifics desired by skiers. And while most snowmobilers are probably not interested in delving beyond these generalities, this does not mean they failed to appreciate a natural environment. Rather than describing the situation as a conflict between people who do and do not appreciate a natural environment, it appears to be a conflict between the different ways in which people choose to experience an environment.

Lifestyle

Nearly four-fifths (77 percent) of the crosscountry skiers interviewed were willing to generalize that snowmobilers as a group were different from themselves. Comments such as "it's unfair to generalize about people" were noticeably absent. Snowmobilers were commonly associated with such lifestyle linked terms as Winnebagos, trial bikes, ORVs, gas guzzlers, and middle class America. Knopp and Tyger (1973) provide empirical support for the contention that snowmobilers have a more consumptive, use oriented view of natural resources. For the individual skier, however, the social contacts on which these generalizations could be based were admittedly few or nonexistent. Less than a quarter (23 percent) of the skiers admitted having any friends who snowmobiled. Here one could speculate that the process of becoming socialized into any activity's attitude set may

include forces influencing the adoption of outgroup stereotypes, and lack of social contact does little to change such images. Most likely past conflict experiences also make a person more willing to stereotype that outgroup unfavorably. Some skiers expressed extremely hostile attitudes of snowmobilers, feeling their form of recreation should be outlawed.

Snowmobilers were somewhat less prone to see crosscountry skiers as a group different from themselves; 40 percent expressed sentiments like "they're outdoorsmen just like us." The 60 percent who saw generalized differences usually explained that skiers were "ecology types," "environmentalists," or "college kids." Some snowmobilers associated skiers with an uncomprising posture--"they're not willing to share," "they want the whole mountain for themselves." Three snowmobilers did express hostility with expressions such as "I'd like to run one of them over." Many people seemed to confuse cross-country and downhill skiing, seeing them as the same activity; this appears to have inflated the percentage (33 percent) who said they had friends who were skiers. Like skiers, a snowmobiler's view of the other group is rarely derived from personal contact.

Free responses revealed that applying the label "environmentalist" to skiers implied other, salient lifestyle dimensions not necessarily associated with environmental issues. As an example, many snowmobilers interviewed described the label with comments on skiers' sexual mores, elitism, heavy taxes and big government. These responses might form the basis for future investigation into the dimensions of perceived lifestyle differences. Taken from other social contexts, labels with

negative connotations, such as "environmentalist" or "motorhead," appear to be easily converted to new groups suspected as being different from one's own.

Summarizing this case, conflict for skiers was due to their sensitive mode of experiencing a natural environment and a generalized intolerance of the stereotyped snowmobiler. Snowmobilers' responses suggested that resource specificity, as expressed by a possessiveness and sense of traditional resource uses, and a negative evaluation of lifestyle differences were sources of conflict.

CASE TWO: BACKCOUNTRY HIKERS AND VEHICLE USERS

The study site was the Needles district of Canyonlands National Park in southeastern Utah. Visitors were contacted at a ranger station as they came to obtain a backcountry permit; from their conversations with the ranger it was determined whether they were interested in hiking, vehicle travel or using their vehicle as a base camp from which to hike or backpack.

The use of fourwheel drive vehicles and trailbikes, though limited to officially designated backcountry roads, is permitted in this desert environment. Here backcountry vehicle recreation is a traditional use of the area, going back before the park's establishment in 1964; however, it would be considered a non-traditional use in most other national parks. This view seems supported by results showing that 67 percent of the hikers interviewed were unaware before their visit that trailbikes were permitted in the park.

Backcountry hikers were interviewed about their experiences with and reactions to trailbikes. Because of the difficulty in contacting enough trailbikers (again, only one person per group was interviewed; in most instances the brief amount of time spent at the contact station precluded more interviews per group), both trailbikers (17/30) and fourwheel drive users (13/30) were interviewed. People using vehicles as backpacking or hiking trip base camps were not interviewed, though this also appears to be a fairly common activity.

This situation was selected to study conflict on the basis of exploratory research which showed trailbiking to be the activity users feel is most incompatible with a National Park (White 1978). Confining vehicles to designated routes (identified on all park trail maps) did limit contacts between hikers and motorized users; nevertheless, contacts could take place in parking lots, backcountry campgrounds, a developed campground, where hiking and vehicle trails crossed, and in areas where vehicle sounds could be heard.

Conflict

All interviews occurred during the peak-use, spring season; interview length and format were similar to Case One. With its rough, isolating topography, the potential for solitude in this park is great; in spite of this, 40 percent of the hikers and 20 percent of the vehicle users interviewed personally felt that there was a conflict between hiking and trailbiking/fourwheel drivers in this park. Most hikers (87 percent) said they tried to find places where they would not meet trailbikers; of the four dissenting responses, two came from hikers who admitted they also trailbiked. Again, a difference between felt and potential conflict occurred.

Resource Specificity

On average, hikers and vehicle users did not differ in the number of years they had been visiting the park; nor did they differ in the previous (1977) year's average number of visits to the park. Each user group averaged less than one trip a year; only 10 percent

of the interviewed users visited the park more than once last year. Nine hikers and seven vehicle users were visiting the park for the first time. From these results and other questions, neither group could safely be described as having evolved a possessive attitude for this park. In addition, no clear relationship could be discerned between felt conflict and the number of years an individual had been using the park. Hikers who felt a conflict was present had on average, been using the park for 1.8 years ($s = 2.12$); this compares to 2.4 years ($s = 1.6$) for hikers with no felt conflict. Since nearly all hikers exhibited conflict avoidance behavior, it appears that the potential for conflict did not vary with the individual's history of use. A number of hikers (6) did voluntarily express a generalized feeling of possessiveness for all National Parks; "National Parks are for feet, not motors." Future investigations should examine resource specificity as a possessiveness for specific places as well as for categories of places.

No conflict caused by different evaluations of the resources' physical qualities could be suggested. The people interviewed seemed attuned to the idea that there was something special or unique about a National Park.

While users were asked whether they personally felt (un)familiar with Canyonlands, it became obvious that the word familiar has different meanings for different groups. The vehicle user knows the park in terms of travel routes and major, identified sites; the hiker becomes familiar with trails, unidentified sites, side canyons, and other micro-elements of the desert environment. Hikers expressed

the sentiment that their mode of travel allowed them to become more knowledgeable and intimate with the park. The vehicle user appears to many hikers as the "site-seer," the person who drives up to an overlook, snaps a picture and leaves. Hikers may base status distinctions on specific types of knowledge which might only be obtained by a person in a particular mode of experience.

Mode of Experience

Again, conflict arises in this case where people have different ideas of how an environment should be appreciated. Hikers, like crosscountry skiers, felt that people who go into natural areas with vehicles cannot appreciate that environment. Quoting some hikers, "They're into their mode of travel and not the environment they're traveling through." More specifically, vehicle users cannot focus their attention on specific objects, sounds, or stimuli if, in a hiker's eyes, one is to "truly" appreciate that environment: "They're into excitement and not appreciation;" "Speed is more important to them than sensitivity." Vehicles introduce interfering stimuli which conflict with the desire of most hikers for a pristine natural environment.

It was not expected that vehicle users (63 percent) would freely admit to also being hikers. It may be necessary to explore differences in a group's definition of the activity "hiking," especially where there is such a heavy one-way crossover in activity participation. Only three hikers (10 percent) admitted to participating in both activities.

Even more surprising was the discovery that 54 percent of the fourwheel drive users saw a conflict with the trailbikers, who "make a lot of noise, go off the road tearing up the country" and were characterized as disrespectful of a resource. Vehicle users who said they used their vehicles to get deeper into the backcountry could be similar to hikers in their desire to experience a pristine, motorless environment once a destination is reached. All trailbikers were not insensitive to the hiker's quality of experience; as one said, "We know they don't like the noise we make; we try to slow down when we pass them so it isn't so bad."

Lifestyle

Hikers' perceptions of differences between themselves and trailbikers were strong. Ninety-three percent of the hikers, including one of three who participated in both activities, felt that people who trailbike are a "different crowd;" in this case some did mention an uneasiness in making generalizations about the other activity groups. Most hikers (87 percent) said they did not have friends who trailbiked; again the limited social contact between the groups was evident. Less prone to feel a conflict, vehicle users were also much less uniform in their responses to these questions: 43 percent saw group related differences. This lower figure could be explained by three tendencies: Vehicle users more commonly identified themselves with both activities in question; 63 percent said they did have friends who hiked, indicating a greater diversity of associations; when compared to hikers, the socialization pressures towards perception of

outgroup differences may be much less strong. We do not have data to support this observation, but it might be fruitfully explored in future research.

Besides differences in the modes of experience, hikers also mentioned lifestyle differences with such comments as, "They're the same people who snowmobile." One particularly hostile hiker described trailbikers as "the same people who motorboat, waterski, come in pick-up campers and drink Coors beer." These comments support the suggestion that attitudes towards resource consumption and technology are a major, salient dimension of lifestyle differences upon which conflict is based. There was no evidence that vehicle users feared a hiker lobby group shutting them out of the park. Even the vehicle user who said, "most hikers seem to be strict environmentalists," gave no indication of feeling hostile towards hikers.

In both Cases One and Two there was a tendency for nonmotorized users to personify the motorized recreationist as lazy and out-of-shape. A work-challenge ethic, reflecting lifestyle values of physical fitness and challenge, was suggested as an important dimension in people's different orientations to leisure pursuits. Mechanized users often saw other activities as too much work, and "I don't want to work on my days off." Some did seem sensitive to charges of laziness in saying, "It's a lot of work, the way we ride--it's harder than it looks." These users usually expressed the difference between themselves and skiers/hikers as "they're the ecology types." Less defensive users did see the skiers/hikers as "more hardy and ambitious." From the foot travelers' point of view, vehicles negate the sense of achievement that comes with working to get into the backcountry.

In this case where few people visit an area more than once a year, mode of experience and lifestyle intolerance seem to be the major source of conflict between hikers and vehicle users. Resource specificity could be another possible cause of conflict reflected in hikers' sense of status associated with their knowledge of the park and feelings of possessiveness for all National Parks.

CONCLUSIONS

Feelings of conflict were not universal to any one group. Various conditions existing before the study was commenced affected conflict between the groups under investigation. In addition, nearly all hikers and skiers made a conscious effort to avoid such contact which can be interpreted as a high potential for conflict. Difficulties associated with the use of the term "conflict" in the interviews were uncovered. Future research efforts should be concentrated on developing indirect measures of conflict and careful operationalization of this concept.

The interviews did produce many comments and other sources of information which fit within the proposed sources of conflict. Differences in mode of experience, resource specificity and negative evaluations of outgroup lifestyles were found in both case studies.

Lifestyle, as a cause of conflict, was found to be composed of many themes beyond those involving resource consumption and conservation. Skiers, hikers, and snowmobilers willingly stereotyped the other group in a negative manner even while admitting to a lack of social interaction with that group. Backcountry vehicle users at the study site were a diverse set of users, composed of many who also identified themselves as hikers. Future research efforts might examine the sub-groups within this activity.

While mode of experience and lifestyle are proposed as two independent factors responsible for conflict, it is possible that certain modes of experience may be central to particular lifestyles

and patterns of recreation participation. Other possible correlations, such as those between status distinctions among users and their mode of experience, remain to be investigated.

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